EENET asia newsletter

9th Issue

We all know that every child is unique and different. They have different abilities, learn in different ways, and at different paces. Inclusive, learning-friendly, and barrier-free environments should therefore be created in every school and community throughout the world so that all children will be enabled to develop to their full academic, social, emotional, and physical potentials. It is important to remember that a child's academic potential can not be developed separately from her/his social, emotional and physical potential, as they are interdependent aspects of a child's development.

Quote from "Teaching Children with Disabilities" - ILFE Toolkit Specialized Booklet 3

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNESCO Bangkok
Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL)

unicef

ASB Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund

idpnorway

Contents

Exploring Inclusive Education: An EENET Workshop
12 - 16 or 19 - 23 September 2011 in Bandung, Indonesia
For further information please contact: ingridlewis@eenet.org.uk

Workshop aims
- to provide education practitioners with a 'quick tour' of inclusive education
- to explore specific aspects of inclusive education in more detail
- to enable participants to reflect on and share their own ideas and experiences.

Workshop content
- A close look at the concept of inclusive education and how we can make it happen in practice.
- Identifying barriers to inclusion and exploring solutions, building on what already exists.
- Using action research as a tool for inclusive education implementation.
- School visit and debrief sessions.
- Participatory activities, group work, using images and photography, one-to-one advice, etc.

Editorial

Every year new schools, communities and countries throughout Asia embark on the path towards inclusion. For the first time we have a story from Gaza in Palestine, where inclusive and child-friendly education has been piloted for more than a decade and where the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) is currently working on developing a National Policy on Early Childhood Development (ECD) and later in the year a National Policy on Inclusive and Child-Friendly Education (ICFE). The conditions and situation affecting Palestinian children (with occupation and blockade) may be unique but millions of other children in Asia and beyond are also victims of conflict and war. Therefore the Palestinian perspective on the effect of occupation, conflict and war on children's mental health and consequently on their abilities to learn and develop will be extremely useful for education planners, school administrators, teachers, teacher educators and parents in other conflict and post-conflict areas throughout Asia.

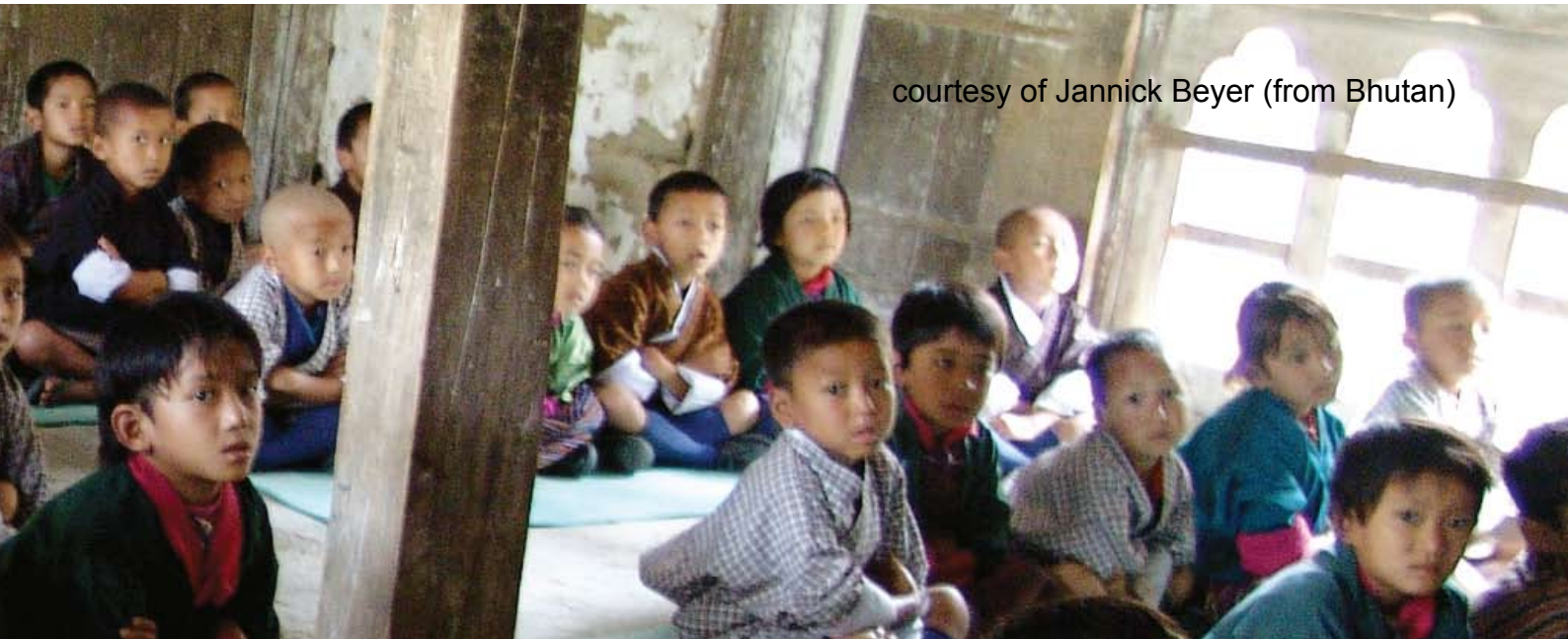
In Issue 9 we are also privileged to have education specialists and practitioners sharing experiences and stories from their work in Afghanistan, Indonesia, Malaysia and Pakistan on topics ranging from: student participation in school management and programmes; evaluation and examination systems, to policy development on ICFE. For the first time we have university students sharing their work.

Sheldon Shaeffer continues with part two of his reflections on how the development of child-friendly education systems, policies and regulations support the process towards inclusion in both schools and communities.

In this issue we are also continuing our effort from Issue 8 to create an active forum for grass root experience sharing between Africa and Asia. This time, our friends and colleagues from Uganda are sharing their experiences on how competence building and innovation in schools contributes to the efforts of ensuring access to quality Education for All (EFA). We are confident that their experiences will be most relevant for our Asian readers as well, as these two continents face many of the same challenges as well as benefit from many of the same opportunities within their education systems.

We need your feedback, so if you are working within the field of inclusive and child-friendly education (from pre-primary to tertiary education) and have made any successful experiences, or if you have any thoughts and ideas on the development of inclusive and child-friendly education systems we encourage you to send us your stories, either in English or in your own language so that they can be published in our newsletter or on our web page. Thank you again for your interest and your continued support.

EENET Asia Editorial Team



courtesy of Jannick Beyer (from Bhutan)

Inclusion – an Agent for Change and Development in Lembata

Sylvia Djawahir

IDPN Indonesia and Plan Indonesia have implemented awareness programmes and developed inclusive education in several provinces in Western Indonesia since 2006. Based on the experiences from Java, IDPN Indonesia and Plan started implementing awareness programmes on inclusive education in Lembata District, East Nusa Tenggara in eastern Indonesia in 2009. Lembata, also known as Lomblen Island, is a new district established in 1999. It is a large island to the northeast of Flores. It has fascinating cultures and many beautiful unspoiled beaches. At the southern tip of the island about 40 km away from Lewoleba, the largest city and the capital of Lembata district, we find a small village called Lamalera. It has been known nationally and internationally for its hunting tradition of large whales that have continued from generation to generation throughout many centuries. The whale hunting is done by using traditional harpoons, ropes and small boats, all made by craftsmen in the village. The island is also famous for its traditional Ikat, an elaborately hand-dyed and hand-woven fabric often thought to have great spiritual and symbolic powers. The Ikat from this island is an essential part of "the bridal price" that a groom must provide before the wedding and is used by the young man and his family to "bind" the bride to her new family so that she can learn to share and become part of their cultural identity and heritage through the unique images woven into the Ikat.

Lembata is a dry and arid island with a long dry season lasting for almost 8 months out of the year, and because of drought there

courtesy of IDPN Indonesia

are frequent bush and forest fires. In spite of these harsh conditions agriculture is the most important part of the local economy. Because the district is by the ocean it has great potential in marine, fishery and the tourism sector. It also has great mining potential as the soil of Lembata contains both gold and copper. The big challenges facing these are lack of infrastructure, facilities and human resources, as well as the island's remoteness from technological advances in general and education in particular. Local belief and their strong relationship with their ancestors has been important in protecting the environment as destroying the land and the ocean would mean to break their ties with their ancestors which has kept them alive for generations. To reach Lembata from the outside world many air and sea journeys are required, as well as time and patience as strong rains and winds often leads to complete isolation from the rest of Indonesia.

Three of us from IDPN Indonesia make the journey to Lembata together with a colleague from Plan Indonesia for the Eastern Region who joined us from Kupang, the capital city of East Nusa Tenggara. Trip from Jakarta via Kupang to Lembata took more than two days. After the long flight to Kupang we stayed overnight to catch the flight to Maumere early the following morning. From Maumere we rented a car with the driver to the port of Larantuka to continue the journey by ship to Lewoleba located on the island of Flores, where there are many volcanoes.. Larantuka, the capital of East Flores District, lies at the foot of the beautiful mount Mandiri. The journey to Larantuka took more than 4 hours by road. The road was narrow, bumpy and curvy but it took us through beautiful landscapes with rice fields, mountain backdrops, and along secluded beaches as well as through villages with small traditional houses under shady trees. After having a long, exhausting but wonderful journey we finally arrive at the Waibalun port of Larantuka. Crossing the sea was considered safe this time of the year. During the windy season from September until January waves could reach 4 meters high which often delay the ferry for days at the time. Our colleague from Plan told us that even in the quiet season sometimes powerful circular water currents would occur in the middle of the ocean that would force the ferries to seek refuge at the nearest island. The five hour sea voyage was spectacular with stunning views of countless small and untouched tropical islands. When we arrived at the harbour we were picked up by the local committee. They immediately took us to a pharmacy to buy medicines as Malaria is common in this part of eastern Indonesia.

The training location is in the city centre at the simple meeting room in the same location with our accommodation. More than 50 headmasters, teachers and school supervisors from the 6 primary schools as well as local education officials from 8 sub-districts in Lembata joined the training. The purpose of this first activity was to introduce the participants to the idea of inclusive and child-friendly education, to discuss their needs and listen to their views on how they feel they can change and improve the quality of education in their schools. From the discussion with the teachers, we found that corporal punishment is common in the schools and the level of violence in the class is high both from teachers towards the children as well as among the children themselves. The teachers told us that they did not hesitate to spank or pinch the children as they believed this would "motivate" the children to study harder and learn their lessons properly.

The main goals of this first part of the programme is to create awareness on inclusive and child-friendly education and provide guidance on how to develop an inclusive and learning friendly environment in classrooms and schools. In addition, the participants also need to become aware of their legal and moral responsibilities based on national legislations and international commitments among others; the UN initiative for Education for All (EFA), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The programme involved active use of discussion groups consisting of

courtesy of IDPN Indonesia

headmasters, teachers, school supervisors and local education authority. In groups they could explore and share experiences and discuss the many challenges they faced in school with few resources and children with diverse backgrounds and abilities. Participants also joined in role-plays where they would simulate being a child with special needs (e.g.: visually impaired, hearing impaired and hyperactive). This simulation gave them an idea on how an impairment would affect their access to school facilities and participation in activities of daily living (ADL) unless the barriers were addressed effectively in order to meet their individual needs. All the participants took turn with the different roles in the role-play and were expected to give a different perspective from the view both as students and teachers. At the end of the activity they had gained a valuable insight into the lives of others, both children with disabilities as well as their teachers. The role-play was as an eye opener for the participants and a good lesson in empathy. It also provided motivation for the participants to start reducing the many barriers to learning, development and participation that exists in their schools and communities.

We also had the opportunity to visit schools to observe teaching and learning processes. Most of the schools were located far away from where many of the children lived. Many children therefore had to walk more than 10 km from their homes to their school. But our concern about the long walk children had to endure coming to school immediately disappear when we were welcomed by all the happy and cheerful children in the school. The harmonization between culture and education as well as the relationship between schools and communities seemed to be very good in all the schools we visited in Lembata. One school showed how the children would hold hands every morning in prayer. The majority of the children were Christians while a sizable minority were Muslims, but they were all praying together in their own way respecting the diversity of faiths in their school and community. Even if Lembata is relatively small in size many different local languages were spoken. Communication between language groups and mother-tongue based education is another important issue that must be addressed effectively to ensure that all the children have access to quality education.

Two years after the first awareness programmes on inclusive and child-friendly education had been implemented successfully in the 6 primary schools in the eastern part

of Indonesia we continue with a follow-up programme on Lembata. This time teachers and headmasters from 10 primary schools in 8 sub-districts participated. The 10 schools had been designated as pilot schools for inclusive education. The teachers and headmasters would later become "master-trainers" for their colleagues in their schools and school-clusters. The training of trainers (TOT) programme will be implemented in 5 separate training-activities over a period of 10 months. Each activity will be focused around discussion groups who will study and discuss different topics from "Embracing Diversity – Toolkit on Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environment (ILFE Toolkit)." We started with the concept of Inclusive and Child-Friendly Education, followed by the following topics; how to identify children with special learning needs; how to conduct a simple and practical functional assessment of children; preparation/development of individual learning plans, and; how to plan and conduct awareness programmes on inclusive education for teachers, parents and other community members. Many changes could be observed in the two years that had passed since the initial awareness programme. Many schools have been renovated and developed to become more child-friendly. The DPRD (local parliament) now fully supported the initiative and had requested and received funding support from the Provincial Education Authority for the implementation of other trainings in order to develop inclusive and child-friendly education in their districts and sub-districts. Lembata has made a leap forward toward inclusion – a clear sign that the seed of inclusive and child-friendly education that had been planted in 2009 had grown and thrived on fertile ground in schools and communities throughout the islands of Eastern Indonesia. Economic progress can also be observed on Lembata as access to this beautiful part of Indonesia had been improved significantly since we came here the first time back in 2009. Now Lembata can be reached directly by air every day from the provincial capital of Kupang. We are looking forward to the next few months of training. We are confident that this initiative will lead to access to quality education for all children regardless of their abilities, disabilities, backgrounds and circumstances within the next few years on Lembata and across the beautiful but distant shores of Indonesia.

Ms. **Sylvia Djawahir** is the Head of the IDPN Indonesia Foundation. She can be contacted via email: sd@idpn-indonesia.org

courtesy of IDPN Indonesia

What Makes a Good Teacher: The Best Ideas for Education Improvements Come from Educators Themselves!

Omal Clare

Introduction

Teacher training may seem a rather technical matter focusing on contents of curricula and specific teaching methods. At its core however it is a moral profession. Most teachers want to make a positive change in children's lives. Improving quality and equality, rather than just passing exams, is thus a critical task of teachers. Although quality is often defined in terms of academic excellence, it may be more elusive than what can be measured in tests. Nowadays, as also reflected in the Education for All goals, quality is given a broader meaning, recognizing measurable and non-measurable outputs, as well as the process by which education takes place. What happens in classrooms must change to be able to create a more inclusive and positive development experiences for all children. It is therefore important to reflect on the roles and responsibilities of teachers because their attitudes, behaviours and methods can either enhance or impede a child's ability to learn effectively. Several studies have provided evidence that investing in teachers may be one of the most cost-effective interventions in improving the quality of education outcomes .

Teacher effectiveness is the single most important factor influencing learning. Studies have found that 40 to 90% of the difference in achievement can be attributed to teacher quality. While attention is now paid to pre-service teacher education, there is a significant unmet need for on-going professional learning and support for teachers and head-teachers already in the schools.

SNV (Netherlands Development Organisation) does not work directly with schools but recognizes the critical importance of influencing what happens in classrooms. Through a local partner like Transform-Uganda positive relationships have been established with the Primary Teaching College. The aim is to reform the education system, while preparing teacher trainees for their future roles and responsibilities. To make teachers change agents and education more equitable and relevant, ownership and a sense of meaning on the part of teachers needs to be created. Such ownership cannot be developed through top-down ministry policies or directives. An enabling environment must be created for teachers to grow professionally based and building on existing knowledge and skills, and thus identify, share, use and integrate the best teaching ideas from the field. Teachers need to work with other teachers to learn from and contribute to knowledge and skills development of colleagues, especially related to teaching diverse and disadvantaged learners.

In the intervention described in this case-study, teachers are called upon to demonstrate their commitment and become reflective practitioners, while receiving on-going professional support. It is not only about literacy and numeracy, but also about a deeper transformation to create a just and inclusive society, education being the means to achieve such.

Teachers thus learn to reflect on their own practice and try out new teaching methods. Head-teachers learn to become mentors and improve their role in supporting school-wide implementation of more inclusive teaching and learning based on the vision that a good teacher teaches the "whole child". Such a vision of education is not limited to the tangibles of academic achievement but encompasses a daily dose of modeling compassion, flexibility, consultation, problem solving, listening, humor, imagination and the willingness to be open-minded.

Case-Study Focus

As capacity building and knowledge development organizations SNV and Transform-Uganda work at district level with Primary Teaching Colleges, District Education officials, teachers and (selected) schools.


courtesy of Omal Clare

Assessing quality improvements in education can be done using different parameters. The two sets of parameters most often used are:

1. Outputs (e.g. exam results) and outcomes (e.g. what opportunities learners can access through education);
2. Learning quality and relevance (e.g. environment, inputs, processes)

This case-study focuses on the second set of parameters to ascertain what interventions best promote improved quality of teaching and learning, evidenced by improved and more equitable completion rates.

Interventions

The interventions of SNV and Transform-Uganda can be grouped into two categories:

1. Capacity development: for teachers and community members e.g. on child friendly school development; child participatory pedagogy; school-community learning projects.
2. Knowledge development: on Alternative Teaching Learning Approaches and low cost innovation; cross-district and peer-to-peer learning; video- documentation of the teaching-learning improvement process.

Process and Progress

This teacher support project is responding to a need to improve the knowledge and skills of teacher educators, head-teachers and teachers. The program is embedded in the existing policy frame-work of the Uganda Education Act (2008), the Quality Enhancement Initiative (QEI, 2008), the Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards (BRMS, 2009) and the existing pre-service and in-service teacher training programs. Using different approaches such as video documentation, professional portfolios and peer to peer learning has proven interesting while results can be seen within a relatively short period of time.

The project supports six selected primary (model) schools, potentially benefiting nearly 50 teachers and more than 2000 pupils. Every term, Transform-Uganda visits the schools and documents teaching and learning in action. Teachers and pupils are filmed in their daily classroom practices. The videos are used for training sessions together with the schools involved and the primary teaching college staff.

During the workshop, teacher educators, head-teachers, teachers and other district education officials reflect on the teaching-learning practices as documented and observed. Together they identify strengths and weaknesses (SWAT analysis). Teachers advice each other on feasible improvements and individual teachers develop action plans on how they will improve their own practices, while head-teachers practice their coaching skills. The video clips are also used for pre-service training.

Videos of different stages are compared to be able to monitor the professional development process and progress, which has proven to be highly motivating. Head-teachers and teachers in the project become reflective practitioners and ask questions like "What difference am I trying to make as a teacher?" The project encourages teachers to share and learn together, not only on teaching literacy and numeracy, but also on how to improve social and emotional learning and creating child friendly learning environments.

After every workshop teachers choose which methods they will further practice and refine to improve student learning – with a special focus on disadvantaged learners. Implementation of newly learned techniques are always based on the classroom and school realities Ugandan teachers face in terms of human and financial resources, teacher-pupil ratio, and availability of teaching-learning materials.

Outcomes

A motivated and effective teacher who is present every day is the best guarantee of quality education. Opportunities for reflective practice and peer to peer support created by the project have resulted in teachers asking for more needs-based training. They have experienced how the training builds on and acknowledges their existing knowledge and skills, while further developing professional effectiveness. It makes teacher educators, head-teachers and teachers career-long learners. Participating teachers state that this needs-based professional development not only brings improved professional performance but also increased motivation.

Video documentation and related workshops has already shown improvements in teaching-learning processes. However, change in classroom practices - as observed on video - such as differentiation, team-teaching, interactive teaching and learning, early remedial responses to children experiencing difficulties, improved attention for children's social and emotional development, and using self-made and low-cost teaching-learning aids will take more time and continued support to consolidate.

The participating teachers have however started to share their experiences in other schools.

Impact and Opportunities for Scaling Up

Teachers can make a considerable contribution to the realization of the Education for All (EFA) goals, especially related to the quality and equality of learners, learning environment, learning content, learning process and learning outcomes. Investing in teacher capacity building therefore contributes to impacts related to enrolment, retention, meaningful education experiences and quality learning outcomes.

Lessons Learned

1. Peer-to-peer feedback and support, identifying strengths and weaknesses and providing needs-based training, creates an enabling environment for continuous professional development while teacher educators and teachers work as teams. When teachers see and are acknowledged for their own professional change they become enthusiastic and want to improve more.
2. School leadership is critical in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Strengthening the capacity of head-teachers, not only in management and leadership, but in professional support of teachers is especially important.
3. There is an urgent need for Primary Teaching College outreach staff and district inspectors to work together. "Inspection" is not an effective way to improve quality because it has no effect on the process that caused poor results in the first place. Real and continuous improvement occurs only when teachers and head-teachers study their own practice and what it results in. A system for teacher accountability is needed that also provides mechanisms for improvement, not just a means of inspection and sorting.

Ms. **Omal Clare**, Education Manager at Transform Uganda in Kumi. Clare can be reached at omclare@yahoo.com

Framework For Inclusive Quality Education

Sukanti R. Bintoro

Yogyakarta Province Progress Toward Inclusive Education

Indonesia is currently putting much effort into achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs) including target number 2 "Achieving Universal Primary Education". Inclusive Education is a crucial element of this effort as it aims at including all children. Yogyakarta Province has mainstreamed education services for children with disabilities since 1975. A significant improvement was made in 2003 when a more inclusive education system was pioneered that did not focus only on visual impairment and encouraged children with disabilities, among other vulnerable children, to learn together with their peers. To date, there are more than 132 schools registered as inclusive with the Provincial Education Authority and Yogyakarta Municipality has developed an Inclusive Education regulation.

National Education Ministerial Decree No. 70, 2009 specifically addresses the implementation of inclusive education for children with disabilities and gifted children. The decree implies a responsibility reorganisation, in line with the Country decentralisation process. Province Education Authorities support Districts and Municipalities in terms of resources and transfer of technical information. To support the process, the Yogyakarta Provincial Education Authority in co-operation with Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB) implements a project co-funded by the European Union entitled "Education for Children with Disabilities: A Local Authority Framework for Inclusion" (January 2010 - August 2011). The framework includes the establishment of an Inclusive Education Steering Committee (IESC) and development of a set of context based guidelines.

Yogyakarta Inclusive Education Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is composed of 12 core members representing Education Authorities from the Province and additional members from varied sections of Education Authorities at the District and Municipality levels. The project aims at raising awareness and to strengthen the capacity of Steering Committee members through training workshops, thematic working groups and study trips.

"In the very first time when we started to implement inclusive education, we were confused about the goals to achieve. We have the regulation but we still didn't know what inclusive education really is. After following

courtesy of ASB

workshops within the project, we got improved capacities which allow us to step by step to fulfil the index of inclusive education and start dealing with better coordination with the Province and other districts as well." Pak Rahmat, IESC member from Yogyakarta Municipality.

A MoU has been signed between ASB and the Provincial Education Authority that stipulates that the IESC will remain a standing body. The IESC is expected to actively ensure a continued coordination between the Province and Districts/Municipality and support Inclusive Education implementation in the future. The commitment of IESC members has been great and initiatives develop in the Districts. One example, among others, is in Gunung Kidul District, where information on Inclusive Education has been shared to all 659 schools in the District, including Primary, Junior and Senior High, and Senior Vocational Schools.

A Set of Context Based Inclusive Education Guidelines

A school-based survey informed initial need assessments together with working groups welcoming stakeholders from the government (Education and other authorities and Planning & Development sections) and non-governmental actors such as parents' associations, Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs), school committees, universities and so forth. These inputs are necessary to ensure that the guidelines are relevant to the Yogyakarta context and are achievable considering local resources and constraints. Due to the diversity of situations and experiences of the 5 Districts/Municipality in the Province, the guidelines provide minimum standards and allow flexible implementation. The topics of the guidelines are:

Guideline 1: Criteria for Inclusive school

The first guideline targets Education Authorities and serves as a reference guideline. It aims at presenting a selection of Inclusive school criteria. 7 criteria have been identified and developed into 50 indicators to monitor progress towards fuller inclusion.

Guideline 2: Strategy for regular teacher training

The second guideline is to be used by Education Authorities. It defines a strategy to train inclusive school teachers. It covers the topics to be taught and indicates the already published training materials such as the "Training module for teacher master trainers" produced by the Ministry of National Education in 2010.

Guideline 3: School Administrators' management guidelines

The third guideline targets Headmasters and school committee members. It presents a check-list to identify the barriers to the implementation of Inclusive Education within a school and suggests concrete actions to implement and provides useful tools to collect data.

Guideline 4: Monitoring criteria for Supervisors

The fourth guideline targets school supervisors. It provides a check-list based on the 8 Indonesian National Standards for Education to support the monitoring activities by school supervisors during their regular school visits.

The guidelines come with the results of the initial school based survey and a practical Directory of Linkages of Inclusive Education stakeholders in Yogyakarta Province and at the national level. Also, following the needs assessment, an additional training material on "Teaching Children with disabilities in Inclusive Setting" (UNESCO, 2009) is being translated and adapted into Bahasa Indonesia by the Yogyakarta Provincial Education Authority, Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Deutschland e.V., IDPN Indonesia, Handicap International and Plan International.

The guidelines are to be completed in January 2011 and disseminated to all targeted stakeholders through workshops and trainings to all District and Province supervisors as well as to government officials.

courtesy of ASB

A Reinforced Support System
The IESC also benefited from other Indonesian experiences such as the Payakumbuh (West Sumatra) support system.

“In Payakumbuh the government, community and schools have a good understanding on Inclusive Education (IE), which is not the case in Bantul yet. Therefore, good awareness of Education for All principle should be socialized to all stakeholders in Bantul. We will encourage other stakeholders to take part in the IE implementation, start to act even though there is no regulation yet.” Pak Totok Sudarto, an IESC member from Bantul.

The IESC understood the schools need support from Education Authorities and the fundamental role of the Resource Centre (RC) to support Inclusive Education implementation; especially in the districts where resources are scarce. The IESC now reflects on the possible optimization of the existing Provincial Resource Centre in Yogyakarta.

The project also seeks to reinforce collaborations with other authorities regarding services for children with disabilities. In February 2010, a mechanism for a “Referral System” was agreed under a MoU signed by the Provincial Education, Health, and Social Affairs Authorities. These authorities have agreed to work closely in terms of early detection and data sharing on children with disabilities.

The IESC has an essential role to play in supporting the comprehensive implementation of Inclusive Education. Yogyakarta Province has already made great steps on the long way towards quality Inclusive Education thanks to a strong commitment of the Education Authorities. For the sake of all Indonesian children, it is hopefully just the beginning of the journey.

Mr. **Sukanti R. Bintoro**, Yogyakarta Province Education Authorities
Jalan Cendana no. 9, Yogyakarta - Indonesia
Email: sukantibintoro@yahoo.com

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

Participation of Students in School Management in Pakistan

Roudaba Shuja

courtesy of IDP Norway

I am the headmistress of a girls' college that offers courses of studies for grade 11 to 14; the last two years are for bachelor's programme. My institution comes under the Federal Directorate of Education which is a partner with IDP Norway and Sightsavers for running a pilot programme on Inclusive and Child-Friendly Education. Working with the Norwegian team I came to know that the participatory role of students in Norwegian higher educational institutions is so strong that they are even a part of the panel that recommends appointments of faculty members. During my 30 years of teaching experience, I have not come across any such single case where students were made to sit along with the teachers to constitute one body. The teachers in our educational system are used to instructing, lecturing, guiding the students but hardly ever inviting suggestions advice, or opinion of the students. Therefore the information shared by my Norwegian friends made me ponder on the benefits and challenges contained in the idea and ultimately I decided to experiment on my own.

During the debating, singing, drama, quiz, and sports competitions held between classes, I asked two members of the student-council to sit along with the faculty members to constitute a panel of judges to determine and announce the winners for first, second, and third prizes. It was equally shocking for the students and teachers; well for the former it was a pleasant surprise. The teachers were not so happy with the idea, despite my explanation that the move should not be taken as undermining their authority but as empowering our students to own responsibility. Gradually, after a few more events, the students and teachers got used to the idea and I was told that the students were very proud of their elevated position and the teachers were relieved that the students would no longer blame them for making biased decisions.

Encouraged by the move, I thought of taking a bolder step. I held a meeting with the staff and floated the idea that to improve ourselves and expedite our professional growth it would be better if we invited feedback from our students, since the annual results are not sufficient to reflect our performance in the classroom - Actually, the heads are asked to fill up the Annual Confidential Report (ACR) of each teacher in the light of the pass over percentage in the annual results. The idea was so unsettling for the teachers that they protested openly and went on to say that this move was not less than setting spies on them.

For a system where teachers close doors after entering the class and there remains no one to see what takes place between teachers and their student, this idea was a bit too much. I then had to withdraw. But I succeeded in making them accept the idea to open their doors and allow their colleagues and/or head to quietly step in the class room anytime to see what is being taught and how. To my amusement I noticed that the doors were indeed left open, but none of the peers went in the class to observe their colleague.

After a few months I again suggested to invite feedback from the students through their elected class representatives. This time there was no resistance. I could see that the teachers were apprehensive but did not argue. Next, I invited the students of the council to ask for their feedback in writing about each class. I made sure that they understood it was not to name any person, but to talk about the qualities they appreciated and the areas they would like the teacher to pay more attention to. Next month I took the staff on board and shared some of the comments made by the students without naming anybody. I said that one of us uses the word “shit” too often in the class, and the students are not comfortable with it. It was really an eventful meeting, because the teachers were elated to know how much their effort were appreciated by the students and how some of the things they had not noticed about themselves were pointed out by the students; like a smile, a habit, a remark, etc. Within 6 months the teachers and the student were very much at ease with the new system and with each other, and everyone realized the responsibilities entailed in their assignments. The teachers generally became more careful in the use of language.

It has now been more than 18 months that I have been practicing these few novel ideas after interacting with foreign counterparts. It all started by opening up the doors of our minds and allowing ourselves to become inspired by the experiences of others.

Dr. **Roudaba Shuja**, Principal, Federal Government College for Women, Humak, Islamabad. You can contact her via email: roudaba@hotmail.com

The two pictures are not from the Federal Government College but from one of the pilot schools (primary level) for inclusive education in Islamabad.

courtesy of IDP Norway

Afghanistan Towards Inclusive Education – Part 1/2

Prof. Lutfullah Safi and **Terje Magnussønn Watterdal**

In 2008 the Afghan Ministry of Education (MOE) decided to make the initial steps towards developing an inclusive and child-friendly education system in Afghanistan. In the spring of 2008 the Inclusive Education Coordination Working Group (IECWG) was formed. IECWG is co-chaired by MOE and UNESCO and has more than 30 members from national and international non-governmental organisations, universities and UN agencies. In January 2009, shortly after the successful participation of the Afghan Minister of Education at the UNESCO-IBE International Conference on Education in Geneva, the Ministry of Education sought UNESCO's assistance in drafting a Needs & Rights Assessment on Inclusive Education in Afghanistan. All the member organisations of IECWG became involved in the process and agreed on a five year Road Map towards Inclusion based on the ground realities of Afghanistan. The Milestones in the Road Map was also based on the experiences made in 12 government pilot schools for inclusive education in Kabul. This successful initiative has been supported by UNESCO and UNICEF as well as the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA). The Road Map was approved and signed by the Minister of Education in the 3rd quarter of 2009.

The first milestone to be completed under the Road Map was the organisation of a High Level Round Table Discussion on Inclusive Education within the Ministry of Education to ensure that all key government stakeholders had a similar understanding on inclusive education and shared the ownership of the process towards inclusion. The High Level Round Table was held in the Ministry of Education in Kabul in June 2010 with five deputy ministers present, as well as most director generals and directors within the Ministry. The meeting was chaired by the Deputy Minister for Academic Affairs and co-hosted by UNESCO, UNICEF and IECWG, and organised with funding support of SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency). The meeting was a great success and the participants agreed on organising the first National Conference on Inclusive Education later the same year.

courtesy of IDP Norway

As a result of the increased awareness on the importance of inclusive and child-friendly education the Ministry of Education decided to comprehensively reform the administrative structure of the Deputy Ministry for Academic Affairs to better facilitate the implementation of inclusive and child-friendly education. Advice from UNESCO and IECWG was sought. Inclusive Education is now Department under the Deputy Ministry. The revised structure was approved by the parliament in the second half of 2010.

Immediately prior to the National Conference a delegation Mr. Patman, Deputy Minister for Academic Affairs and his senior advisor participated in the World Conference on Early Childhood Education on Moscow. In his presentation he said that: It is the 1st Priority of the Afghan government to develop Early Childhood Care and Education Programmes (ECCE) with special focus on school preparedness and readiness for children who are most vulnerable to exclusion from and within education – in order to increase enrolment rates and reduce drop-out rates in primary schools in an effort to support other EFA initiatives. Introduction of ECCE is therefore another aspect of the Afghan governments struggle to improve their education system and reach the goals of Education for All (EFA) by making schools and other education institutions (from pre-primary to tertiary) more inclusive and child-friendly.

The first National Conference on Inclusive and Child-Friendly Education was held in Kabul in the beginning October 2010. More than 120 participants from key government and non-government stakeholders from all the regions of Afghanistan participated during the two day conference. At the end of the second day the participants drafted and agreed on the Afghan Declaration on Inclusive and Child-Friendly Education. The declaration was presented to the Deputy Minister for Academic Affairs who approved the declaration and committed to implement the 19 action points – all which are in line with the Road Map towards Inclusion as well as the National Education Strategic Plan II (2010 to 2014) and supported by the Afghan Constitution and the Education Law of 2009.

Afghanistan Declaration on Inclusive and Child-Friendly Education - 5th October 2010

Definition for Inclusive and Child-Friendly Education in Afghanistan

- An inclusive and child-friendly education system ensures that all children have equal access to quality education regardless of their gender, age, abilities, disabilities/ impairments, health conditions, circumstances, as well as socio-economic, religious, ethnic, and language backgrounds.

Elaborated Definition:

- Inclusive and child-friendly education is a rights-based approach to education and thus in full accordance with the Constitution, the Afghan Millennium Development Goals, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Education for All (EFA) Goals, the Education Law, the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP II) and the Road Map of the Needs & Rights Assessment on Inclusive Education.
- Inclusive and child-friendly education is a means to achieve quality Education for All (EFA) – with special emphasis on the main 12 groups most vulnerable to exclusion from and within the Afghan education system (listed alphabetically):
  - Children affected by Conflict, War and Emergencies, Internally Displaced Children, Refugees and Returnees
  - Children affected by Drugs
  - Children from Ethnic, Language, Social and Religious Minorities
  - Children from Poor Economic Backgrounds
  - Children in Conflict with the Law / Children in Incarceration
  - Children living far away from School - in Villages where there are no Schools
  - Children suffering from Neglect, Abandonment and/or Abuse – including Orphans
  - Children with Disabilities
  - Children who are over-aged
  - Girls
  - Nomadic (Kuchi) Children
  - Street and Working Children

The delegates at the National Conference on Inclusive and Child-Friendly Education agree on the following:

- The Ministry of Education should provide equal quality of education as well as equal access to education for all children, without discrimination, both in rural and municipal areas.
- Quality education should provide children with; values; basic literacy skills; life skills; problem solving skills as well as abilities to solve conflicts peacefully; ability to properly understand their faith, culture, and traditions; empathy towards others; skills that will help them, their families and their communities to develop and prosper; as well as skills that are marketable in the labour market and will help Afghanistan to develop its economy.
- The education system should contribute to the peaceful development of Afghanistan, enabling children, families and communities to develop and for Afghan youth to compete in the global market place.
- Afghanistan should learn from successful education programmes, both inside and outside the country, to find a path towards a more effective, inclusive and child-friendly education system.
- A common strategy for inclusive and child-friendly education must be developed and implemented in all provinces, all districts and all schools throughout Afghanistan.
- Positive teaching and learning methods that foster, value and embrace the unique abilities of all children should be introduced in schools.
- Implementation of inclusive and child-friendly education in schools throughout Afghanistan should be expanded based on good practices in existing pilot schools and programmes.
- Inclusive and child-friendly pre-schools throughout Afghanistan should be established, with special focus on school readiness programmes for children vulnerable to exclusion from and within education.
- Quality education will need well trained, highly motivated, and responsible teachers who know how to facilitate learning among all groups of children.
- Teachers must serve as good examples for their students – it is therefore important that they are appointed based on objective quality and performance criteria.
- Text books and Curricula must reflect the needs and circumstances of communities, parents and children to make education more relevant as well as combat poor completion and transition rates from primary to secondary education.
- Introduce local content subject matter in the Curriculum – this should be decided upon by village education committees (comprising of parents, elders and children) – to increase the relevance of education.
- Coordination between different national and international stakeholders should be strengthened – both through the Inclusive Education Coordination Working Group (IECWG) as well as through other forums such as the Human Resource Development Board (HRDB).
- The cost of leaving children out of school is much higher that providing quality Education for All (EFA) without any form of discrimination.
- Inclusive and child-friendly education must be included into all pre- and in-service teacher education and training programmes in Afghanistan.
- More focus should be given within the education system to minority languages to promote education of children and youth from minority populations, as well as to preserve indigenous culture and knowledge.
- Sign language should be recognised as an official language with equal rights with spoken and written languages
- Books in Braille must be provided for all students who need Braille as a medium for reading and writing.
- Inclusive and child-friendly education should be implemented according to the Road Map towards Inclusion (2009) as well as the Plans of Actions developed during the 1st National Conference on Inclusive and Child-Friendly Education (2010)

courtesy of IDP Norway

Much has been achieved within quite a short time in Afghanistan. However the challenges that remain are daunting as approximately 50% of school-aged children remain out of school. Some children never enrol in school, while others drop out or are expelled during their schooling years. This often happens without education authorities, schools and communities fully realising their legal responsibility to provide quality education for all children, regardless of their gender, abilities or disabilities, their social, economical, cultural, ethnic linguistic or religious background, or their health conditions. We will follow the development towards inclusion in Afghanistan with a part two of the article in the next issue of EENET.

Prof. **Lutfullah Safi** is a Senior Advisor to the Deputy Minister for Academic Affairs. He has a long career within UNESCO and UNICEF and been instrumental in the development of inclusive education in Afghanistan since he joined the Afghan Ministry of Education a few years back. You can contact Prof. Safi on: safilutfullah@hotmail.com

Mr. **Terje Magnussønn Watterdal** is one of the editors of EENET Asia and has been working with UNESCO Kabul and the Afghan Ministry of Education on inclusive and child-friendly education since 2008. Terje can be contacted on: watterdal-terje@idp-europe.org

Education and Career Development of the Orang Asli children of SK Runchang, Malaysia: Insiders' Perspectives

Dwee Chiew Yen, Chieng Khieng Hie, Norhayatunnisa Nordin, Puteri Aini Megat Yusop, Raihanah Abd Rahim and **Abdul Razaq Ahmad**

Malaysia is a multiethnic country rich in culture, tradition and heritage. Of its population of about 27 million, 0.5% are the Orang Asli who are indigenous to Peninsular Malaysia. The term 'Orang Asli' originates from Malay language and can be literally translated as 'original people' or 'first people'. According to the law, an Orang Asli can be defined as a member of an aboriginal ethnic group (either by blood descent or via adoption) who is able to speak an aboriginal language and who abides by aboriginal customs and beliefs (Aboriginal Peoples Ordinance 1954, revised 1974).

The Orang Asli, are not one homogenous people but divided into three categories namely Negritos, Senoi and Proto-Malays, the Orang Asli. They can be further divided into subgroups, which are all distinguishable, by physical appearance, linguistic ability and cultural practices. In other words, they are a unique group of people with different languages, cultures, beliefs and values.

Of the many issues related to the Orang Asli, education remains the number one concern for the government. Studies done by the JHEOA (Department of Orang Asli Affairs) show that the dropout rate among Orang Asli schoolchildren is much higher than the national average. For every 100 Orang Asli children entering Standard 1, only 6 will be expected to continue their studies up to Form 5. This equates to a 94% dropout rate. This phenomenon is worrying as it can deprive our nation of its precious human resources.

To counter the problem, The Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato Seri Najib Tun Razak has recently proposed three components to ensure success in education for the Orang Asli. During a groundbreaking ceremony for a new Orang Asli school at Simpai Village, Pekan, Pahang on the 25th of February this year (Utusan 2011), Najib suggested that firstly, schools should be built close to Orang Asli settlements to ensure easy access. Secondly, there must be teachers who are dedicated and are willing to work at the Orang Asli settlement and lastly, the Orang Asli parents themselves should emphasize on their children's education.

Pahang state is home to the highest number of Orang Asli in Malaysia, amounting to 54,293 people or 36% of the entire Orang Asli population. Among the sub-ethnic Orang Asli groups which can be found in Pahang are Jahut, Jakun, Semaqberi, Bateq, Semai, Temuan, Chewong, Semelai and Temiar. According to 2010 statistics, there is a total of 14,974 Orang Asli students in Pahang. Of this number, 10,807 Orang Asli children are enrolled in primary school. This article will be focusing on education and career development issues from the perspectives of the parents, teachers and students of SK Runchang located in Kampung Runchang, Pekan, Pahang. Kampung Runchang, which has been developed under the regrouping plan (Rancangan Pengumpulan Semula), is home to 1821 Orang Asli where the majority is from the Jakun group.

Data collection was carried out through a program called EdePAC (Education Development Program for Aboriginal Community) by students taking a course called 'Life Science' at the National University of Malaysia (UKM). A qualitative approach through observation, as well as formal and informal interviews carried out with the parents, teachers and students of Kampung Runchang in the Malay language. In this article, the findings from the teachers', parents' and students' perspectives regarding the importance of education and career development based on two themes namely goals and spread will be presented.

Goals

Goals refer to the aim and purpose of education and career development from the respondents' perspectives.

Parents

From our observation and through the interviews conducted, we found that many of the Orang Asli in Kampung Runchang are well aware of the importance of education. They encourage their children to study hard because they believe it will improve their children's chances of obtaining a better job and guarantee a better future. Some parents conveyed that they do not want their children to follow their footsteps and lead a life of poverty and hardship. They too, hope their children will have a better future through education.

"If possible I want the children to learn. I don't want them to suffer like me. If they have education, they can get a better job." (Ms. Saridah)

Teachers

In general, the teachers from SK Runchang are of the opinion that education is the only way out for the Orang Asli. They think it is very important for Orang Asli children to be literate so that it would be easier for them to secure better jobs in the future. Although the passing rates of the Orang Asli children in Kampung Runchang in the UPSR (Primary School Evaluation Test) exams remain low (40% passing rate in 2010), a student named Juyana managed to do the school proud by scoring an excellent 5 As in 2010. Her achievement has served as an inspiration for the teachers and students of SK Runchang.

One of the teachers who teach remediation classes places high importance on the ability of the students to read and write. From her observation, many Orang Asli children face difficulties in catching up with their studies partly because they are first-generation learners. Many of them do not attend school regularly and cited reasons such as having to help take care of their siblings at home while their parents work. In terms of career, she expresses that many of her students tend to follow their parents' footsteps.

"Many of them (students) tend to follow what their parents do. For example, if their father plants watermelons, they plan to do the same." (Puan Wani, teacher of SK Runchang)

Students

From the informal interviews conducted with 6 standard six female students, it was observed that a majority cited career choices such as teachers and singers. When asked why, they said it was because they wanted to educate the next generation. Another expressed it was because of her aunt's influence. She has dreams to become a teacher like her aunt so that she can buy a car and provide a better life for her family.

However, it was realised that none of the students talked about the more 'prestigious' and high-paying careers such as lawyers, doctors or accountants. Most of the students enjoy coming to school to learn and make friends. They named Mathematics and Bahasa Malaysia as their favourite subjects because they were fun and interesting.

courtesy of Abdul Razaq Ahmad

Spread

Spread examines how parents and teachers contribute to the education and career development of the school-going children.

Parents

Although the community of Orang Asli at Kampung Runchang generally have lower standards of living, they place importance on education and enrol their children in kindergarten at the early age of six. This shows the parents' involvement in encouraging their children to go to school. Due to the fact that most Orang Asli parents have received very little formal education or none at all, it might be impossible for them to assist their children with their studies. Some parents, when asked, expressed that they are not very sure of their children's achievements or interests at school.

On the other hand, there were a few parents who took the initiative to continue learning to read and write by enrolling for adult classes in the school. This is so that they can become a role model for their own children.

Teachers

According to one of the teachers interviewed, enrichment programs such as motivation programs have been held in SK Runchang to encourage students sitting for public exams. In the past, the school has invited Orang Asli speakers who have succeeded in their careers to give talks in the hope that they would serve as role models to inspire the students to aim high and continue with their education.

However, no career development workshop has been carried out in the school so far. In addition, there were no counsellors in the school to provide advice or career guidance for the students.

Students

In order to find out what are the students' efforts to improve themselves, they were asked about homework, family background and reading habits. It was found that most of the students do not complete their homework. Many of them help their parents with housework or prefer to play with their friends at home. Furthermore, some of them mentioned that it was also difficult to complete their homework because there was no one at home to provide help. While there are no bookshops in the village, there is a public library where the students can borrow books. From the conversation, they revealed their interest in storybooks and mentioned that they sometimes visit the public library to borrow books to read.

Fieldwork Observation

Through the fieldwork conducted at Kampung Runchang, the writers have gained insights on the lives of the Orang Asli. From our observation, this is what we found:

1. The Orang Asli school children of SK Runchang are generally very shy and have low self-confidence. During the activities carried out with them however, we observed that these children have the potential to improve their self-confidence.
2. The Orang Asli children were seen to respond eagerly towards activities, which involve music and dance. Their interest and enthusiasm in group-activities show that active learning works well for Orang Asli children.
3. Due to minimal exposure to the outside world, the Orang Asli children of Kampung Runchang are not aware of all the education and career choices that are available to them.
4. The teachers of SK Runchang are still employing traditional pedagogical methods such as 'chalk and talk' in classrooms. This may not be very effective for the students' learning.

Fieldwork Experience

Since we have never had such close contact to the Orang Asli community before, this fieldwork has opened our eyes and changed our perspective towards them. Below are some of our experience and afterthoughts on the EdePAC program:

1. We used to judge the intelligence of Orang Asli based on their poor academic performance. But seeing their learning and living environment for ourselves, we realised that these children have the potential to excel academically if only they have access to proper resources and academic support.

2. This course has given us exposure on the methods to carry out fieldwork and research through observation and interviews.
3. We have also managed to apply theoretical knowledge in education, especially on qualitative research methods to collect data according to the appropriate measures.
4. During the fieldwork, we have also gained a lot of guidance and useful advice from our supervisor who has assisted us greatly in understanding the procedures of research.
5. In preparation for this program, we have also learnt how to apply soft skills outside the classroom. To secure sponsorship from private companies, for example, we had to utilise our communication skills in order to convince them about the significance of EdePAC. We believe these skills will benefit us greatly in our future endeavours.

Suggestions

From the data obtained, it is evident that more remains to be done by all parties to improve the education and career development opportunities provided to the Orang Asli children of Kampung Runchang. Teachers play an important role in creating awareness on the importance of education and career options, but this alone is not sufficient. We suggest career talks or workshops to be carried out in schools not just for Orang Asli students, but also for their parents. This is because we think that it is also important for the parents to be given exposure on the possible career paths their children can take and how that can improve their quality of life. This way, they can continue to motivate their children and keep them right on track.

We also think that it will also be beneficial if university students can conduct more community service projects such as education fairs, career talks and English camps in Orang Asli villages so that the Orang Asli children will be more exposed to the outside world and continue to be motivated to pursue their education to a higher level.

Through observations, the writers have also realised that the Orang Asli children love to sing and dance - possibly due to their cultural background. Therefore, we suggest that teachers could incorporate traditional songs and dancing activities into lessons, especially English, to make language learning a more fun and interactive process for the students.

Last but not least, the government should also ensure that school supplies and incentives arrive on time as poverty remains the number one cause for the high dropout rates among Orang Asli children (Kamarulzaman & Osman 2008). Well-equipped computer labs with Internet access should also be provided in every Orang Asli school to ensure that these children have the opportunity to stay in touch with technological advances and keep up with our ever-changing society.

The authors are students of the National University of Malaysia (Universiti Kebangsaaan Malaysia - UKM). You can conatct them via email: dweeyen@gmail.com or razaq@ukm.my

courtesy of Abdul Razaq Ahmad

Realising Inclusive Education Through Child-Friendly Schools - Part 2/2

Sheldon Shaeffer

III. Inclusive education: how to do it?

A. The need to "re-structure" education systems, policies, and strategies
It should be clear by now that "failure to address inequalities, stigmatization, and discrimination linked to wealth, gender, ethnicity, language, location, and disability is holding back progress towards Education for All". Addressing these issues requires a strong commitment to - and more financial resources for - an education which is inclusive of, and responsive to, all learners.

But inclusive education represents not merely the tinkering with an education system - a few adjustments to it at the margins. Rather its focus is on the "transformation of education systems and schools so that they can cater for the diversity of students' learning needs resulting from their social and cultural background and their individual characteristics as regards learning motivations, abilities, styles, and rhythm. According to this perspective, it is not the students enrolled in school that must adapt to the existing educational provision, but rather the school that should be adapted to the needs of every student, since all students are different." Put another way, "the move toward inclusion is not simply a technical or organisational change but also a movement with a clear philosophy."

This has several implications for education systems around the world:

- They must **welcome difference and diversity** in the classroom, seeing these conditions as opportunities for, rather than obstacles to, more and better learning. They must also consider from the beginning the different needs and learning styles of individual students rather than planning for the average student, with a few tweaks, if any, for those not so average - or, in fact, for those far above average, the gifted.
- Reflecting this focus on diversification, they must **implement a comprehensive re-structuring**, from the education management information system (what it looks for and reports on), to teacher education and curriculum/textbook development (what it teaches about and how), to monitoring and assessment (what it measures in terms of student and system outcomes), to costing and budgeting (what it pays for).
- They must **worry more about the last 5%** - and accept a much larger share of the blame for student failure. To the extent that a Ministry (and Minister) of Education is satisfied with achieving a few (or more) percentage points less than universal primary education, often with the excuse that the remaining few are not educable or too expensive to educate, Education for All will not be achieved.
- They must understand the fundamental need to start early with early childhood care and development (ECCD) as the foundation for inclusion through its ability to offset family disadvantage and social inequality and lead to successful learning. Exclusive, largely urban, and elite day care programmes and kindergartens will replicate and even reinforce social exclusion; universally available ECCD programmes of good quality will even the playing field, promote initial enrolment in primary education, reduce the exclusionary acts of repetition and drop-out, and promote successful learning.

B. The need to re-structure how education is provided at the level of the school and community: child-friendly schools

Promoting diversity-responsive, inclusive education also - and perhaps even more so - requires a re-structuring of how education is provided at the level of the school and community This essentially means developing schools of good quality which are inclusive

courtesy of IDPN Indonesia

and child-friendly - not only **child-centred** in the usual sense of the word but also **child-seeking**, explicitly looking for children not in school and getting them enrolled, paying special attention to children not learning in the classroom, and therefore personalising education so that all children can enrol and learn.

The common assumption of the 1970's and 80's was that if a school were built, children would come. Many schools were therefore built - thousands, for example, through a massive school-building programme in Indonesia - but many children still did not enrol. The rather more sophisticated, post-Jomtien perspective realised that the school, to be attractive, had to be of some quality and local relevance - and then, certainly, the children would come. This did lead to higher enrolments, but the last three percent (or five or ten) still did not enrol - a number too often ignored by ministries of education fond of focusing on NER increases rather than on the absolute number of children still not in school. The post-Dakar view, reinforced by the mid-decade assessment of EFA, changed the focus once again; education systems and especially schools must be genuinely inclusive, more proactively identifying children not in school and getting them enrolled and learning - and in the process, adapting the school to the needs of individual children rather than the children to the needs of the school.

But it can be argued that most teachers prefer small and homogeneous classrooms - not too different in regard to age, social-economic status, language, ability, etc. Thus, they are satisfied with students who have "volunteered" for school, and they often have little interest in, or feel responsible for, children who are not enrolled and who are "different". (The same is true, of course, for many parents of "normal" children who don't want the school's quality diluted by learners with disabilities or from the poor or lower castes, or their own children "endangered" by others affected by HIV/AIDS.) By the same token, as we have seen, schools are also quite good at "pushing out" many of the "different" students who do get in (and call them "drop-outs") - by using a language many do not understand, by setting fees and/or other expenses too high, and by turning small disabilities into large impairments.

UNICEF has most fully developed the child-friendly school model , but it shares characteristics with many other models that are concerned with outcomes more than only academic effectiveness and measurable student achievement. Such a school must, of course, be effective in helping children learn what they want to, and need to, learn. But it must also be democratic in nature; protective and healthy for children (both their physical and psychological health); sensitive to issues of gender; welcoming of student, parent, and community participation; and, above all, inclusive.

In being inclusive, it must therefore: (1) not exclude or discriminate against on the basis of difference; (2) provide education that is free and compulsory, affordable and accessible; and (3) respect and welcome diversity and respond to it as an opportunity and not as a problem. This has several implications for what child-friendly schools must do:

- They must have **a mechanism for identifying and enrolling the excluded** - a kind of child-focused, school- and community-based EMIS which collects data on all children, aged 0-6 and beyond, their family circumstances, their health history, and their educational achievement. This might be based on local, community-level structures and data such as village government censuses, or be a function of the parent-teacher-community association or school committee, or even be the responsibility of the students themselves, mapping houses in the community with out-of-school children and working with teachers to get them enrolled.
- They must have a **healthy, protective, and inclusive school culture and learning environment** - hygienic, safe, free of corporal punishment, and respectful of difference and diversity. They must not exclude on the basis of difference (language, gender, income, caste, ability) and therefore resist the kinds of means tests - financial or academic - which are becoming more and more prevalent in schools around the region, beginning even with kindergarten; e.g., the UIS survey of schools revealed that students' performance on school entry tests was a high priority in close to 13% of schools in the Philippines and Sri Lanka.
- They must promote more **targeted, affirmative action** in regard to excluded learners. This can mean the abolition of school fees and other costs for some or (preferably) all students, targeted school food programmes, assistance with transport, support for teachers to recognize children with emotional-behavioural problems, basic counselling skills for teachers, the provision of teacher aids and other special support (so-called "assistive devices") for children with disabilities, and

courtesy of Alexander Fesenko

the remediation for children with learning difficulties such as delayed literacy.
- They must be able to **assess learning differences** among their students and then **personalise instruction** to match these differences. This can mean working in the mother-tongue of the students (even when more than one is spoken in a classroom), providing special assistance to children with disabilities (e.g., putting sight- and hearing-impaired students at the front of the room), and teaching in more gender-responsive ways in contexts where the sex of learners makes a difference.
- They must have **an inclusive school design and infrastructure**. In general, and with some exceptions (e.g., Cambodia, where there has been a special focus on the needs of land-mine victims), schools in Asia and the Pacific are seldom designed to serve the diversity of students who should be attending them; sanitation and hygiene issues relevant to the education for girls are still often neglected.

Restructuring is more than environment and architecture, of course. For an issue as broad and deep as inclusive education, the need for **a whole-school approach to change** is essential. At a minimum, this involves the follow aspects:

- **Inclusive school policies.** Individual schools, supported by their clusters and local education office as well as parents, community leaders, and their students, should base their school self-assessment and development plans (e.g., goals, targets, gaps to be filled, ways to fill them, etc.) on the principles of inclusion. This means actively looking for children in the community not in school and getting them enrolled, identifying the most important barriers to access to and learning in the school and trying to eliminate them, personalising instruction to respond to diversity among its students, and welcoming this diversity and using it creatively to improve the quality of education provided.
- **Sympathetic and knowledgeable school leadership and supervision.** Headteachers and principals, supervisors and inspectors, must not only internalise the philosophy and principles of inclusiveness but also be able to support the practice of inclusive teaching and learning.
- **Support services/personnel.** Additional support, even extra staff, should be sought to assist in the implementation of more inclusive education. These might be teachers trained in special needs education, perhaps based in local resource centres (e.g., former special schools); para-teachers, teaching assistants, and community members able to assist in bilingual education programmes; school counsellors/senior women teachers to support girls' development towards adolescence; "outreach" teachers able to provide education to children needing to remain at home; and remedial teachers, especially in early literacy, to ensure that slow learners receive the support they need.
- **In-service professional development and good practices.** Making education more inclusive and responsive to all learners, as we have seen, requires new teacher skills. In-service professional development is therefore required, and good practices in inclusive education should be sought, disseminated, and adapted to different contexts as needed. Two useful materials to support this development, designed by the UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education in Bangkok, are:
  - *Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments.* This toolkit consists of eight modules designed to help teachers understand and practice inclusion, with special reference, for example, to being inclusive in large classes and to working with children in disabilities in regular schools.
  - *Toolkit for Promoting Gender Equality in Education.* This toolkit includes a cluster of resources for use by educational planners and implementers to incorporate gender equality into

their work. It has materials dealing with gender-related definitions, the essential progression from gender equity to gender equality, a range of gender lenses, a classroom observation tool for assessing gender relations, and guidelines for developing and assessing gender-responsive EFA plans.

- **Local curriculum content.** Inclusion is made easier to the extent that the curriculum is made relevant to the local context and needs of learners rather than being completely standardised to a national and often urban-biased context. Many education systems, in fact, now mandate that a certain percentage of the curriculum in basic education (e.g., 25%) can be "local content"; but this is easier said than done. There is therefore the need to develop local competencies and skills to adapt and develop curricula to local and more inclusive contexts. The building of teachers' capacity to be co-developers of such curricula is an important part of the process.
- **Community involvement.** More inclusive education cannot be achieved without the support and assistance of the local community. This is partly a matter of attitudes; if parents do not want children with disabilities, or of different castes or ethnicity, or affected by HIV/AIDS in the same classroom with their own children - and the school does nothing to combat this exclusionary attitude, then inclusion will never be achieved. Communities must therefore be encouraged to support the education of all children living in them. Parents and other community members can also more actively support inclusive practices; they can be involved, for example, in mapping children not in school, in enrolment campaigns, and in support in the classroom for excluded groups of learners or for mother-tongue teaching and learning.

An important resource for school-level planning for inclusion is the Index for inclusion: developing learning and participation in schools which helps schools systematically to review all aspects of their cultures, policies, and practices related to inclusive education. Now adapted for use in over 25 countries and translated into over 20 languages, the Index promotes a detailed investigation of what values, such as respect for diversity, equity, community, and participation, mean for how education is provided in classrooms, schools, homes, and communities.

courtesy of Simon Baker

A special word on the importance of programmes for **early childhood care and development/education** (ECCD/ECCE). The evidence just continues to mount: good quality ECCD programmes are not only essential for young children (leading to better health and nutrition and stronger cognitive development) and their role as future adults (better employment, less dependence on social welfare systems, less involvement in criminal justice systems, etc.), but also good for children as future learners. Children with ECCD/pre-school experience enrol more, drop

out and repeat less, achieve better, and move farther up the educational ladder than children without such experience.

Such programmes are especially important in achieving inclusive education. This is partly because of the health, nutrition, and development benefits of such programmes but also because they are unstructured and informal enough to be innately more inclusive of diversity (language differences, disabilities) but structured and formal enough so that children (and their families) get used to the environment likely to be found in a school. In other words, children in such schools get more ready for school (which doesn't mean, of course, that the school does not need to get more ready - more inclusive - for its pupils). Good quality ECCD experience is therefore an essential driver of a more inclusive education system.

Annex 1: EFA and exclusion in South and West Asia

More so, perhaps, than in other parts of the Asia-Pacific region, those excluded from education in South and West Asia are more likely to be part of a larger economic, social, ethnic/linguistic, and/or religious group which is educationally disadvantaged. This has often led to the creation of a number of parallel education systems: public systems, often of dubious quality, for the majority of learners; expensive private systems for the urban elite; systems managed by NGOs, community-based organisations, and ethnic or religious groups, of varying quality (from the very poor to large systems such as those run by BRAC in Bangladesh); and an increasing number of private, for-profit schools which often promise (but cannot deliver) an English-language, international standard education to the aspiring lower middle classes of the region - in other words, not at all a comprehensive, coordinated, and quality-controlled system.

The groups most excluded from any education, or from an education of minimally acceptable quality, are particularly characterised by:

- high levels of **poverty**, including child labour (15% of girls and 14% of boys are involved in such labour), and low parental education
- large **caste- and class-based disparities** - the gap between the richest and the poorest 20% of the population in terms of number of years in education is 6.5 years in Pakistan, 6.9 in India, and 4.4 in Bangladesh
- **ethnic and linguistic barriers**, especially of tribal groups; according to UNDP's Human Development Report of 2004 , 34% of children in South Asia are in schols where the language of instruction is not their mother tongue
- **isolation** through geographical barriers of high mountain ranges and wide ocean expanses between small islands
- **difficult circumstances** such as living in huge slums, armed conflict, natural disasters (earthquakes, cyclones, tsunamis, floods), and the displacement of people both internally and between countries (with Pakistan - along with Iran - being home to one-fifth of the world's refugees and Nepal having 3.4 million stateless people)
- **gender**, universally to the disadvantage of girls and women, with South Asia having the largest number of out-of-school females in the world due to issues such as early marriage, sexual harassment, malnutrition, and the low proportion of female teachers
- **disability**, where the vast majority of learners so affected are excluded from school and even completely invisible to the education system.

The results of these various exclusionary factors are notable: high out-of-school and drop-out rates (in 2006, 13% of pupils dropped out before the end of first grade and 28% of adolescents were out of school) and, despite considerable progress in the achievement of EFA, still low enrolment rates at every level of the system. South and West Asia still account for 25% of the global total of the out-of-school population. Particularly worrisome is that household surveys indicate that current data seriously underestimate the size of the problem - perhaps by 16 million in the case of India.

Increased Pressure on Children in Primary Schools

Sabrina Kang Holthe

Millions of children throughout Asia go to private schools. Traditionally most private schools have been elitist schools for the wealthy and powerful ruling classes. However this is changing rapidly. Today all segments of the population are sending their children to private schools. The reasons are many; in some cases the parents are too poor to send their children to a regular government school that in spite of being "free" often have high hidden costs (e.g. books, uniforms, and transportation); in other cases private schools offer a faith based curriculum that appeals to many parents; they may offer a different language of instruction from the regular government schools, or; they offer a different pedagogy that "promises" parents that their children will succeed in the ever increasing competition for jobs and prosperity if they study in their school instead of a regular government school.

Here is story from an Indonesian mother and her child:

"I have a 7 year old daughter. She is now in the 1st grade of a private primary school in Jakarta. She has to face the final test on the 3rd week of May. When I asked her how she feels about this, she said that she is a little bit nervous and wish that she will have more time to prepare everything. Luckily, she does not have any problems dealing with all of the tasks from her school. But when I think about her friends and some of the other students who might struggle to learn I feel sad. I spoke to some of her friends about this, and this is what they said:

Some of the children said that they were nervous and worried, and they wish that they had been given more time to study again on some subjects so they can be better prepared.

While other children feel anxious about not being able to perform very well in the test, some of them said that they did not care at all.

When I asked these children about how they felt about staying in school for so many hours every day to study, they said that the time to stay in school was a little bit too long, much more when they were still in the preschool. They said that they are a little bit tired even though they know that being a student in the primary school they have more responsibilities than when they were still in preschool. They said that they enjoy school but sometimes they get bored with all the routine.

I decided to discuss this issue with other parents, especially about the school hours.

courtesy of Sabrina Kang Holthe

courtesy of Sabrina Kang Holthe

Most of them feel that it is a little bit too long for their small children, BUT they didn't feel that they could do anything about it since this is common in every private school now, especially in the big cities. When I asked the other parents about the school entry test (which is taken before they are able to enroll their children in the primary school), the answer were the same; that almost every private school now assesses or tests every child who wants to enter their primary school especially those who are not continuing from their preschool . Regarding the Final Test for the 1st grade students of Primary School, they said that they also felt that they could not do anything about it since it happens in every school, and it is not only in the private school but also in regular government schools, although there may be some differences in the material used for the test.

Then I go to the homeroom teacher of my daughter to get some answers and she says more or less the same as the parents. They know that this is hard for their students, but it is important for the school management as it could affect the learning achievement of their students and the ranking of the school compared with other schools.

This is a big dilemma for Basic Education in Indonesia where standard regulation on how child-friendly education has to be implemented in the school curriculum, especially for the children in their early year of primary school, still remainsvague.

In the case where preschool children, still immature and vulnerable, they should be given time to learn based on their abilities and capacities through play and exploration. This way they can develop naturally at their own pace both physically, academically, socially and emotionally. However on the other side the demands from the society (and competitive parents and schools) often force them to focus too early on developing their academic skill. This is why even more and more preschools start teaching their children academic skills at a much early age.

I think that it is a big challenge for our government how they monitor and evaluate whether the implementation of the basic curriculum has been done in an appropriate way so that the right of every child is safeguarded.

I am a mother of two children who wishes that my story can be read by those who are responsible for our national education system.

This story highlights the need to re-evaluate what is often thought of as "quality education". Education planners and managers need to realise that children must be given time and opportunity to develop other skills than academic skills in early years and that play will actually help them later in their life with their social motional, cognitive, and physical development.

You can contact Ms. **Sabrina Kang Holthe** via email: sabrina.holthe@gmail.com

War, Mental Health and Academic Achievement of Palestinian Children

Safwat Diab

It is now over than six decades since the start of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Since then, the Palestinian people have lived under high levels of military and political violence, and war. Thousands of the Palestinians have been killed and seriously wounded, and hundred thousands have been deported from their homeland. All aspects of Palestinians life including health, education, and the economy have been affected by the occupation. There is no doubt that the long lasting and ongoing military conflict has affected the mental health of the whole nation.

As it is mostly the case, children are the most vulnerable group to be affected by conflict and war. Their direct exposure to conflict and occupation can affect their physical and mental health. War will also indirectly affect children as it affects the mental health of others who are in direct contact with them, especially their care-givers (parents and teachers) which will potentially influence on the quality of their interaction. Growing up under such stressful and potentially life threatening conditions may create barriers for the child's development which leads to future challenges on individual, family and community levels.

The mental health problems (emotional and behavioural problems) many Palestinian children develop due to the continued exposure to conflict and war can either be of an externalizing and/or an internalizing type:

- Externalizing problems are characterized by overt behaviours that seem to be directed towards others including difficulties with attention, disruptive and aggressive conduct, as well as to comply with rules

courtesy of Safwat Diab

and regulations. These children often seem to lack self-control.
- Internalizing problems are characterized by covert and self-directed behaviours that involve avoidance/withdrawal, fearfulness, anxiety, and depression.

The more specific mental health problem that children develop as a result of chronic exposure to military violence and war is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Children with PTSD show symptoms of repeated re-experiencing of images and nightmares of the traumatic event that initially triggered the condition, avoidance of situations and places reminding of the event, and increased anxiety that manifests itself in problems with concentration and sleeping. As a consequence, PTSD leads to distress or impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning.

The mental health problems that Palestinian children suffer due to the continued and multiple exposures to violence and war could disturb their cognitive and behaviour competences (developmental resources) including: attention, concentration and memory – all a basis for academic learning and achievement. Their cognitive and behavioural competences become occupied with their sufferings and are devoted to struggling against and surviving their pains rather than with growth and mastery of developmental tasks.

This dysfunctional process leads to block the children's effective engagement in the academic learning process as a result they will not to be able to achieve in accordance with their intellectual potentials. Their low achievement in school will in turn reflect negatively on their self-esteem, motivation and interests. This will lead to further deterioration in their mental health and academic achievement. With the lack of care and specialised intervention, the personal, cognitive and behavioural resources of many of these children will continue to be occupied by trauma and directed to protecting their remaining self-esteem and fight against their mental health pains rather than towards academic learning and achievement. This, gradually, leads to their mental withdrawal from academic school activities even when they are physically present in the classroom.

Children with mental health problem are not excluded from schools in Palestine which is positive and in accordance with the movement towards access to quality Education For All (EFA). However, their inclusion in regular schools is not intentional but more a result of the low recognition of mental health problems by the school system – and a lack of awareness of the importance of mental health issues and they can influence children's academic achievements at the same level as physical health problems (and maybe even more). In spite of their physical "inclusion" is positive, the low communal recognition of the mental health problems continues to deprive children from effective interventions. This is not to say that the educational system does not provide services to the children with mental health problems but most available counselling programmes are not effectively addressing their needs.

Although almost all Palestinian children have been continuously exposed to military occupation, violence and war, many did not develop serious mental health problems or PTSD and are still able to function and achieve in school in accordance with their intellectual abilities. This indicates that exposure to such conditions may not be the only precondition for the development of mental health problems or PTSD. Then the question is why under such conditions some children develop mental health problems and suffer intensively leading to their academic achievement below their mental abilities, while others stay intact or recover in just a few weeks and continue to do well in school?

In answering this question and understanding more about this dynamic, we have to take into account the child's other personal and external or environmental factors that may play a role in determining the impact of military violence on children's mental health. These factors can


courtesy of Safwat Diab

have either a protective impact or produce an additional risk for the possibilities of children developing chronic mental health problems or PTSD after their exposure to military violence or trauma.

The personal factors that may protect children's mental health are the individual strengths and resources that have been developed during the earlier years of a child's life through the dynamic interaction with their surrounding environments. These strengths, such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-control, and healthy beliefs and value systems, help the child to regulate him/herself after the exposure to stress and restore balance between self and the environment within a short time and before any damage occurs to his/her mental health. Children with poor developmental resources will be more vulnerable and making them less able to self-regulate or achieve balance within themselves which will affect their mental health, especially if they also lack support from their caregivers.

The external determinants are the social support systems in the child's immediate environment. Here we are taking about the family and the school as the most important immediate settings influencing the child. The quality of the social relations between the child and others in his/her immediate surrounding environment, including: parents; siblings; relatives; teachers, and; peers, can mediate between violent events and the child's mental health. High quality social relation between the child and others characterised by warmth, understanding, comfort, support, encouragement, and acceptance can buffer or counteract the negative impact of the violence or trauma on the mental health of the child. This helps the child to devote his/her cognitive and behavioural competences towards the attainment of developmental tasks, such as learning and achievements in school.

On the other hand, low quality social relations characterised by harshness, ignorance, rejection, discouragement, and punishment do not only deprive the child from very significant protective resources but also compose an additional risk on his/her mental health.

The Palestinian children who enjoy good mental health despite the exposure to continued military violence and threats are those who enjoyed effective and supportive social relations in the home and in school.

As it became evident, the quality of the child's developmental resources and the effectiveness of their social support systems play a major role in the discrepancy in the mental health status of children exposed to similar military violence. This, consequently, leads to the discrepancy in their academic achievement. So, to protect Palestinian children's mental health and enhance their academic achievement, the application of inclusive education in schools should not only be restricted to the adaptation of the curriculum, teaching methods, teaching materials, and/or exams. It should also respond to the specific individual needs of vulnerable children through nurturing their developmental resources and strengths as well as promoting the effectiveness of the social systems the child is connected to. This can be practiced through creating a safe, caring, supportive, encouraging, and accepting school environment which enables children to manage stressful experiences successfully. Such environments will promote their readiness for academic learning.

In this context, school personnel might need additional training on how the quality of their interaction with the children can promote their developmental resources, and they need to be sensitised on how this can protect children's mental health. In addition, teachers' skills on how to act towards and interact with children under emergency situations should be enhanced. As peer social relation is an important protective factor, teachers need to create environments and conditions that intensify academic and/or recreational activities that strengthen children's peer social relations. In the realm of inclusive education, teachers' role also extends to sensitising parents about effective practices to child development under occupation, war and emergency conditions, especially how to react to the child after exposure to military violence. Besides, parents have to be sensitised about the crucial importance of warm, cohesive, understanding, cooperative and responsive family climates in protecting the mental health of their children from the impact of military violence. Last and most importantly, the occupation and military violence must end so that the new generations can enjoy good mental health and be able to develop their potentials to the maximum.

Mr. **Safwat Diab** is a Palestinian scholar and researcher based in Norway. He just completed his PhD at the University of Oslo and is currently affiliated with IDP Norway. He can be contacted via Email: safwatdiab@hotmail.com

courtesy of Safwat Diab

Enabling Education Network Asia

Contact Information [Email and Website]:

Newsletter Website: www.idp-europe.org/eenet-asia
EENET Asia: asia@eenet.org.uk

EENET Global Website: www.eenet.org.uk
Contact EENET Global via email: info@eenet.org.uk

EENET Asia Postal Address:

EENET Asia
Jalan Benda IV No. 5
Kebayoran Baru
Jakarta Selatan 12160
Indonesia

Cover picture by Simon Baker

cbm together we can do more
Sightsavers
idpn indonesia
European Union
BRAILLO NORWAY