

## TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE POLICY

A DCDD PUBLICATION SERIES ABOUT  
INTEGRATING DISABILITY IN POLICY AND PRACTICE



# ALL EQUAL, ALL DIFFERENT

Inclusive education: a DCDD publication about Education for All.



## ***Inclusive education***

Inclusion in education is a process of enabling *all* children to learn and participate effectively within mainstream school systems. It does not segregate children who have different abilities or needs. Inclusive education is a rights-based approach to educating children and includes those who are subject to exclusionary pressures. Inclusive education creates a learning environment that is child centred, flexible and which enables children to develop their unique capacities in a way which is conducive to their individual styles of learning. The process of inclusion contributes to the academic development and social and economic welfare of the child and its family, enabling them to reach their potential and to flourish.

We distinguish between inclusive education on the one hand and educational integration via special education and special schools, on the other. Inclusive education is different from *integration* as the latter only denotes the placement of disabled pupils in the mainstream. Integration implies that the child has to change to be able to participate in the existing school system. In inclusive education a change is needed to address accessibility and challenge attitudes of managers, staff, pupils, parents and the local community.

In particular cases, or in certain contexts, special education remains an effective strategy for providing education for specific groups of children (within inclusive school systems). For example, blind children who are taught Braille in small groups while other children learn to read written words. But we do want to abolish the concept of *special schools* which separates disabled children from non-disabled children, thus segregating disabled children from daily life in the community.

## ***Why this brochure?***

The Millennium Development Goal's (MDG) educational target is that by 2015 all children will be able to enjoy a full course of basic education. Without the inclusion of disabled children it will be a goal that is impossible to reach. The extent of this

### ***An example of Good Practice at local level: Anindita***

## **A child's story about inclusive education**

Anindita, now 8 years old, visited Mentaid in India, along with her mother, in December 2001. Mentaid is an association for the development of people who are mentally disabled. Anindita was diagnosed as having Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). In May 2002, Anindita joined Mentaid and a special programme was introduced to her. The mother worked hard and, within a few months, the child started to respond. From December 2002, a team from Mentaid started working with a mainstream school in Kolkatta, called Patha Bhavan. A few workshops were conducted with the class room teachers at Patha Bhavan in order to motivate them. In March 2003 Anindita was admitted to Patha Bhavan. She also attends Mentaid for special education back up (twice weekly) after school. She is showing an improvement in many areas and in April 2005, was promoted to the next class in the school.

### **Improvements made by Anindita:**

- She learnt socially accepted behaviour.
- She improved her communication skills, especially in receptive language.
- She improved her attention and concentration spans.
- She improved her capacity to sit still.
- She sensitized other children to her uniqueness.

### **Success factors of the project:**

- The support and motivation of her parents to involve Anindita in mainstream education;
- The willingness and motivation of the Patha Bhavan staff to open up their school to an inclusive education programme;
- The cooperation between Patha Bhavan and Mentaid to meet Anindita's personal needs.

task is demonstrated by the fact that, of the 115 million children worldwide who are excluded from education, at least 40 million are disabled. Of all the disabled children in developing countries only 2-10 percent attend school (UNESCO estimates).

The Netherlands has a good reputation internationally promoting the participation of children in developing countries in education. It is a spearhead of the government in development policy. The Netherlands aspires to spend 15 percent of its development budget on education in 2007, or an amount of 600 million Euros. It is not clear however, how much money the Dutch government will allocate to making mainstream education accessible to children with disabilities, nor does it have an explicit policy for this purpose.

There are many development organisations (NGOs) in the Netherlands which address the issue of basic education. In 2004, DCDD conducted a study to find out whether NGOs paid any attention to the accessibility of education for children with disabilities. Of the thirteen NGOs which had educational programmes that were studied, eight paid little or no attention to disability (\*) in their educational policies. Three of the other organisations were changing their policies and wanted to focus structurally on disability issues in their educational policies in the future, like the two remaining organisations. These two organisations exclusively target children with disabilities.

The government as well as the NGOs have a blind spot. The present educational culture in the Netherlands may play a role here: in the Netherlands itself, there is hardly any integration of children with disabilities in education, let alone inclusive education, and there is a lack of the required support for schools and teachers in this field. For this reason, the participation of children with disabilities in education is not a given fact for the policymakers. There is a problem about the level of knowledge and culture in the government and NGO's in the Netherlands regarding inclusive education. This is also the case in many developing countries, and partners of Dutch development organisations often do not explicitly demand that attention be paid to the educational situation of children with disabilities.

(\*) Disability, according to the International Classification System, ICF, is a limitation in a person's functioning and/or activity resulting from a physical or mental disorder and/or a chronic disease. DCDD defines disability according to the social model, which states that limitations are located in the environment, i.e., not that the person is disabled, but that the environment is not adapted to, or is not suitable for, the participation of the person with a disability. Disability is a broader concept than 'handicap', which is regarded as a stigmatising word in the Netherlands. For the sake of convenience, the terms disability, handicap(ped) and (functional) limitation are used interchangeably in DCDD texts, but they must always be understood to mean 'disability' in the sense of the social model.

## *The need for inclusive education, for all children*

All children have dreams, interests and needs. They need to explore the world to learn. They need to socialize with their peers to develop their identity. The separation of disabled children deprives them from the basic stimulation of daily life. Disabled children need protection like all children do, but keeping them fully dependent on carers threatens their cognitive and social development and increases the risk of neglect and abuse. Exclusion from education reinforces and deepens illiteracy and it increases dependency and poverty for disabled children and for those who care for them in their families.

All children have unique capacities, opinions and needs and have their own styles of learning. The capacity to learn does not depend on the impairment of a child but on the potential and the way that the child is enabled and encouraged to develop this potential. If decisions are made with their consent, if their learning potential is challenged to the fullest, if they can play and learn together with their peers, all children will be valued and encouraged to learn on their own merits.



All children need education to break the cycle of illiteracy, dependency and poverty. An educated child is more likely to participate, to become self-reliant and to contribute to society than an illiterate child or a child who is separated from mainstream schooling. It is in the economic interests of the family and the state to invest in the education of all children to help them to contribute to the family household, to society and to their own living.

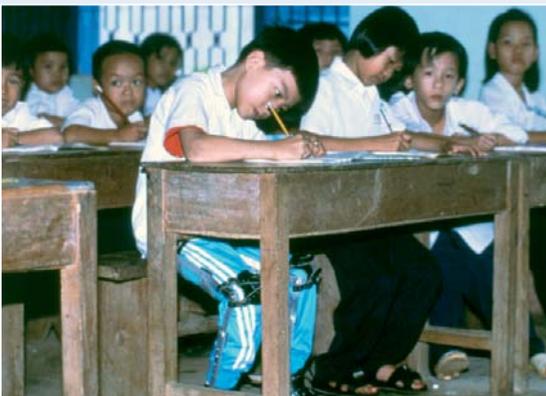
Children, with their variety in behaviour, communication and styles of learning create a challenge for teachers. Teaching disabled children confronts teachers with

their own beliefs, behaviour, style and methods of teaching. Education which is inclusive of disabled children is not easy, but the job as teacher may become more interesting and the teaching methods may respond more to the variety of learning needs of *all* the children. All the children in the classroom benefit from more child centred, flexible and creative approaches.

## ***What are the barriers towards the education of disabled children?***

Barriers to entering, participating and succeeding in education are manifold for disabled children. Just consider parental ignorance about the value of education for their child, the physical distance to schools, the lay-out of schools with high thresholds and stairs, the learning environment in classrooms and the lack of child-centred school curricula. As well as parental ignorance, the teachers lack the basic teaching skills to work in a flexible manner with all the children (i.e. insufficient training with regard to inclusive education) and the lack of resources and recognition of teachers. All this hampers the opportunities for children in general to learn, let alone the chances of disabled children learning anything at all.

However it is negative attitudes which create the main barriers to education. Negative attitudes such as those which are rooted in the mindset of people about segregating and/or banning disabled children from school and thus denying them



a life of growing up with, and feeling like, all the other children. Inclusive education therefore needs to address the perceptions and attitudes towards the education of disabled children's parents, the school community and all the other stakeholders in mainstream education.

***An example of Good Practice at regional level: Maputo  
'It's not about resources, it's about attitudes!'***

In Mozambique, the national education policy defines basic education as a universal right. But most of the children who stay outside the school system and those who repeat or drop out during the early years of primary education are disabled, or have learning difficulties. In 1998 the Ministry of Education launched the 'Inclusive Schools' project, with UNESCO's support, in all of Mozambique's ten provinces.

The focus of the programme is on awareness raising and training for all education staff throughout the education structure. Activities include: short capacity building courses for provincial coordinators and for teachers involved in pilots in inclusive schools. Four teacher education institutes are also involved in the programme. Teachers and schools are now able to identify pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities, and what type of needs they have.

In 2001 the province of Maputo organised an inclusive education competition in two stages. Each district asked teachers to share their experiences of identifying special needs in the classroom, and to report on how they teach pupils who have difficulties in learning, or who have impairments. The teachers who produced the best case reports were awarded bicycles, radios and books on inclusive education. This approach has generated a change of attitude in the education sector, which now regards disabled children as it does all other children.

## ***How can we turn inclusive education into reality?***

Inclusive education offers a strategy for promoting effective education for all children and so has a great deal to offer mainstream education. It is concerned with both access and quality, and involves child-centred teaching and the creation of schools that are responsive to the diverse needs of children and their communities. Most importantly it is part of a wider strategy to promote a more inclusive society.

Below we offer some concrete guidance for policy makers and practitioners on how to make educational projects, programmes and policies more inclusive.

## 1. Carry out a situation analysis

Conduct a situation analysis on different levels, collecting both qualitative and quantitative data, before embarking upon the development of an inclusive education programme. This can provide essential baseline information, help identify existing human and material resources, establish who is excluded from participation in learning, and reassure those who are resistant to inclusion.

## 2. Develop a language of inclusion

The issues involved in inclusive education are complex and controversial and the terminology can be confusing. Encouraging practitioners and other stakeholders to agree on the meaning of common terms can be a useful starting point, especially if there are difficulties in translating key terms such as 'inclusion' into local languages.



### **Example: The Index for Inclusion**

*The Index for Inclusion is a set of materials launched in the UK in 2000 to support schools in reviewing all aspects of their cultures, policies and practices with respect to inclusion. Although designed for England, the development of the Index was influenced by research on inclusive education in India, Brazil, South Africa as well as in England. It has since been translated into 20 languages and adapted for use in 25 countries, including India, Eritrea and several countries in the Middle East. The Index provides guidance for schools as they engage in a process of consultation and discussion among key stakeholders. The Index also encourages practitioners to think carefully about the language they use and about how to promote inclusive practice.*





### **3. Collaborate with early childhood intervention initiatives and services**

The pre-school years are, arguably, the most crucial in any child's life. Early detection of a developmental delay or impairment at the earliest possible time can make an enormous difference to a child's opportunities in life and to their inclusion in education and their community. Close collaboration between health, early childhood services and education services is essential if early identification and intervention is to become a reality.

#### **Example: China**

*The Anhui Provincial Education Commission committed itself to early intervention in preparation for Education for All initiatives in the primary education sector. The Education programme began with the small scale development of kindergartens in rural towns. Changes were brought about in the general teaching methodology from a formal teaching system to one in which learning was based on play (active learning) and small group activities. Schools were instructed to admit at least two children with mild-to-moderate learning difficulties, preferably aged three to four years old, so that they could have three years in kindergarten before starting primary school. These children would not otherwise have been admitted to school.*

#### **4. Stimulate parent involvement**

Parental motivation and involvement in their children's education is a key factor influencing educational progress. Yet some parents decide not to send their disabled children to school because they do not consider it to be a good financial investment. They would rather spend the little money that they have in sending their able-bodied children to school; other parents may be unaware that their disabled children have a right to education, and the potential to learn in their neighbourhood schools.

Parents can be the strongest advocates for the rights of their disabled children, but they may need help in gaining awareness about the impact of education on disabled children and about how to organise themselves as a group. There are many examples around the world of highly successful parent-led initiatives, many of which have become well-established professionally-led organisations.

#### **5. Develop inclusive learning environments**

The development of inclusive learning environments is a central feature in many recently established inclusive education programmes. This tends to include improving the sanitation facilities and the quality of light in classrooms. It may





also involve adaptations to accommodate wheelchair users, such as the installation of ramps, widening doors, lowering blackboards and improvements to flooring, paths and road surfaces.

### ***6. Promote inclusive pedagogy***

Large numbers of children repeat classes, fail and drop out of school altogether. Realising that children learn at different rates and have different learning styles will help ensure that teaching methods are more flexible. Teachers should be aware that the need for all children to be able to 'see, hear and understand' is essential for them to participate in their own learning. The use of simple, clear and consistent language is another basic principle in teaching inclusively. The promotion of active learning and child-to-child activities can also prevent children from becoming bored and dropping out.

### ***7. Collaborate in a multi-sector approach***

Developing local or regional multi-agency or inter-disciplinary committees, linking education with health, social welfare and consumer organisations, is an essential step towards providing a solid foundation for future developments.

### **Example: Lesotho**

A multi-sector committee was established in Lesotho prior to the development of the national inclusive education programme. Membership included representatives from the Ministries of Education, Health and Social Welfare, the National Disabled People's Association, parents of non-disabled children, and later the National Organisation of Parents of Disabled Children. The committee discussed the implementation of this new programme, and contributed to the development of the new in-service teacher training curriculum. This ensured that there was full understanding and cooperation from all professionals and stakeholders. Fifteen years later this programme is still supporting inclusive education at a national level.

## **8. Facilitate teacher training and development**

In the short term, on-the-job training for all teachers is the most practical and cost-effective way forward. Training is needed in various aspects of inclusive education to make it attractive for teachers and successful for all. In the current situation many teachers in mainstream schools are unfamiliar with the concept of inclusive education which results in concerns that they do not have the necessary specialist training to teach disabled children. In the long term, inclusive education should be included in basic teacher training curricula. In that way, all student-teachers would learn to teach inclusively.



### **Example: Lesotho**

*Short in-service training courses delivered in schools provided teachers in Lesotho with the confidence and competence to respond to the individual needs of disabled children, even though they were teaching large classes of over a hundred children. Teachers from the schools for the deaf and the blind were involved in training the teachers in Braille and Sign Language. The involvement of the specialist teachers in the training helped to reassure them of the valuable role they could play within inclusion. Previously they had been resistant to inclusive education as they thought they might lose their jobs. The teachers were trained to do simple assessments of children who had difficulties learning. This made them more aware of some of the children who had been in their classes for many years without making any significant academic progress. They began to see the children as individuals, rather than as a class, and they said that they had become 'better teachers' as a result.*

## **9. Share information**

The dissemination of practical publications and the exchange of ideas and best practices in inclusion either through workshops, newsletters, or networks such as EENET (the Enabling Education Network), also builds confidence and provides teachers with examples of what is possible, or 'how to do inclusive education'.



Written examples of inclusive practice provide inspiration to change teaching practice. Exchange visits to other schools, regions or neighbouring countries have proved very helpful in providing informal training opportunities and building capacity, as they provide education practitioners with concrete examples of what is possible.

**Example: Ethiopian teachers visit Zambia**

*A small group of Ethiopian teachers and administrators visited Zambia on a study tour arranged and led by EENET staff and co-researchers. The Ethiopian teachers were impressed by the teachers' meetings in Zambia which included practical problem-solving sessions. These enabled teachers to respond to the particular needs of the disabled children in their classes. Since the visit all 89 Ethiopian teachers have agreed to have disabled children in their classes for the first time.*



## ***An example of Good Practice at national level: Lao PDR Inclusive education policy***

Lao Peoples' Democratic Republic is a small country in south-east Asia with a population of 5.2 million. Until 1992 there was no expertise in special education and no information in the Lao language about how to include disabled children. The first special school for children with vision and hearing problems was opened in 1992 and, a year later, the pilot inclusive education project started in a primary school in the capital, Vientiane.

It was not clear, however, how this pilot could be expanded to national level. It was decided that - inclusive education had to be developed with mainstream school teachers, not specialist teachers, and that it had to be built into the normal workload within school hours; the pilot programme was expanded to new schools in different areas, including pre-schools; a National Implementation Team was set up to promote the exchange of information, the production of guidelines and education materials in Lao, and staff training; external funding was secured to ensure regular project monitoring; peer support was encouraged among teachers, schools and school managers, and also between children.

In 1998 the Ministry of Education appointed pedagogical advisers at district and provincial level. The National Implementation Team was also decentralised to provincial and district level. This has made referral and support more efficient and more accessible at short notice.

Despite scarce resources, the number of inclusive education initiatives has expanded from a pilot project in 1993 in one school to schools in all 18 provinces in 2002. Developing innovative ways of meeting the needs of all children, rather than just meeting the 'special needs' of disabled children, has been the key to Lao's success.

This brochure argues that inclusive education is feasible in developing countries. It offers development organisations a guideline for educational policies that realise optimum participation in regular education for *all* children, including children with disabilities.

## DCDD

It is DCDD's mission to work for the inclusion and social participation of people with disabilities who live in conditions of poverty and exclusion. DCDD does this from a perspective of human rights and solidarity. An important guideline is given in the *UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities*, which will be replaced later this decade by a new UN Convention on the human rights of people with disabilities.

DCDD's education working group focuses on influencing the policies of Dutch development organisations and government departments that deal with education for all. DCDD wants all children with disabilities to be integrated in these policies.

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*Earlier publications in the DCDD publication series 'Towards an inclusive policy:*

- *'As strong as the weakest link.' An incentive for development organisations and governments to make disability an integrated element of policy and action. (www.dccd.nl?2485)*
- *'Moving up the learning curve – inclusive development today.'*  
*Examples of projects from Southern partners of Dutch development NGOs illustrate good practice and show the way. (www.dccd.nl?2647)*

*This brochure can also be accessed online: www.dccd.nl?2924. All photos used in this brochure are meant as illustrations of inclusive education and are not linked to the brochure's contents. Photos were provided by: Lilliane Foundation, Viataal, Bernard van Leer Foundation and members of DCDD's education working group.*

**DCDD**  
**Postbus 13054**  
**3507 LB Utrecht**

**telefoon +31 30 236 3786**  
**fax +31 30 236 3009**  
**e-mail [dcdd@dcdd.nl](mailto:dcdd@dcdd.nl)**  
**web [www.dccd.nl](http://www.dccd.nl)**

**Texts:** Corinne Nederlof, with contributions from Marlies van der Kroft and Susie Miles. Texts were discussed in DCDD's education working group.

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