



# Enabling Education

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Special Edition:  
Language



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**E@NET**  
Enabling Education Network

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## EENET news

### What's in this newsletter?

This year's newsletter contains a special section on the issue of language and inclusion (pages 9-24). Often, we are so used to accepting 'the way things are done', or so focused on trying to promote inclusion for specific groups of children (e.g., disabled children or girls), that we don't notice some of the most common problems in education; obstacles that potentially exclude huge numbers of children. For instance, globally, millions of children are being taught using languages they can barely understand. Many of the articles in the special section share the experiences of people who are trying to promote education in 'mother tongue' (the child's first language). They show how use of mother tongue languages at the start of, and throughout, a child's education can help prevent exclusion and drop-out, and promote diversity and reconciliation in society.

The newsletter also contains articles on other inclusive education topics. In particular, we have four pages looking at inclusion in vocational and higher education. If you have a story to tell about making education more inclusive for learners from different language groups, or for learners in vocational, higher or informal education settings, we'd love to hear from you.

### Website news

We continue to be amazed by how much the website is used.

In the last two years, the site has been used by 187,484 individuals. They live in:

- 213 countries or territories. Only Chad, Central African Republic, North Korea, Turkmenistan and Western Sahara are missing!
- over 8,000 different towns and cities around the world, though for 15% of visitors we have no record of the city/town.

We would like to hear from:

- the 335 people who have visited EENET's website more than 200 times in the last two years. That is dedication! Are you one of these frequent users? We'd love to interview some of you for the next newsletter, to find out how you use the information you get from EENET's website.

The most visited webpage is still:

- 'Early marriage and education' – an article in *Enabling Education* issue 7.

### EENET volunteers

It is becoming increasingly difficult for one part-time co-ordinator to meet the growing demands placed on EENET. So this year, EENET recruited a small team of volunteers to help with administration and specific projects. They only work a few hours a week, usually in between their studies or paid jobs, but their help has been valuable. A big thank you to Alex, Hattie, Kalpana, Nola and Olivia!

### EENET's Steering Group

This year we are reviving our Steering Group, following feedback from EENET's evaluation in 2006. The Steering Group oversees the direction of EENET's work, and ensures that the network's vision for creating conversations about inclusive education in the South is maintained. Steering Group members represent the viewpoints of EENET's user groups, its regional networking partners, its founders, and the international NGOs and donors that support EENET's work. This year we held an open application process for two Steering Group vacancies for 'grassroots' representatives. We received applications from 24 countries and we were very encouraged by the number of people interested in EENET's development. The new Steering Group will meet in September 2008.

# A focus on policy: Afghanistan

Parween Azimi

**Two decades of war destroyed thousands of schools. The Ministry of Education (MoE) says hundreds of trained teachers emigrated or were killed. But education is seen as central to the modernisation of the Afghan state. “Equal access to quality education for all” is enshrined in the 2003 constitution and National Education Strategic Plan, 2006–10. Particular attention is paid to ethnic minorities and children identified as having special needs, and to compensating girls for discrimination during the Taliban era. Parween describes a recent initiative to include disabled children in mainstream schools in Kabul.**

## Challenges

The school enrolment rate for girls has risen from a little more than 0% in 2001 to 35% in 2006.

In the 1990s a generation of children had little access to schooling. Now Afghanistan has one of the world's lowest literacy rates. The situation worsened when the Taliban outlawed the education of women and girls, although communities set up secret schools.

Enrolment targets are now 75% for boys and 60% for girls by 2015. Targets for disabled boys and girls are 45% and 30%, respectively. There has been a seven-fold increase in teacher numbers since 2001, but only 22% meet the national qualification grade.

## A focus on policy and practice

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has helped to develop education policy and has worked with schools to increase accessibility for all children. UNDP has encouraged the enrolment of disabled boys and girls. Involving parents in their children's education and challenging negative attitudes about disability are vital aspects of work.

Three mainstream schools in Kabul were chosen to take part in a UNDP-supported programme which included 32 disabled learners (the programme is now also supported by UNICEF, UNESCO, UN Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan and the MoE). Parents and teachers were initially sceptical. Teachers liked the idea of inclusive education,

but were unsure how it would work in reality. They thought extra resources would be required, and learners with intellectual impairments would be disruptive, bullied, and unable to learn.

**Inclusive education is the only way to reach the 196,000 disabled children of school age.**

## Teacher-parent relations

A problem-solving approach meant parents and teachers worked together to analyse barriers faced by disabled children. Teachers learned more about medical aspects of disability. Parents of disabled children were visited by medical specialists and teachers with advice on supporting their children at home.

Teachers and parents were not used to collaborating. Parents saw no need to participate in their child's schooling and viewed teacher involvement in the community as intrusive. But they became more supportive when they saw the benefits of the programme. Co-operation became seen as crucial for success, as parents often had to go to great lengths to bring their children to school.

## Promoting inclusive classroom environments

**Play was recognised as developing physical, social and intellectual capacity in all children.**

Resource persons were trained by the MoE (supported by UNICEF) to facilitate understanding of inclusive education. Teacher training sought

to challenge attitudes, encouraging difference to be valued and disabled children to be accepted in class. By evaluating their existing teaching methods, teachers discovered new educational approaches, e.g.:

- songs and repetition – made learning more accessible for children of all abilities
- drama – helped communicate abstract concepts and explanations to deaf or intellectually impaired children
- games – were used to develop memory and communication skills
- making school more accessible.

## Responses to the programme

The final evaluation showed that:

- Teachers learned a range of practical skills; became more creative, inventing their own methods; and developed greater awareness and more positive attitudes towards the inclusion of disabled learners.
- Parents were happy about the inclusion of their disabled children.
- Teachers and parents said children were more engaged in learning and enjoyed the new methods.
- Disabled children learned new skills and had opportunities to socialise.
- Non-disabled children became more aware of the needs of others, and learned more quickly than before.

**Parween Azimi is the focal point for inclusive education at the Ministry of Education, through UNESCO Afghanistan. She can be contacted at: [parween\\_azimi@hotmail.com](mailto:parween_azimi@hotmail.com).**

# Inclusive vocational education, Morogoro, Tanzania

Emma Machenje

**Bigwa Folk Development College (FDC) offers vocational education to students from rural areas, many of whom have not completed primary or secondary school. Daily travel is impossible for many students, so they board at the college during term time. The college promotes an inclusive approach to education – not just through its commitment to enrolling disabled students, but also through the welcoming, student-focused environment created for all learners. Bigwa’s principal, Emma Machenje, explains how this inclusive approach has developed.**

## **Our approach to learning**

At Bigwa FDC we offer students a chance to learn a skill (tailoring, carpentry, masonry, domestic electrical installations, gardening and cooking). At the same time they can continue with academic learning (languages, business studies, etc). We use our small, but well-organised library to encourage all students to read more widely, about any subjects that interest them. Every student has library sessions in their timetable. We also found that staging small discussion groups is very good for all students. On a regular basis students gather in groups to discuss what they have read in the library or learned in class, and the running of the college in general.

*“When a teacher is teaching, you can forget issues, but if you also read by yourself you can remember better.” (Dickson, student)*

When you introduce a new idea like this, it grows slowly. Students need to get used to it. We helped them develop a structure for the discussion groups, e.g., someone who is the chairperson, etc. In class, students help each other during the discussion groups. We encourage them to keep discussing outside of class, and to go to the teachers if they have any questions. They can also come to my office at any time if they want to talk or ask questions.

*“A teacher has to love his students.” (Ally, student with learning disability)*

We believe that every person is a resource who can help in the learning process. Every student can bring their ideas to the student council and to the college administration. They can advise us on improving the education we provide. We don’t like having a big gap between teachers and students. We try to close the gap. For example, we have a system of student diaries. Every day students write what has happened in the diary. At the end of the diary there is a space where they can also write their personal reflections. Students and teachers read the diary together, and then staff can make any changes that are needed, based on what the students have experienced.

*“A teacher has to be tolerant because some are slow and some are fast learners. He should be patient with anyone who writes slowly.” (Mariam, student with visual impairment)*

## **Introducing disabled students**

The Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children first introduced college staff to inclusive education ideas in 2005. We then attended seminars on inclusive education/schools, Sign Language and Braille, run by the Tanzanian Association for Mentally Handicapped (TAMH). We were taught how to work and live with disabled students and how to incorporate them in the learning process.

We decided to embrace inclusive education because we thought it was a good idea; we believe the community and education should be for everyone.

After training, we started to raise awareness within the college community. We encouraged parents to educate their disabled children, and they started to bring them to Bigwa. We still work closely with TAMH in our efforts to involve parents. TAMH is a membership organisation for parents of children with learning disabilities. A TAMH member from Bigwa’s community represents parents and follows up with the college administration every month, so that parents know what is going on. We also raised awareness among students by stressing that they should all care for one another as they would want to be cared for themselves.

## **The role of students**

When the first disabled students enrolled, we held a staff meeting to discuss how we should receive them. We decided on a system where fellow students help them – not over-protect them, but just assist them within and outside class. We asked non-disabled students if they wanted to volunteer to support a disabled student, and many of them did. They started by showing the disabled students around, helping them to wash their clothes and do other daily tasks.

To start with it was difficult, but we all persisted. Some of the disabled students were kept hidden in the community before they came here; with no social contact even simple daily tasks were a challenge for them. Some, like Omari, could not even talk. When they first enrolled they often preferred to be alone. Staff and students encouraged them to mix in daily activities, and now the disabled students have gained confidence and social skills. We currently have 15 disabled students enrolled, with a range of physical, visual and intellectual impairments, out of a total of about 75 students.

*"We all need to be co-operative and ask classmates. We don't just have to wait for the teacher when we have a question; friends can explain things to us as well." (Mwajuma, student)*

#### **Participation and progress**

We don't just leave the disabled students in class once they have enrolled. We do lots of follow up questioning to ensure they are participating. For example, I often meet with them and ask them if they have any problems. Then I sit with the teachers and we all discuss how we can solve any issues that arise.

As principal I believe I shouldn't be restricted by my working hours. My home is always open. In this job I have to be patient and listen to every student. If they get frustrated because I don't listen, then we will lose them.

Students have both continuous assessment and end of module tests, which can be written or oral, depending on their communication abilities. We keep records on students' progress. For example, our students who have learning disabilities are regularly assessed for progress in basic reading, writing and numeracy skills.



Ally and his friend Aron practise using a camera

**In April 2008, a participatory photography project was run at the college, with support from TAMH and its Norwegian partner NFU.**

The project helped disabled and non-disabled students to express their views on what makes education inclusive, and what responsibilities the students, parents and teachers have in developing inclusive education.



This photograph was taken by Omari, aged 28. He had never been to school before TAMH encouraged his guardians to enrol him at the college. He had rarely left his home and could not speak. Now, one year later, with

the support of teachers and students, Omari is learning to be a tailor and is speaking with increasing confidence. The photograph represents how the regular library and discussion sessions make use of TV and video to stimulate thinking and debate. Omari said "We get news from the TV and when I'm watching I can be well informed about what is going on around the world". During a group discussion about making education more inclusive, Omari also stated that "...parents should bring a letter to schools and say 'my child would like to study'".

A book and a short film of young people's views of education, *Young Voices* – resulting from the participatory activities carried out at Bigwa, and at schools in Tororo, Uganda – will be available from EENET later in 2008.

#### **How do we keep improving?**

To develop inclusive education in this college we have used ideas from other places and from discussions with other principals. Anatoglou FDC taught us about the need to love and care for students so that they have confidence and will stay in the college. We have used the suggestions of innovative teachers, and I have done a lot of reading into education research. Visitors to the college can also advise us and discuss issues.

And of course, most importantly, the students give us many suggestions for improvements, through the student diaries and the student council.

**Emma Machenje is Principal of Bigwa Folk Development College.**

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# Inclusive higher education in Rwanda: the story continues

**Evariste Karangwa**

**In *Enabling Education* Issue 7, 2003, we shared the experiences of a rural secondary school in post-Genocide Rwanda. Visually impaired students had not had access to secondary education, but with the unique efforts of educators and the parents' committee, the school was able to include them. The story ended with Evariste's determination to see disabled young people enrolled into Rwandan public universities. Now, three Rwandan public universities have opened their doors to male and female students with visual and hearing impairments for the first time.**

It all started with a meeting convened at Kigali Institute of Education (KIE) by Dr Mujawamariya Jeanne d' Arc, then Minister of Education. Educationalists from the Ministry and four public universities discussed how to give disabled secondary school graduates a chance to go to university. Shortly after that, *The New Times* newspaper reported that Rwandan universities would have to admit disabled students for the first time.

It was eight years since I had left the secondary school where I had struggled to include visually impaired students. These students were now pressing for university registration, and this pressure was felt in the Minister's office. So after the meeting at KIE, I was asked to lead a team of 12 people (mainly educators and activists) to help universities include these students by January 2008.

I knew it would not be easy, but the Minister was clearly different from others I'd met before. She shared a dream that few other policy-makers and educationalists in Rwanda had: "It will always haunt my thoughts, if I leave this office before I see these students in the same lecture room with their peers".

My team reviewed application and selection criteria and advised the Ministry about adjustments and equipment needed to assist disabled students. The Ministry, with the National Examination Council and the National Federation of the Disabled, provided a list of applicants with various disabilities

who had qualified but could not get into university. There were over 250, so we decided on a series of phases to introduce disabled students into the universities.

In January 2008, nine blind students were admitted into the National University of Butare on Law, Languages, Journalism and Social Science courses; five deaf students joined Kigali Health Institute for various medical studies courses; and eight students (six blind, one physically impaired, and one deaf) began education training at KIE.

The government pays their fees and living costs during their studies. In addition, a special chair was made for the physically disabled student, and an assistant hired to support him in certain tasks. A resource room for blind students was built close to the universities and the Ministry of Education funded US\$180,000 worth of educational materials for it. A compulsory information session and an awareness-raising day were planned for university staff.

The first few days in the university were shocking for the disabled students, and their non-disabled peers. Everyone knew from the media that these students would be enrolling. But sighted students were still surprised to see blind students on campus asking to share their notes, though many were eager to help. Now the first semester is almost over, and I see attitudes changing daily as staff and students experience the realities of their now

enriched community. We recently held a three-day seminar for educators to explain how a resource room can bridge the gap between students with impairments, their peers, teachers and the materials provided. We covered, for example, the use of equipment for Braille and tactile imaging in providing notes and exams for visually impaired students, and discussed sport for all students.

The association of disabled students staged a play on the 'denial of our educational rights, and its impact on our contributions to society'. Many spectators were in awe as actors depicted effective secretaries who did not need hands to use computers; and blind lawyers and mothers who executed their duties diligently.

The Minister attended, even though she had moved to a different position by then. The students knew and appreciated the crucial role she had played as "the best government cabinet member ever". They were also aware of the role they are left with: asserting to everyone their permanent right to attend higher education and showing that they simply require equal opportunity – not more or less than their peers.

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# The views of blind and deaf university students, Namibia

Cynthy Haihambo

**In addition to enrolling students with physical disabilities, the University of Namibia has enrolled three male students with severe sensory disabilities since 2003 – two are blind and one is deaf. Here, Cynthy presents these students' views during an action research project in 2005. What was it like being the first students with severe sensory disabilities at the university? What were the challenges and successes? How could things be improved?**

## Registering

*"We do not cater for blind people"* was what one student heard when he telephoned the university to ask about registration. He was told there was no space for him.

*"I felt so rejected. I felt that I had reached the end of the road. What was left for me was to remain at home and start weaving baskets"*.

He persisted and turned up anyway.

*"Staff members asked a lot of questions about me, and talked about and not to me. Finally, a member of the Department of Educational Psychology accompanied me, and it ended up as a very pleasant process."*

## Accessibility and orientation

The blind students said they found it difficult to locate and enter some lecture rooms and the library. There are many stairs and only one lift. The campus lacks touchable signposts that could help them find their way. All three students said that orientation information was inadequate and only available in print, and student-assistants lacked awareness of their needs.

*"They wore t-shirts indicating they are there to assist, but if you can't see, how can you know that they are the ones to assist you?"*

The university had no one trained in mobility assistance for blind students, so Students' Representative Council members assisted them, but they were also busy with their own registration process.

## Lectures

The students applauded most lecturers for creating a non-discriminatory environment and ensuring that they benefited from the lectures. They highlighted the following areas for improvement:

- Blind students who rely on tape-recording lectures need time to set up their equipment.
- Lecturers who write on transparencies or chalkboards need to read aloud what they write, so that everyone can follow the lectures.
- Blind students need oral information describing things that other students are able to see.
- Blind students need textbooks in Braille or audio format.
- Lecturers need to stand where deaf students can see them, if they rely on lip-reading, and not turn their backs as they talk.
- Lecturers need to provide notes to deaf students; they cannot lip-read and write at the same time.

## Learning

All three students felt they faced challenges to their learning:

- limited study materials
- a lack of suitable computer programmes
- few staff who respond to their needs promptly
- being dependent on other students who are also studying.

Lecturers often set observation, writing or reading assignments without taking the students' needs into account.

## Social life

The students had mostly positive experiences of making friends and

socialising. Other students often visited their rooms to talk, shared food, took them into town, etc. Many students said they found them inspirational. However, the students with disabilities had some negative experiences, such as being robbed and facing awkward questions from other students about how they learn and what their abilities are.

## Students' recommendations

- run a disability sensitisation campaign in the university
- re-design the application form to be sensitive to those with disabilities
- review the student loan provided by the government – it does not meet the financial needs of students with severe disabilities
- get stronger commitments from the university and government
- appoint university personnel to aid those with severe special needs
- place tactile signposts around the campus to facilitate mobility.

I was appointed as a 'guardian lecturer' for the blind students and my colleague, Pamela February, was a 'guardian' to the deaf student. We arranged for learning materials and assistive devices and briefed their lecturers. We lobbied the university for a Disability Unit and co-ordinator, and were successful in 2007. All three students graduated in 2007 and 2008.

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# How inclusive are national education policies and plans?

Ingrid Lewis

**EENET recently reviewed education policy and planning documents from Nepal, Tanzania, Vietnam and Zambia,\* to see if they mention inclusive education. If they do, what approaches to inclusive, quality education for all are being outlined? Here we summarise key issues highlighted by the review, and suggest questions you might want to ask about education policy in your country.**

Issues highlighted by the review	Questions to ask about your country's education policy
<b>Definitions of inclusive education</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The policies have rather confused definitions. Inclusive education is seen primarily in terms of disability and 'special needs'.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do your country's policies lead the way in presenting clear explanations of inclusive education?</li> <li>Do they tackle the confusion between the concepts of 'special education' and 'inclusive education'?</li> </ul>
<b>Quality education</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving quality in education is discussed, but is not given as much attention as increasing enrolment rates/access.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are your country's policies based on a strong understanding that improvements in access need to be matched with improvements in quality, if enrolment growth is to be maintained and drop-out rates reduced?</li> </ul>
<b>Holistic approach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inclusive education is mainly presented as a set of separate interventions for separate groups of learners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do policies in your country view inclusive education as a way to change the <i>whole</i> education system so that every learner is included in a better quality education?</li> <li>Do the policies present a vision of a unified system in which formal, non-formal, mainstream and segregated provision work together?</li> </ul>
<b>Resource allocation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allocating funding to inclusive education is a challenge; there is no easy way to put a price on improved inclusion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do policies in your country encourage every area of education to budget for improving inclusion, rather than sidelining inclusion issues with a separate budget?</li> </ul>
<b>Participatory data collection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Methods of collecting education-related data, to inform policy and practice development, are discussed in the documents. But data on diversity and exclusion is still often limited.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are education policies in your country built firmly on a system of information gathering involving participatory processes with children and adults across the community?</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher education</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher education is discussed in detail, but training on inclusive education is rarely mentioned. Inclusive education is presented as a specialist area of study.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do policies in your country push for radical reform to pre- and in-service teacher education?</li> <li>Do they encourage a view of inclusive education as a natural way of working for every teacher?</li> <li>Do they ask the question "who trains the trainers", and tackle the sensitive issue of well-established training institutes teaching out-of-date approaches?</li> </ul>
<b>Flexible curriculum development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Curriculum reform is prominent in the reviewed documents, but stakeholder involvement in this process appears limited.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do policies in your country encourage curriculum reforms built on stakeholder input?</li> <li>Do they support local flexibility in curriculum development?</li> </ul>
<b>Inclusive education as a rights issue</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The policies and plans do not stress the rights basis for inclusion very strongly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do policies in your country actively promote inclusion as a human rights issue and use human rights as a justification for inclusive policies?</li> </ul>

## What is education policy like in your country?

Have your country's education policies been reviewed, or could you review them, following the questions asked above? Could you write an article about policy strengths and weaknesses in relation to inclusion and quality? If you think any of the answers to the questions in the table are 'no' for your country, how could you help change the policy situation? **EENET wants to hear from you!**



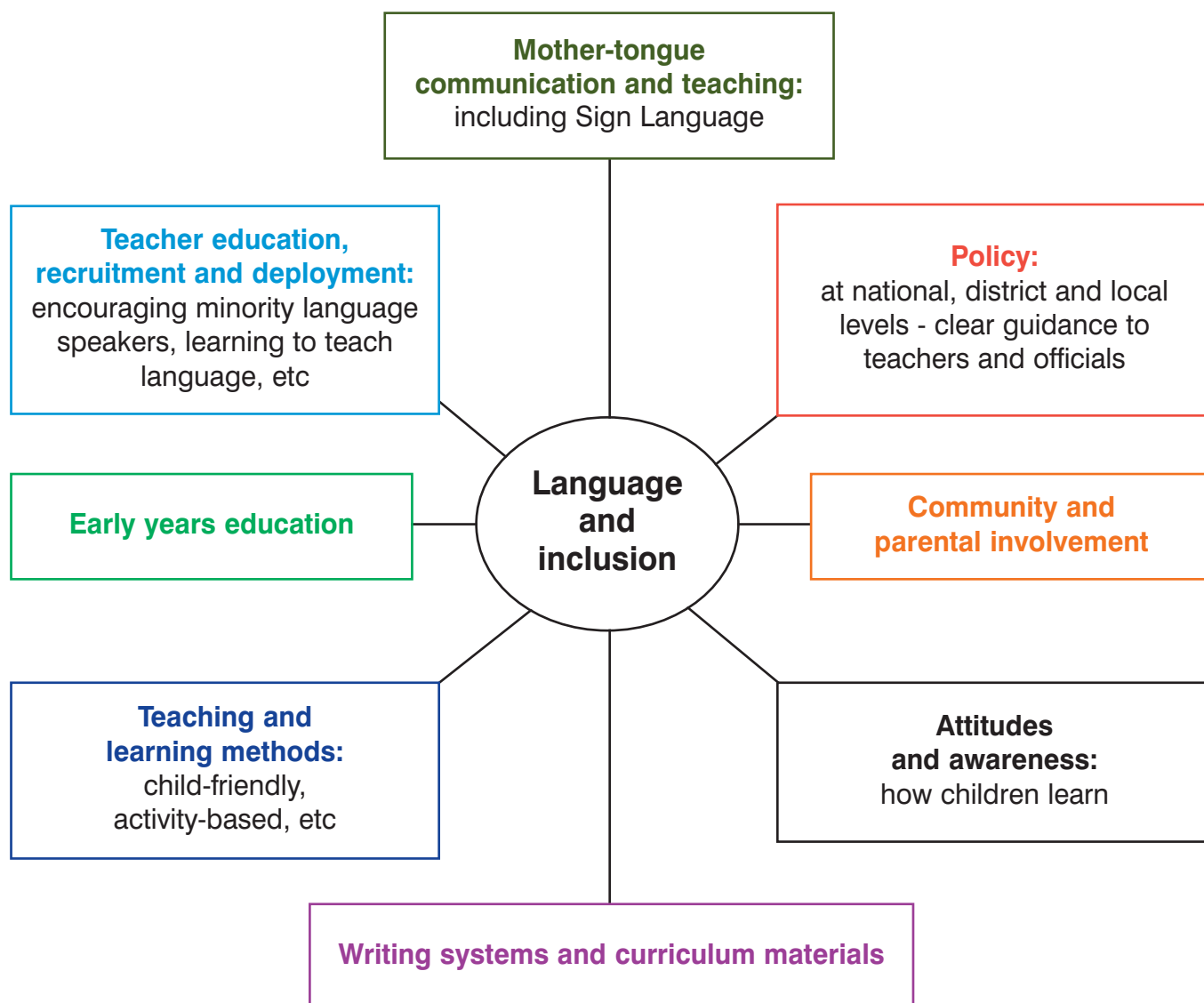
“There is no alternative to mother tongue education. It is the only means of ensuring good quality primary school education.” *Indira Chakma*



# Special Edition: Language

Imagine this ... you're six and about to start school. You're getting ready for your first day; you're excited and chat to your mum and sister using your mother tongue, the local language. You also know Kiswahili, which you speak in the market, to your friends and at church. You like speaking these two languages and have no difficulties switching between them. You arrive at school, find a place to sit and wait for the teacher. She arrives, smiles and begins to give instructions and explanations ... but you don't understand her. She's not speaking Kiswahili or the local language ... she's speaking English. What do you do?

## Key issues to consider in relation to language and education



Thanks to Helen Pinnock and Samantha Ross Hepworth for their input into this overview of key issues.

# Language as an inclusive education issue

**In this special section, we will look at language and the impact it has on children's participation and achievement in education. The use of, and teaching of, language is a complex issue. We can only provide a brief introduction through the articles in this newsletter, but ideas for further reading are provided on page 24.**

## Problems and solutions

Millions of children worldwide are still not attending school, and language barriers are a significant reason for this. Many children, especially those from ethnic minority groups, use a different language at home from that used in school. If they don't speak the school's language, they may not be accepted, may struggle to make progress, or drop out early. Girls may find it harder to cope in school than boys because they are often less exposed to other languages outside the home.

## Mother-tongue communication and teaching

Children need to learn in their own language for five to six years, before they gradually begin using a second language as the main medium of instruction. And they need to have received, and keep receiving, good quality teaching in that second language. Yet many children have to learn subjects in their second language almost as soon as they start school. Education authorities in low-income countries often think it will be too expensive and time-consuming to deliver quality education in multiple languages. They forget that current language and education approaches aren't working or helping to improve educational quality.

Increasingly, therefore, education programmes are promoting the use of prolonged mother-tongue communication and teaching, and demonstrating its benefits. Programmes often cover a range

of initiatives, from teacher education, to material production, to community involvement. But many policy-makers are yet to be convinced.

### Areas for action

- Develop effective monitoring of mother-tongue language programmes, to show policy-makers the benefits.
- Explain that investing in multi-lingual education may cost more initially, but will be more efficient long term. Guatemala saved over US\$5.6 million a year when mother-tongue based education reduced repetition and drop-out rates.

**The article from Senegal (p.14) looks at issues of affordability.**

### Policy

The choice of language used in education is often dictated by the government. They may want to ensure that everyone communicates in a common language or learns the language used in the country's economic activities, or that its use establishes a sense of national unity.

### Areas for action

- Document evidence that using multiple languages in education doesn't encourage minority groups to work against the state, instead it fosters social and political harmony and peaceful resolution of disputes.

**The article from Thailand (pp.16-17) looks at language as a tool for reconciliation.**

## Language teaching and learning approaches

Children can often switch between languages when carrying out everyday tasks like shopping. But the cognitive and language skills needed to cope with learning at school in a second language are very different. Children learn literacy and academic content best in the language they understand best. They cope better with learning a second language if they are educated in their own language first.

It is not true that children will automatically learn a new language quickly if they are surrounded by it in class; or that deaf children will get used to lipreading and communicating through writing if they experience it enough, or that this is the best thing for them to be able to function well in a hearing society.

In everyday life we learn languages in a practical way, seeing or touching items that represent new words we are learning. But in school, teachers using traditional methods rely heavily on speaking, offering few clues as to the meaning of unfamiliar words used in unfamiliar situations (e.g., words used to describe new concepts like maths). They may confuse learners by translating back and forth between local and official languages. The development of literacy is particularly difficult through a second language.

**Areas for action**

- Provide clear guidance to teachers and parents on the differences between (a) giving students good language learning skills, and (b) teaching the curriculum *in* a language.
- Promote child-centred, active learning approaches to language learning.
- Allow/request primary-level exams to be taken in different languages.

**The article about China (pp.12-13) highlights active learning approaches.**

**Teacher recruitment, education and deployment**

Sometimes teachers speak the children's language but are not allowed to use it in class. Or they



A display of children's and parents' learning materials, Uganda (see p.15)

may not speak the same language at all. Some may even have been deliberately deployed to an area where they don't speak the language to encourage education in the official language.

It can be difficult to recruit teachers who speak ethnic minority languages; students from these groups often lack sufficient education to be accepted on teacher training courses. Teachers are increasingly trained using English as the medium of instruction. But this does not make them better at teaching in English, it just makes it harder for them to learn how to become teachers.

**Areas for action**

- Create alternative routes into teaching, e.g., on-the-job teacher training to build up trainees' experience and education levels until they can get accredited teacher status.
- Develop and share lessons from pilot programmes on training primary school teachers to teach the official language as a subject.

**The article on Vietnam (pp.22-23) shows how community women have worked as classroom language assistants.**

**Writing systems and curriculum materials**

Where teachers are discouraged from using the local language, there is often also a lack of learning materials in that language, or of community-accepted script for that language. Teachers often spend time translating materials, slowing progress through the curriculum.

**Areas for action**

- Encourage local education authorities to work with minority language communities to create their own scripts and literacy materials, in line with the national curriculum.

**The article from Thailand (pp.16-17) highlights the complexity of developing writing systems for minority languages.**

**Community and parental involvement**

Too often there is a division between a learner's home life and their education experiences. For instance, family members often do not speak the language that their children are learning in, and so cannot support their children's learning.

**The articles from Uganda (p.15) and Bangladesh (pp.18-19) highlight efforts to close the gap between language use at home and school.**

**Emergencies**

Communication and teaching in mother tongue becomes an even greater challenge in emergency and post-emergency situations, especially when students are displaced to areas that use different languages for instruction. Careful planning of language issues within education in these contexts can contribute greatly to reconciliation and reconstruction.

**Areas for action**

- In emergency situations, design suitable language transition programmes for children who have been displaced.
- Accelerated learning for children who have missed school should take place in their mother tongue, with gradual transition to the mainstream school language.

It is important to continually improve language practice in education, rather than aiming for unrealistic short-term targets or sudden big changes. Progress towards mother-tongue based multi-lingual education is being made in many parts of the world. By documenting and sharing these experiences more widely, we can show educators and decision-makers that schools can meet the needs of multi-lingual societies.

# Supporting language learning in Qinghai Province, China

**China is ethnically and linguistically diverse, with 56 officially recognised ethnic minority groups, speaking up to 80 languages – in addition to the official Chinese language.\* The country has a policy stating that “every nationality has the freedom to use and develop its own language”. All ethnic minority primary and secondary schools should teach both ethnic minority language and Chinese curricula, and the right to receive education in the first (mother tongue) language should be respected. There is, however, a gap between policy and implementation. Here, Lou from Save the Children UK (SC UK) outlines work piloting a more effective way of language learning with the Tibetan minority group.**

## The challenge in Qinghai

Qinghai province in north-west China has 43 ethnic groups, of which the Tibetan ethnic group is the largest. Many families live in remote areas with poor access to basic quality education or other services. Because of its diverse population, since 2003 the Qinghai provincial education department has piloted two main approaches to bilingual education:

- Model 1: areas where Chinese language use is limited. The ethnic minority language is the medium of instruction and Chinese is introduced as a subject.
- Model 2: for areas where Chinese use is stronger. Chinese is the main language of instruction, with the ethnic minority language used if necessary. Unfortunately, this model does not respect the ethnic minority culture and language.

Qinghai lacks qualified bilingual teachers, with fewer than half able to speak and use both Tibetan and Chinese in class. In Tongde County, more than 90% of the population is Tibetan. The schools follow Model 1, and in some primary schools no teachers are able to teach Chinese.

Some are not qualified teachers and have had only short-term pre-service or in-service training. The lack of teachers means they have very heavy workloads, making it impossible for them to undertake additional training.

Evidence from Tongde shows that, in Chinese language lessons, teachers have poor language skills. They can only focus on grammar, vocabulary and reading; and teaching styles are built around rote learning, resulting in students' disinterest in learning languages.

Some parents, government officials and educators do not value learning Tibetan, and challenge the development of bilingual education. They see Chinese as the language of economy, the one that will help their children pass exams, get a higher education, and provide a better economic future for the family. School administrators and teachers have also objected to bilingual education. Some fear that studying Tibetan will slow the learning of Chinese, and that any textbooks made available in Tibetan will not contain the curricula needed for national examinations. Insufficient textbooks means teachers' time is spent translating Chinese materials, which are not always culturally relevant to maintain student interest.

## Finding solutions

With the support of Qinghai provincial education department, SC UK set up a language learning resource centre in Douhesuo primary school, Tongde County. It is a pilot project illustrating a different approach to language education. The centre is based on the internationally accepted idea that children need to listen and speak *before* they can learn to read and write a second language. The centre is designed to:

- recognise and support understanding of Tibetan language and culture
- help Tibetan students improve their Chinese language skills, especially their listening, speaking and reading abilities
- improve students' life skills
- promote community participation in education through managing and running the centre.

## Child-centred learning

The project team wanted the centre to increase second language exposure and give children a chance to hear and practice Tibetan and Chinese in a natural learning environment, rather than in a formal classroom. The centre offers space to develop thinking skills and the ability to work together – a child-centred learning environment that enhances peer interaction and child-environment interaction.

\* The official language is called Putonghua (also known as Mandarin). For simplicity, it will be referred to as 'Chinese' throughout this article.

## Lou Chunfang

From the beginning, the staff stressed that the centre is a place where children can decide what to do, with volunteers setting up spaces for children to experiment, practise, and learn.

### *Using volunteers*

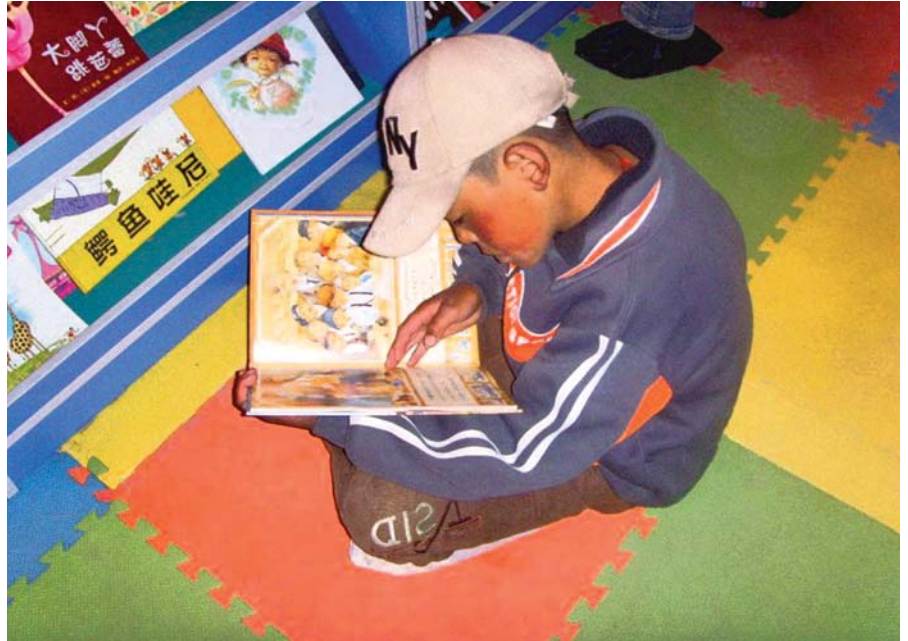
We needed to find people with Chinese and Tibetan language skills who were open to finding new ways of working with children. Fifty-three Tibetan students from Qinghai Normal University were selected as volunteers. They went through intensive training to ensure a common understanding of the function and aims of the centre; to improve their skills playing with and working with children; and to help them design and plan language learning activities and materials. In groups the volunteers developed lesson plans using local resources – they identified themes relevant to students' local contexts, using an innovative theme-based language approach.

### *Selecting learning materials*

Language learning resources were selected and designed to develop children's interest in learning Chinese and Tibetan. Books using very simple Chinese were chosen, as were DVDs of children's stories, songs and chants in Tibetan. Since few quality Tibetan children's books are available, we trained volunteers to make Tibetan language learning materials, such as big books and picture stories using role-play and games.

### *Developing life skills*

Children's life skills in Qinghai Province are very low; their traditional lessons cover only Tibetan, Chinese and Mathematics. In class they usually only listen to the teacher.



A child reading a book at the language learning resource centre

And the teacher shortage means not enough attention is paid to students' overall development; only to academic performance and exam technique. Consequently, schools are often perceived by parents as irrelevant, not teaching useful skills or conveying useful information. This contributes to high absenteeism and drop-out rates. Teachers in many schools do not value the potential input of parents, and parents have no opportunities to understand the importance of education for their children, believing it to be solely the school's responsibility.

SC UK therefore felt the centre could improve children's life skills and language skills, through well-planned, interesting activities. We also thought it could develop ways to involve communities in their children's education. We designed activities to improve children's ability to understand themselves and improve their self-esteem, by providing opportunities to succeed and to communicate better with others.

The activities are developed around themes. Children are asked what they would like to learn about. All themes are related to the children's real life, e.g. health and hygiene, environmental protection and science. Community members are involved in the whole process, from centre design through to on-going management. The centre also provides many relevant books for community members, for example, books on agriculture.

The project will now concentrate on demonstrating to more teachers and education authorities just what a difference active language learning can have on children's educational successes.

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# The benefits of mother tongue education in Senegal

## Rudy Klaas

**The benefits of learning in one's mother tongue are no longer disputed. But is it affordable to implement mother tongue as the first language of learning and teaching for all learners? And if it is, where can one find the necessary expertise and ideas to make it happen? In this article, Rudy shares the story of a mother tongue project in the small village of Diembering, south-west Senegal, which may begin to answer these questions.**

### Project background

In 1998, school teachers in Diembering attended a mother tongue literacy teacher training event run by SIL International. The teachers then convinced their headteacher to try out the methodology in their school. This first initiative was a success, and convinced parents that their children would learn better in their mother tongue. The mother tongue programme that followed sought to reduce the high failure rates in schools that resulted from students' poor development of basic literacy skills in their first few years of education. In 2002, the government launched a separate experimental multi-lingual education programme in five locations, including Diembering.

### Changes within Diembering school

- 11 out of 18 students who were using mother tongue in all lessons passed their exams. In the two classes using French for instruction, only two and four students respectively out of 20 passed.
- Mother tongue classes are more student-centred, with more use of interactive teaching methods. On-going monitoring shows that students are more confident and enthusiastic.

### Differences between Diembering and other schools

Other experimental mother tongue classes in the area were less successful. During my on-going monitoring visits, students, teachers and education officials have suggested reasons for this:

#### "They spoke to me in the language I understood"

In addition to using non-local language teaching and learning materials, the Diembering school heavily supplemented the students' reading with local language materials produced by SIL.

#### "We had lots of fun things to read in our own language"

SIL supported the creation of a library of mother tongue reading books, folktales, health books, etc, for use by students and the community. Other experimental classes did not have this resource.

#### "You encouraged us."

Diembering school staff received support from SIL consultants in literacy and education, while the other schools did not.

#### "The multi-lingual education training seemed to lack something."

Some teachers and trainers felt the initial training provided by the government was insufficient, and not followed up with in-service training. Next year, SIL plans to provide monthly in-service training in Diembering so teachers can network and build relationships and discuss successes and challenges.

#### "We already knew you."

The community in Diembering already had a strong relationship with SIL linguists and literacy consultants who had lived there for nine years doing research, providing translations and facilitating mother tongue literacy classes, so the idea of mother tongue classes in school was welcomed.

### Affordable and worthwhile?

Detailed figures are not available yet on how much the experimental mother tongue classes cost per student. However, these classes in Diembering produced almost four times the level of exam passes than the traditional classes – but certainly didn't cost four times as much to run. So the mother tongue class approach is clearly worthwhile.

The cost of producing traditional class books is not that different from producing the same book translated into a mother tongue. Translation costs don't have to be high either; some work can be done voluntarily, if time is taken to find motivated translators.

Students from mother tongue classes often complete their learning goals faster than those in traditional classes. This can reduce overall education system costs, especially if it reduces the number of students who repeat years.

We need to think:

**If a country spends less money on education that doesn't work, it costs them more in the long term than if they spend more money on education that does work!**

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# Language for effective family learning, Uganda

**Leni Wild**

**Everyone says parents are a child's first and best teachers. One project in Uganda suggests this is true. The project reveals the extent to which language is key to effective learning for the whole family. Here, Leni explains how Education Action, a UK-based international NGO, is working with Literacy and Basic Education (LBE), a local partner in Northern Uganda, to develop new ways of placing language at the heart of learning for children and parents.**

## Background

A study by LBE in four districts in Northern Uganda found a key reason why children were failing to learn, progress and complete primary schooling was because of the early use of English as the main language of instruction. As a result, at home it became impossible for parents to effectively support their children's schooling – by motivating them or helping with homework – as they too did not understand the main language of instruction.

The Government now recognises the advantages of mother tongue learning. It introduced a 'Mother Tongue Education Policy' for the first three years of primary education, but currently lacks the resources to effectively implement it. The policy aims to provide mother tongue materials (e.g. translations of the national curriculum) for all 52 local languages spoken in Uganda, but so far they are only available in six. Many teachers also lack training in how to integrate mother tongue and English language instruction.

This is where the Education Action/LBE's project, funded by the UK's Department for International Development, comes in. With a particular focus on girls' and women's education in Northern Uganda, we are facilitating the development of a range of learning activities and resources in mother tongue languages. The project places language at the heart of our strategy to promote education, and we hope to expand this in future programmes.

## Education resources in local languages

Most textbooks are printed in the official language (English). However, with our support, resources for children and parents have been translated into local languages. Our project integrates local languages, materials and stories into lessons. Activities with children in the Yumbe and Gulu districts include: making games out of local materials, such as counting games using everyday objects found at home; story-telling in local languages; and composing riddles that carry meaningful messages, appropriate to the local context.

## Activities with parents

We provide classes for parents, conducted in mother tongue. These help them to understand and support their children's education, and to participate more effectively in their local communities, for example, improving their ability to secure better prices for goods at market.

The literacy classes for parents are based on the curriculum for primary years one and two, adapted to suit parents' learning levels. Parents learn the same concepts that their children do at school, so they can support their children's learning. Classes are usually held in the afternoon, after domestic and work commitments have been completed. They often take place under a tree in the school compound or at a parent's home. Parent educators lead the classes. They are volunteers, selected from within their communities, who receive training in adult learning techniques (including use of mother tongue languages).

Participation is key – parents are consulted on the timing and content of classes to ensure that the education meets their needs. Clear communication is needed to enable effective participation, which is why the use of mother tongue has been so important for delivering effective education to parents. This work has led to the development of resources and activities in local languages, including numeracy booklets and parents' story booklets in the Acholi and Aringa languages.

*"The idea of parents and teachers educating children together is the way to forge ahead in the education of our children". Deputy head teacher*

## Life-long education

While learning official languages remains important, our project reveals the need to go further than just encouraging mother tongue communication and teaching during the early years. A few years of learning in their mother tongue is not enough for most children to acquire the language skills needed for learning across the curriculum – including learning an official language. And building effective literacy skills for adults will remain a challenge unless the language of instruction in adult education is given more attention.

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# Language for national reconciliation: Southern Thailand

**Patani-Malay is the language spoken by 83% of people in the four southern provinces of Thailand. On-going violence and political unrest in this area are largely a result of language issues and identity crisis – Malay identity, as reflected by the Malay language used in daily life, is not officially recognised by the government. Compulsory education in the Thai language results in poor attendance and achievement among Patani-Malay-speaking students. They gain few working skills and have limited prospects for higher education and employment. Many fear education is being used to destroy the local language and religious identity. In this article, Suwilai outlines a mother tongue based bilingual education programme designed to help Patani-Malay-speaking children retain their Malay identity at the local level and achieve a Thai identity at the national level.**

## Introducing the programme

A nine-year participatory action research programme is being conducted by Mahidol University linguists and a Patani-Malay-speaking research team. It covers eight school years, from Kindergarten to Grade 6, with one year of preparation. The programme supports Patani-Malay-speaking children to speak, read and write well in both Patani-Malay and Thai. Patani-Malay is used as the medium of instruction from Kindergarten to Grade 1, so that children gain the necessary skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing in their mother tongue, before learning Thai. Patani-Malay Studies, in which Patani-Malay language is the main component, is also taught throughout primary school. The Education Act allows up to 30% of the curriculum to be locally determined in this way.

## Programme objectives

- 1 Language Situation Survey – to gather information for programme planning.
- 2 Awareness-raising about the benefit of mother tongue based bilingual education. Mobilising partners for the programme activities, e.g., a local research team of academics and village scholars, including four experimental schools.

- 3 Develop a writing system for Patani-Malay using Thai-based script, building on academic as well as native speaker acceptance and technical feasibility. This will help children to transfer to using Thai as the main medium of instruction.
- 4 Develop a curriculum, using Patani-Malay and Thai as the medium of instruction, which contains more local content, yet maintains educational standards.
- 5 Develop teaching materials and graded reading materials in Patani-Malay and materials to support students' transfer to using Thai.
- 6 Recruit and train bilingual education staff: teachers, writers, local culture experts, workshop organisers, etc.
- 7 Evaluate learners in the experimental schools and compare with those in other schools.
- 8 Build co-operation among governmental and non-governmental funding and technical assistance organisations, influential people in society and the mass media.
- 9 Develop and establish a supportive national language policy.

## Challenges

- Using the local spoken language in education as a way to promote development, peace and prosperity is a new idea that some find hard to accept because there are few previous examples of such work in Thailand.
- Many people think that language and script are the same, and that script is more important than the spoken language. This proves problematic. Jawi script (based on Arabic script) is commonly used in the region for writing, but this means the writing is done using Central Malay language, which is different from Patani-Malay language. People use Central Malay language in religious contexts where they can memorise texts, but this is not suitable as a medium of instruction in schools for children who speak Patani-Malay as their mother tongue. Efforts to use Thai script instead have been controversial. Opponents believe such efforts could make the teaching and writing of Jawi script redundant. Those in favour of using Thai script believe that Jawi script is currently inadequate for writing Patani-Malay, but that Jawi will continue to be taught in religious schools, while Thai-based script will only be used in secular schools. The bilingual programme will consider incorporating the Jawi script at a later stage.



## Suwilai Premsrirat

- The pilot schools are in an area experiencing political unrest and violence, making it difficult to monitor progress of the programme.
- Despite the support provided by the programme, the benefits of teaching Patani-Malay within the formal education system are not yet fully understood by some authorities dealing with security and education issues. Even though higher level government officials generally accept bilingual education, some do not have confidence in the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction through to the higher grades.
- The biggest challenge is how to incorporate bilingual education principles into the curriculum and teaching/learning materials.

### Successes to date

Preliminary results from the preparation year are encouraging.

- The local research team has been actively involved in developing written language, curriculum, lesson plans, teaching materials, songs and graded reading materials in Patani-Malay and Thai. The team consists of language teachers, educators, linguists, Islamic committee members, village scholars and young co-ordinators in various communities.
- Awareness-raising activities have been conducted among communities, academics, educators, officials and religious leaders.
- Consultants from SIL International have provided technical assistance.
- Governmental and non-governmental funding agencies such as UNICEF and Thailand Research Fund have promised funding for the first three years.



A villager writing a story using Thai-based Patani-Malay

- Academics, government officials, mass media and members of the public have offered encouragement and support, agreeing that this type of education will meet the needs of local people and assist with national reconciliation and internal security for the whole country.
- New teaching materials for oral and written Patani-Malay have been carefully developed by a group of native speakers, including local teachers and educators from various fields.
- Teachers of Patani-Malay have been given detailed training, from planning lessons to teaching and managing bilingual classrooms.
- The popular Total Physical Response method (TPR) is being introduced along with other new techniques in child-centred education. TPR involves students initially remaining silent while the teachers use the language being taught to instruct them to make physical actions.
- People from Malay-speaking communities have been actively participating in the programme, especially in producing graded reading materials about local stories or local culture and knowledge.

“Using Patani-Malay as the language of instruction from Kindergarten to Grade 1 will spare little children from the confusion and fear of having to learn in a language that is not their mother tongue. The change should have been done long ago.”  
*School Director, Narathiwat province.*

### Creating a sense of security

Despite the obstacles, this project has earned the trust and confidence of the local communities. They value the efforts made to preserve their language and culture and to respect their Malay identity in education. They see this as a move towards lasting reconciliation and understanding. Ultimately, they feel more secure in the education system. The future success of the programme relies on the continued support and good faith of all participants. This project lays the foundation for significant improvements in the prospects of the children in the south of Thailand. It is in line with growing awareness that the linguistic and cultural rights of minorities demand the attention of governments and policy-makers, who have a responsibility to preserve and protect such diversity, wealth and heritage from abuse or extinction.

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# Community participation in mother tongue based multilingual education in Bangladesh

**In Bangladesh, most children from indigenous ethnic minority groups are disadvantaged by an education system that does not recognise their language, culture or future livelihood realities. They are taught in Bengali, a language they do not understand. Many quickly lose interest in school and leave. In the Chittagong Hill Tract region, the drop-out rate for indigenous children is more than 60%. In this article, Mathura outlines a project that promotes quality, inclusive education, with a strong focus on mother tongue education, and which has community participation throughout.**



Local materials are used to help children develop their language skills

## Project background

The Chittagong Hill Tracts region has diverse cultural and ethnic communities, and complex administrative structures. Until 1997, decades of political unrest had left the region isolated from the rest of the country and from development initiatives. Around half the region's population belongs to various ethnic indigenous communities, the rest are Bengali. Historically, teachers did not speak the same language as their students and the host community, and they were not officially allowed to use local languages, only Bengali.

In 2006, Zabarang Kalyan Samity (ZKS), a local NGO, initiated a project called *Shishur Khamatayan: Children's Action Through Education* with the support of the Save the Children Alliance.

The project aims, by 2011, to ensure indigenous children receive a quality, inclusive education and participate in decisions that affect them, supported by national, regional and local policy and practice. It is being implemented in three sub-districts – Khagrachari Sadar, Panchari and Dighinala – in 60 pre-primary centres with 1,259 indigenous children, of whom 631 (50%) are girls. The government department of education and the local government authority are closely involved.

The project promotes indigenous children's education by first developing a strong foundation in their own mother tongue, through multilingual pre-primary centres. They then gradually learn the national language as they make the transition to mainstream schools. This approach allows children to progress well through school, maintaining their own language, culture and identity but ultimately still gaining access to the official language.

*"I attend school regularly because my teacher teaches me in Tripura [language]. I like to play with the colourful ball very much. I want to be a school teacher when I grow up."*  
*Apusmoy, age 5, Salkatal Pre-school*

There are two main areas of work within the project – education and child participation.

## Education component

The project introduces a two-year multilingual pre-primary programme in target communities, with children enrolling at the age of four. The students are taught entirely in their mother tongue in the first year, to build their confidence. Preparation for literacy through oral practices is introduced. Gradually students enter into pre-reading, pre-writing and subsequently pre-maths activities. In the second year, children begin to read and write in their mother tongue and continue with oral mother tongue. In the second half of the year they also begin to learn oral Bangla.

## Community participation

As multilingual education is a new concept in Bangladesh, we started the process with community involvement activities, such as consultations and awareness-raising activities. We involved community leaders in all activities. People initially had varying perceptions of multilingual education.

One community leader thought "...the concept of mother tongue based education is a great idea for the betterment of indigenous children's education, but it may take as long as fifty years to make this dream a reality".

## Mathura Bikash Tripura

We involve and respect the leaders of each language community we work with. For the Chakma language development process we established relations with the Changma Academy, an organisation of Chakma language practitioners. For 'Kokborok' – the Tripura language – we involved the Bangladesh Tripura Kalyan Sangsad, a national organisation of Tripura people. And for the activities relevant to the Marma language, we involved the Marma Unnayan Sangsad as well as a number of monks who practise both reading and writing the language regularly.

*“There is no alternative to mother tongue education. It is the only means of ensuring good quality primary school education.”*  
*Indira Chakma, a female leader in Khagrachari District*

We prepare drafts of education materials then organise community reviews, workshops and exhibitions. A broad cross-section

of the community reviews the materials and suggests changes and/or additions, e.g., decisions on the issues of spelling, standard uses of scripts, themes for the teaching/learning materials for multilingual pre-schooling, etc. Community members oversee each level of activities. Each community has a Centre Management Committee which has overall responsibility for the management and monitoring of the pre-primary centres. They also encourage parents to send their children to school regularly, oversee the construction of centres, appoint teachers and monitor their attendance, inform the parents about the monthly parents meeting, visit the centres at least three times a week, and maintain the building.

### Child participation component

This component of the project was only started in 2008, and focuses on active learning and citizenship. Quality, inclusive education emphasises the active participation



An example of alphabet charts developed by the project

of all children in the classroom and school, helping them to participate in decisions that affect their education and issues within the community and wider society, thus creating an environment where their voices are heard. The project aims to achieve this through awareness-raising and capacity-building, involving children, school teachers, parents, and community members. We have facilitated the formation of 60 child organisations, and 10 'community learning circles' to ensure child participation in the decision-making processes of their communities. Children are receiving training on leadership.

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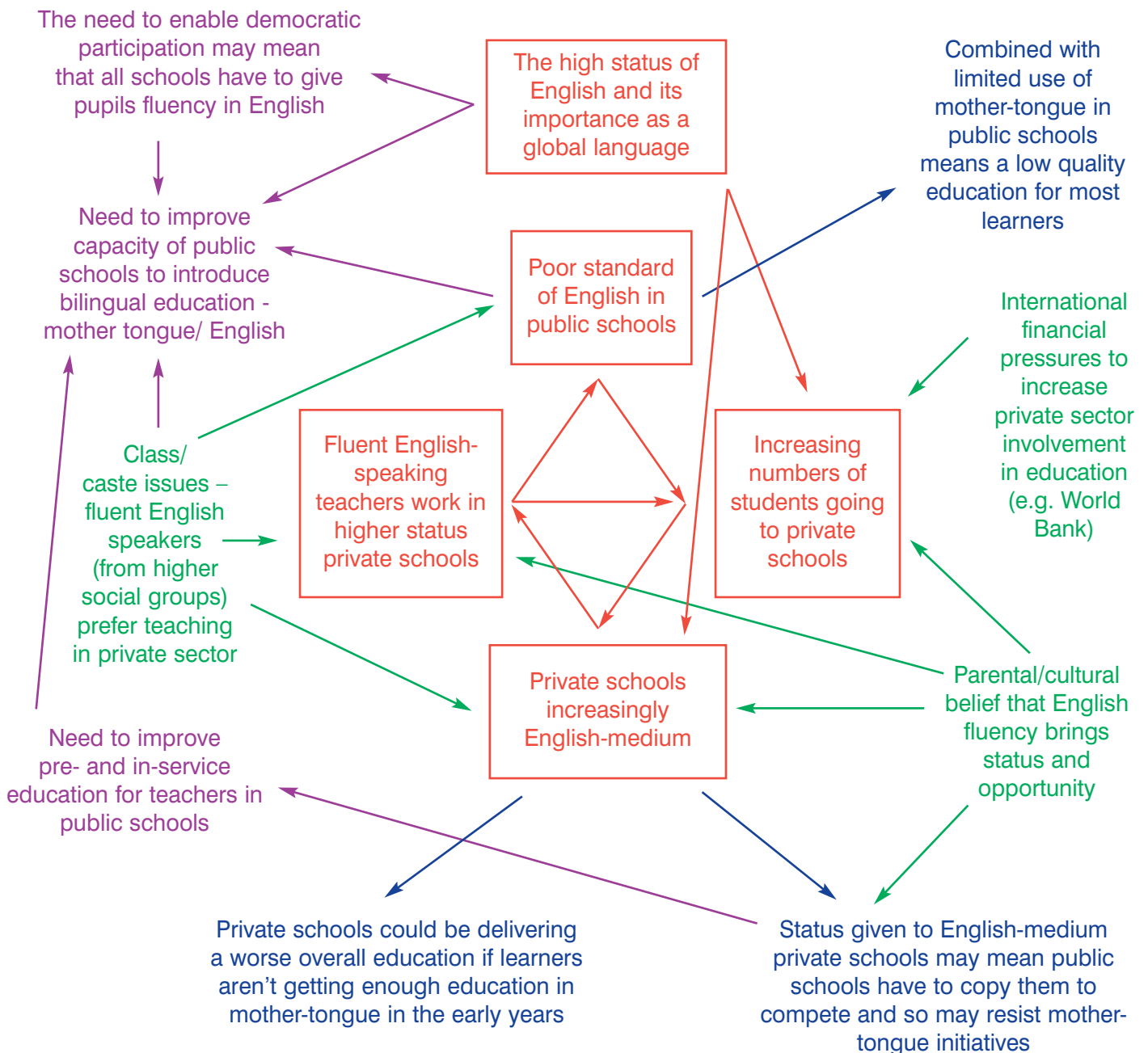
Children participating in a community celebration

# The growing demand for private education in English: a barrier to inclusion?

Tony Booth

In this article, Tony Booth discusses a barrier to learning and participation that is often overlooked. Even when public schools promote mother tongue teaching, private schools may continue to only teach in English. The status of English becomes closely linked with a perception that private education offers a 'better' education. Many families feel pressured to pay private school fees they cannot afford, even in schools where the teachers are not fluent in English. Tony argues for the development of policies for inclusive Education for All that recognise the growth of English as a global language, but resist pressures for private education.

## 'Better' education?



## The expansion of mother tongue teaching in many countries is held back by the status and power of national and international languages, particularly English.

### Language, democracy and rights

Citizens often receive contradictory messages about the status of their home language. The South African constitution gives equal status to 11 official national languages and promotes eight unofficial national languages, including Sign Language. Yet English, the sixth most common language used in homes, is used throughout government, the media and the legal system. To participate in that democracy you need to learn English.

The power of English globally and its dominance of the Internet means that English is important for understanding the world and the local impact of global changes. To support the democratic rights of their learners, schools need to teach through a mother tongue, perhaps help students to learn a different national language, and teach them to become fluent in English.

Rights to free public education and to learn in a family language, set out in United Nations documents (see p.24), are widely disregarded. Much evidence suggests that school fees are a major cause of poor attendance, drop-outs and gender inequality in education. So when powerful international organisations, like the World Bank, pressure poorer countries to expand private fee-paying education, they are encouraging the denial of these rights and undermining Education for All. Countries fund public education through taxation. Often, the wealthier elites send their children to private schools, and are unwilling to pay enough taxes to help develop quality free education for poorer families. Such elites have often attended English-medium schools, and may resist giving

others the economic and social privileges of being fluent in English. The development of inclusive Education for All depends on overcoming such difficulties.

### Lessons from India

This example from India illustrates how the high status given to both English and private education adds to the complexity of trying to expand mother tongue teaching.

Public schools in Tamil Nadu teach through Tamil, the state language. I visited schools in Chennai, the state capital, in 2005 with Indian colleagues. In one primary school the headteacher showed us the resource room for teaching English, full of special language-teaching computers donated by an American company. The computer programmes were irrelevant to the lives of local children, and delivered in strong American accents. Children were struggling to learn English from these programmes and from teachers whose English was not fluent. Some families from the area, who could hardly afford the fees, had sent their children to private English-medium schools, believing they were paying for a better education, even though the teachers' English in these private schools was also not good.

Caste still plays a significant role in Tamil Nadu. So-called upper caste families are more likely than those from lower castes to have been educated in private schools and to have been brought up in families where English is sometimes used at home. Even though teachers' salaries are higher in the public sector, teachers from upper caste families may not want to teach in public schools, so they keep their English language skills in the private sector.

### Drawing conclusions

The success of public schools in Tamil Nadu, in appealing to diverse communities, depends in part on how well they can teach English. Yet the development of a public education system which promotes mother tongue education, the learning of a national language, and quality English teaching is a huge challenge. As well as improving pre- and in-service teacher education, it requires making available the language skills held by English-speaking elites so that they can benefit *all* students. Through these ways the growth of private education may be resisted. Such challenges are widespread in economically poor countries around the world. They require dedicated action by those working within schools and communities, and those developing national and international policies.

**Tony Booth is Professor of inclusive and international education at the Department of Educational Research, Canterbury Christ Church University, CT1 1QU, UK. Email: [tony.booth@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:tony.booth@canterbury.ac.uk)**

The diagram on p.20 shows the links between the high status of the English language, the growth of private education, and attempts to develop teaching and learning in mother tongues.

Is your country facing similar challenges?

What status does English (or another international language) have in your country, and does this affect efforts to promote mother tongue teaching/learning? Is private education becoming more or less popular? Why? Can you adapt the diagram to show the situation in your country?

Please share your diagrams with EENET!

# Introducing multilingual teaching in Vietnam

Nguyen Thi Bich and Dinh Phuong Thao

**Vietnam has 54 ethnic minority groups with different languages, making up about 13% of the population. Education enrolment and completion rates are lower for these groups, as are their performance results. This article outlines Save the Children UK's (SC UK) work to promote increased use of mother tongue based multilingual teaching approaches, to give ethnic minority groups a better chance in education.**

## The situation in Vietnam

The majority group in Vietnam is the Vietnamese-speaking Kinh. Vietnamese is spoken as a first language by about 90% of the population. The constitution states that all ethnic groups have the right to use their own languages, yet the language of instruction in schools is Vietnamese, and only eight minority languages are taught as school subjects. Only 28 languages have writing systems, and few books exist outside the main minority languages, such as Tay, Muong, Cham, Khmer and H'mong.

There are few ethnic minority teachers, due to the difficulties they face progressing through the education system. And in highland areas, where many ethnic minority groups live, children from several

language groups are often present in one class, creating additional communication challenges for teachers, parents and children.

Vietnam's overall primary enrolment rate is 94.5%, but the rate for ethnic minority children is just 80%. Completion rates in 2006 were 89.7% for Kinh but only 67.9% for children from ethnic minority groups. This gap is even bigger for lower secondary completion rates (76.5% for Kinh and 45.5% for ethnic minority children).<sup>1</sup>

Most children excluded from lower secondary education are girls, especially H'mong girls. SC UK has evidence that drop-out rates for ethnic minority girls are also significantly higher than for boys from these groups.

## Supporting education for minority groups

Between 2004 and 2006 SC UK tried to support minority children's learning by selecting ethnic minority women and girls to be bilingual pre-school teachers. They worked in the children's mother tongue and introduced them to Vietnamese. Fifty women were then supported to become fully recognised pre-school teachers. However, such mother tongue language support in pre-school is still not enough to help children cope with using Vietnamese in primary school.

Vietnamese is seen as the language of national unity, so reducing its use in education is a sensitive issue. Nevertheless, the government has responded to research linking ethnic minority children's education difficulties with the unfamiliar language of instruction. It is now looking for practical ways to deliver primary education in multiple languages, testing locally relevant approaches to fit Vietnam's situation.

SC UK has now developed a new phase of multi-lingual education in pre-schools and primary schools. The programme has been designed and implemented jointly by community members, teachers and local education officers, and Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) specialists.



Children with teaching assistant



Teaching and learning materials, and children's work, displayed in a classroom

Local languages will be introduced as languages of instruction as far as possible in pre-schools and primary schools. Vietnamese will be introduced more gradually as a second language, so that children can learn to use it without being overwhelmed.

### Community teaching assistants

SC UK is again working with primary- and secondary-educated women in highland communities, building their skills as teaching assistants in pre-schools and primary schools. These 'key mothers' work with teachers to ensure that lesson content is relevant. They help adapt the curriculum and textbooks to the local reality, and support the use of active play and learning techniques. Key mothers introduce new teaching content to pupils in the local language. The teacher then introduces some key words in Vietnamese relating to that content. To prepare children for primary school, Vietnamese language is introduced verbally and children are familiarised with Vietnamese letters.

The main focus of the teaching assistants is on developing – in genuine partnership with teachers – active learning activities that will stimulate and improve children's mother tongue and Vietnamese language skills. Teachers improve their local language skills through language courses and supported communication with local people. Where children from multiple language groups are in one school, classes are re-organised into multi-grade classes which contain just one language group. Teachers and teaching assistants are trained in multi-grade teaching.



Children with teaching assistant

### Results of this approach

Children in the programme are showing much more engagement in class and greater familiarity with Vietnamese than children taught solely by a Kinh teacher. It is expected that children learning through this approach will progress more easily through school.

Education and donor officials are seeing the benefits of this multilingual team-teaching approach. As a result, ethnic minority teaching assistants have been recruited to another large aid project to improve primary education for ethnic minority communities.

Different initiatives on mother tongue based multilingual education are now being implemented in Vietnam by various organisations.

It is expected that MoET will adapt these initiatives to develop a comprehensive approach to quality education for ethnic minority groups in Vietnam. Monitoring and evaluation of the various pilot initiatives will be essential for providing evidence to justify further investment in mother tongue based multilingual education.

**Nguyen Thi Bich is Deputy Programme Director and Dinh Phuong Thao is Education Programme Manager for SC UK in Vietnam.**  
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<sup>1</sup> The World Bank studies 'The determinants of learning outcomes: An analysis of data from the 2007 testing database.'

## Useful publications: Language and inclusion

### **Girls, Educational Equity and Mother Tongue-based Teaching**

Carol Benson/

UNESCO Bangkok, 2005

This publication looks at the links between girls, education and exclusion; the barriers to girls' inclusion; and mother-tongue based education approaches for improving girls' participation.

See: [www2.unescobkk.org/elib/publications/Girls\\_Edu\\_Equity/Girls\\_Edu.pdf](http://www2.unescobkk.org/elib/publications/Girls_Edu_Equity/Girls_Edu.pdf)

### **Highland Children's Education Project: A pilot project on bilingual education in Cambodia** UNESCO, 2005

This report documents the model of bilingual primary education provided in the north-eastern province of Ratanakiri. It looks at issues of policy, and the implementation and expansion of the project.

Available from:

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001395/139595e.pdf>

### **id21 Insights Education No.5, 2006**

This edition focuses on children's right to learn in their own language. It contains articles about Bolivia, Vietnam and India; and also covers issues such as gender and language, and the cost-effectiveness of mother-tongue teaching and learning.

Available in English, French and Spanish from: [www.id21.org/insights/insights-ed05/index.html](http://www.id21.org/insights/insights-ed05/index.html)

### **Mother Language First** Khagrachari Hill District Council, Zabarang Kalyan Samity, and Save the Children, 2007

This report documents the work carried out on mother-tongue based multi-lingual education in Bangladesh.

Available as a PDF file on CD or by email from EENET

### **Mother Tongue Education is Best**

Kathleen Heugh

This short article provides a useful overview of the issues surrounding the use of mother-tongue in education, including its impact on learning outcomes and cost-effectiveness.

Available from: [www.hsrb.ac.za/HSRC\\_Review\\_Article-14.phtml#](http://www.hsrb.ac.za/HSRC_Review_Article-14.phtml#)

### **SIL International's website**

SIL is an international linguistic NGO. SIL language teams live within language communities and study phonetics, phonology and grammar. They help develop written scripts, produce mother-tongue materials, and run literacy/education programmes. Their website contains a range of articles, guidance documents and research papers on multi-lingual education and mother-tongue literacy.

See: [www.sil.org/literacy/](http://www.sil.org/literacy/)

Many of the documents listed here are available on the Internet. If you are based in a Southern country and are unable to access these documents online, contact EENET and we will put them onto a CD-ROM for you, or send you print-outs.

### **Key articles from international conventions**

"In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language."

#### **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (Article 30)**

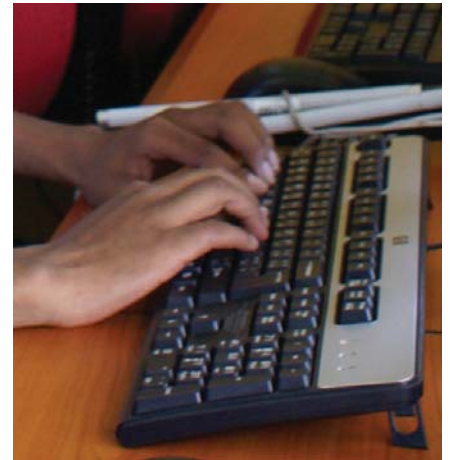
1. "Children belonging to the peoples concerned shall, wherever practicable, be taught to read and write in their own indigenous language or in the language most commonly used by the group to which they belong. When this is not practicable, the competent authorities shall undertake consultations with these peoples with a view to the adoption of measures to achieve this objective.
2. Adequate measures shall be taken to ensure that these peoples have the opportunity to attain fluency in the national language or in one of the official languages of the country.
3. Measures shall be taken to preserve and promote the development and practice of the indigenous languages of the peoples concerned."

#### **Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, 1989 (Article 28)**





## Writing for EENET



**We hope you have found the articles in this newsletter inspiring. But do you feel moved enough to write about and share your own inclusive education experiences? We know that many people are interested in sending articles to EENET, but they often don't know where to start with preparing their articles, or feel too nervous to send us what they have written. So here are some ideas to help you get started.**

### Who can write for EENET?

Everyone! We encourage *all* our readers to consider writing an article. We really want authors who have direct experience of inclusive education – for instance, as a teacher, a student, a parent, a youth worker, an activist or a campaigner, a local education officer, or a local NGO member of staff.

### What if you have never written an article before?

Don't worry! You do not have to be an experienced writer. EENET can help you to develop your ideas and edit what you write. If you send us an article, which we think is not ready for publishing, we will offer ideas, or ask questions to help you collect suitable information. Don't be upset or put off if we ask you to do more work on your article. Every article we publish goes through a process of rewriting and editing.

### Who decides which articles to publish?

EENET has an editorial team – the co-ordinator and several volunteer editors – which assesses articles and supports writers with advice and ideas. Each year we try to publish articles:

- from countries not featured before
- about aspects of inclusive education that have received less attention
- written by or including the views of children and parents
- that communicate in different ways – e.g., using diagrams, photos or drawings, instead of just words.

Every year we receive more articles than we can publish. So we cannot guarantee that your article will make it into the newsletter.

### What can you write about?

- You can write about any issue related to quality, inclusive education.
- We encourage you to write articles that give practical advice. Avoid writing just about the theory of inclusive education. Instead, we want to know what you did, what you learned, and what impact this had on children's education in your situation.
- Look carefully at previous newsletters to get an idea of the type of articles we publish.
- We particularly need more articles about inclusive education in relation to:
  - refugees and emergency situations
  - early childhood development
  - secondary and higher education
  - life-long learning and vocational education
  - private schools
  - non-formal education.

### How much should you write?

The maximum is 600 words for a one-page article, or 1,200 words for a two-page article – less if you want to include photos or diagrams.

### How should you present your article?

- Email it to us as a Word document, with a font size of at least 12pts.

- If you do not have access to a computer or email, you can type or handwrite an article and post it to us.
- You can also send us articles on audio-cassette or in Braille.
- Ideally, articles should be written in English. But if you send us an article in another language, we will try to find a volunteer translator to help us.
- Remember to tell us your full name, postal address, telephone number and email address, and write a short paragraph about yourself – who you are, what your job is, etc.

### Other advice

- Use simple language – short sentences; no abbreviations, jargon or academic-style referencing.
- Break up your article into small sections, using sub-headings or text boxes.
- Include quotations, e.g., from students in your school.
- If you are using people's names, get their permission first, or change their names in your article.
- If you send us a photo, make sure everyone in the photo (and the photographer) has given their permission. If there are children in the photo, ask their parents or guardians for permission to publish the picture.

**We look forward to reading your articles!**

# Building bridges, Russia

Denise Roza, Pam Mendelsohn and Yulia Simonova

**Perspektiva is a Russian NGO that promotes inclusion in education and in society for people with disabilities. Its inclusive education programmes are supported by UNICEF and USAID. It has organised film festivals around disability and inclusion since 2002 and understands the power of images. One of its goals is to empower people with disabilities to be leaders and to bring about change in schools and the wider community. In this article Denise, Pam and Yulia explain about a project that helped students to acquire new skills, take pictures about their lives, and learn about and from each other.**

In November 2005, 10 students, aged 12 to 15 years old, from school '1961' in Moscow, spent five days undertaking photography activities. Disabled children were paired with non-disabled children. Disposable cameras were donated by Kodak, and a local photo printing shop put the photos onto CDs, so that each day the photos could be shared and discussed.

## Self-portraits

Children were first given instructions and a questionnaire. Each child was asked to bring a favourite photo from home to the first session. They shared their photos and explained what they liked about them. In pairs they were then asked to take photo self-portraits. They discussed what they liked about these photos, e.g., the lighting, the positioning of the person, what the photo could tell us about the person, etc. Each pair chose three or four of their best photos.

## The school environment

On the second day, the children went around their school and discussed how disability-friendly it was, and then took photos to illustrate these issues. They discussed their photos and again chose the best photos of the day.

## Favourite people and places

The third task involved taking a picture of each pair's favourite place or places, and their favourite person in school. They talked about these choices and were asked to explain why they had chosen them.

## Interesting objects

On the fourth day the children collected objects that they see every day at school. They considered how to make these very simple objects appear more interesting by using light, colour, or a different angle in their photos. Again photos were taken and discussed.

## 'My best quality'

Finally, each child completed the following statement on a piece of paper: "I know it's not good to boast, but my best quality is .....". They discussed their answers and how they could take a photo that would convey these qualities. Again they selected the best pictures taken that day.

## An exhibition

At the end of the project the children considered what type of pictures are usually chosen for exhibitions; and which photos they should show at their event: what will interest the viewers, should they choose an everyday scene or object, or an unusual one, etc? They made their selections, created captions for them, and then exhibited them.

## Follow-up

School administrators and teachers have been very enthusiastic about the project. So in March 2007, Pam trained five other photographers and Perspektiva staff in this approach. The photographers also participated in a disability awareness training session led by Perspektiva. Thus, the activities could be duplicated and carried out with 30 more children in three other schools, with on-going advice and support.

Zhenya photographing her friends in Red Square



**"This photo workshop taught me to 'catch the moment'"**

Zhenya Shirkina is 12 years old and is in the 7th grade. She does everything with her feet, including eating, writing and painting, as she was born without arms. She has many friends at school, takes classes in drawing and painting, and dreams of becoming a professional photographer or an interpreter.



Zhenya practising his photography skills

**“I now see the world differently.”**

Zhenya Lapin is 13 years old and uses a wheelchair. He is also in the 7th grade, and loves dancing, reading and travelling to the sea. Zhenya sings in the UNESCO choir in Moscow. He wants to become a Hollywood film director. For the photography project, Zhenya and his friends visited an orphanage for children with severe intellectual disabilities, which they found to be a very moving experience.

In May 2007, Giacomo Pirozzi, a UNICEF photographer, led further activities. He has worked with children affected by traumatic events in Beslan and Chechnya. Children aged between 14 and 17 years old were invited from six inclusive schools in Moscow. Working in pairs, they spent three days learning about the camera, light, images, colour, etc, and practising taking photos.

On the fourth day they had a field trip around Moscow. Beforehand the children discussed where they would like to visit and what topics they could photograph. They chose to visit tourist sites, but also an inclusive school and a residential institution for children with intellectual disabilities. The next day, they reviewed all of the photos as a group. Photos were projected onto a large screen.

They chose the best photo and were given other awards, such as one for best work by a pair.

#### Results of the project

- Many barriers between disabled and non-disabled children were broken down. The project demonstrated how positive attitudes and friendships can grow in a short time using a very simple, but powerful tool – a camera.
- Photos have been exhibited at schools, in parks, at the American Embassy, and at the Marriott Hotel. Members of the donor and business community and children’s relatives could view and discuss the photos. Since January 2008, the project has become a weekly activity in two Moscow schools.

- Extensive media coverage of the project has led to people donating cameras so that more schools can develop similar activities.
- This popular project has been replicated in six cities in Russia. In two cities it has become an annual summer camp activity.
- The project has very effectively promoted the message that all children can and must be educated together.

The activities demonstrate to other children, teachers, school officials and parents what disabled and non-disabled children can do when given a chance to live, work and learn together.

We recently developed a photo-illustrated guide on how to organise similar activities, which is available in Russian on Perspektiva’s website [www.perspektiva-inva.ru/files/downloads/building\\_bridges\\_brosh.pdf](http://www.perspektiva-inva.ru/files/downloads/building_bridges_brosh.pdf), or by writing to the address below.

**Denise is Founder and Director of Perspektiva. With its 50 disabled and non-disabled staff members, Perspektiva has developed and implemented training, outreach, public education, advocacy and information-referral activities. Yulia is Perspektiva’s Education Project Manager. Pam is a professional photographer and disability rights activist, based in the USA.**

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**denise@perspektiva-inva.ru**  
**<http://perspektiva-inva.ru/>**

## EENET interview



**Agururu Primary School in Tororo, Uganda, used to be a regular school with a special unit for disabled children. In 2005 and 2006, its headteacher, Owerodumo Cortider, attended inclusive education training events in Kenya and Zanzibar. Here she explains to Ingrid Lewis of EENET, the changes that have happened since that training, and the successes and problems the school has encountered. Owerodumo also highlights the challenges of teaching children who speak many different languages, including Sign Language.**

### **What is Agururu Primary School's history?**

The school opened in 1980. Then in 1996 the special unit was started with six children – two were deaf and four had learning disabilities. There are now 718 children altogether, and 174 have various disabilities.

### **Why did you decide to develop it into an inclusive school?**

The training received at the study visit to Kisumu, Kenya, and at the Zanzibar workshop on inclusive education helped. When I came back I called all the teachers together and told them about inclusive education. I have tried to change their attitude, such as encouraging them that we can all learn Sign Language.

### **What do parents of non-disabled children think about your inclusive school?**

We have asked them to accept that this school is inclusive. Parents could send their non-disabled children to another regular school in town, but they still send them here. And our enrolment is higher than the other school. Some of the non-disabled children now know Sign Language. They interact with deaf and disabled children quite well.

### **How did you prepare the parents for an inclusive approach?**

We've helped parents to see that deaf people have a future. We have four deaf adults working in the school who teach the children Sign Language. Parents are encouraged when they see this and have changed their attitudes.

We trained the parents of about 30 children in Sign Language because children often face communication barriers at home. The training was sponsored by an NGO in Tororo. Some parents come from a long way, so they can't afford to do that without help. Then the NGO withdrew the sponsorship, so unfortunately the parents' training has stopped for now.

### **How did you prepare the teachers?**

The attitude of teachers is most important. When the deaf children first come to school they are often aggressive; they can't communicate and get frustrated. They need sympathetic teachers who can communicate with them. A project funded by Operation Days Work, Norway, has trained 10 of our teachers in Sign Language.

### **Why do some students travel so far to attend your boarding school?**

Children who simply cannot get an education in their local school can come here; their local schools won't take them. If deaf children in particular don't come here, there are few other options. The girls' dormitory is full. But if we don't take the children then they won't go to school at all.

### **What are the challenges you still face?**

*Attitudes:* Some of the non-disabled children still have negative attitudes towards disabled children. We let them know that everyone is here to learn, and learning is a process. However, attitudes towards disability often originate in their families and

this is a challenge to address. We also find that some parents of deaf children still want their children educated in separate schools.

*Language:* The use of Sign Language in class is a challenge; we currently have six Sign Language trained teachers for 14 classes. These trained teachers go to assist with signing in another class when the subject is very tough. But they can't help in every class all the time, they have their own teaching to do. If a teacher just works to translate in class they won't be paid; they need to fulfil a full teaching load to get a full teacher's salary. This hinders our efforts, though we try to bring in other interpreters if we can. Some hearing pupils are learning Sign Language as well.

English is the national and official language. A policy change in 2007 means that from primary years 1 to 3, children should learn in their mother tongue language. But so far retraining for this new approach has only happened for teachers of primary 1. The problem is we have so many languages – about seven in this school alone. So we are still teaching primary 1 in English. Yet we know that some parents don't speak English, so students can't practise at home.

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**Head Teacher**  
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## Regional news

### EENET Eastern Africa

In September 2007, EENET's Co-ordinator arranged a two-day meeting in Nairobi with people who were interested in starting a local inclusive education information-sharing network. Most were from Kenya, but there were also participants from Somaliland and Sudan. During the first day participants discussed the concept of inclusive education, while on the second day they looked at networking ideas and activities. It was decided that a network should be started, but it should aim to cover the whole East Africa region, not just Kenya.

Following the meeting a small voluntary management committee was formed for the regional network, and an email discussion group started. This email group has been very active, with members from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and even outside the region. Discussions have looked so far at: the role of special schools in the development of inclusive education (see p.31); inclusion for deaf students; involving teachers more in

If you live or work in East Africa and would like to join this discussion group, please email: [eenet\\_eastern\\_africa\\_subscribe@yahoogroups.co.uk](mailto:eenet_eastern_africa_subscribe@yahoogroups.co.uk). Please remember to write a short note explaining your involvement in inclusive education and why you want to join the group.



Participants at the Nairobi meeting

inclusive education debates; and the need for sharing African experiences. They have also shared information about events and publications.

EENET Eastern Africa would like to hear from anyone willing to volunteer to help with expanding its networking activities. This might involve, for instance, helping to distribute leaflets and EENET's global newsletters, or assisting education stakeholders to write about and share their experiences. Please email the Evena Massae on [easternafrika@eenet.org.uk](mailto:easternafrika@eenet.org.uk) to discuss your ideas. And of course the network would also like to hear from any organisation interested in providing financial support for its inclusive education information sharing work.

### EENET Zambia

EENET Zambia was established in 2007. This national network is led by Francis Simui and Charity Namitwe, who both studied on the M.Ed. Inclusive Education course at Manchester University. While in Manchester, they learned about, were inspired by and did voluntary work for EENET, before returning home determined to support better information sharing in their country.

EENET Zambia aims to promote dialogue on inclusive education, to highlight the challenges being faced by Zambian communities and enable them to develop their own solutions.

Although still a new network, Sight Savers International Zambia has generously loaned office space, and a small website has been started. EENET Zambia is looking for articles and longer documents about

inclusive education in Zambia to publish on the website. So if you have ideas and experiences to share, or if you could assist with developing the network's activities or funding, please contact EENET Zambia.

Email: [simui francis@googlemail.com](mailto:simui francis@googlemail.com)

Tel: +260 978 882 952

Website: <http://enablingeducationnetworkzambia.googlepages.com>

### REDEinclusão – Portuguese-language network

Associação Cidadãos do Mundo (Citizens of the World) has now launched its Portuguese language inclusive education website - REDEinclusão.

See: <http://redeinclusao.web.ua.pt>

The site contains a growing collection of inclusive education documents in Portuguese, as well as a newsletter. The first edition of the newsletter features articles from Angola, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Portugal.

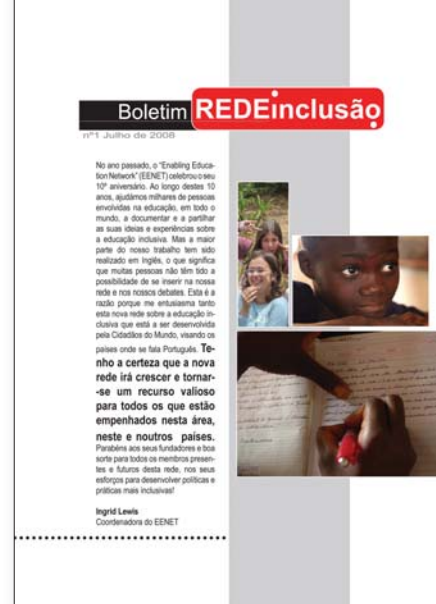
If you would like to contribute an article in Portuguese to the REDEinclusão newsletter or website, or if you have any other questions for the network, please contact:

Associação Cidadãos do Mundo, rua Gago Coutinho, 6, 2710-566 Sintra, Portugal.  
Email: [redinclusao@gmail.com](mailto:redinclusao@gmail.com).

You can read an interview with Ana Maria Benard da Costa about her work to set up REDEinclusão on page 30.

### EENET Asia

The Asia network continues to grow and has now published five newsletters. A regional email group has been set up. To subscribe, please email: [EENET-Asia-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:EENET-Asia-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)



## REDEinclusão – Inclusion Network

**In 1998 we interviewed Ana Maria Benard da Costa about her voluntary work to translate EENET's newsletter into Portuguese. Now, ten years later, Ana Maria has led a project to develop an inclusive education information network for teachers, parents, students, policy-makers and NGOs in Portuguese-speaking countries. In this interview with EENET, Ana Maria explains the process, and the challenges, involved in establishing this network.**

### **When and why did you decide to start a Portuguese language inclusive education information network?**

This decision was inspired by two different sources. First a friend who had worked in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, with street children proposed that we set up of an NGO called 'Citizens of the World' to carry out projects to promote health, education, citizenship and other human rights.

At the same time, EENET organised a meeting in Portugal to discuss its regional networking plans. I presented the idea of promoting inclusive education in Portuguese-speaking countries, and Windyz Ferreira presented a similar idea for Brazil.

These two ideas were combined, and a group of people from different fields (health, education, social development) came together to create Citizens of the World and its project 'Inclusion Network', inspired by EENET.

We then tried to find funding (which took about three years), and now after six years we have finally been able to launch the network.

### **What did you do during those six years?**

We created a working group of people committed to inclusive education and willing to volunteer on this project. We met and discussed website ideas. We also searched for relevant documents and people from Portuguese-speaking countries who could

share information and experiences. We translated and adapted materials that we received.

### **Who has helped to make this project happen?**

We, of course, received help from our team members (mostly teachers and teacher trainers), plus NGOs, parents and teachers who have sent us their experiences for our newsletter. EENET's newsletter is our basic source of inspiration and EENET's Co-ordinator has supported and advised us. The Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education, UNESCO, and the Ministry of Family and Child Development in British Columbia have also let us use their documents. The University of Aveiro helped with the production of the website and the Gulbenkian Foundation provided essential funding for our activities.

### **How did you find the people who have written articles for the newsletter?**

Most of the contacts started with the people and organisations on EENET's mailing list. Many of these people then sent us other contacts, and others have been suggested through our team members.

### **It has been a very difficult process – what motivated you even when the task seemed impossible?**

It was really a very difficult and sometimes lonely process to get REDEinclusão launched, as nowadays I am retired and working from home. Team members could

not meet often as they live in different parts of Portugal and most still have full-time jobs. Email has been my greatest communication tool, but I felt very deeply how difficult it is to work on a project like this when you are not part of an organisation or do not have colleagues nearby.

What motivates me to pursue this task is the belief in the importance of this communication network and the need to not disappoint all the people who helped me along the way.

### **What has caused you the most stress?**

The most stress has been caused by the difficulty in getting responses to my requests for people to share their inclusive education experiences. At one point, I thought that I was never going to receive any stories that could be used in the newsletter. I now realise how difficult it is for teachers to write about their own real experiences.

### **What has been most enjoyable so far?**

The most enjoyable moments have been our team meetings where I felt supported and could share and discuss ideas, and when I received emails expressing support for the project or sending stories for the newsletter.

[See page 29 for more information about REDEinclusão, and Ana Maria's contact details.](#)

# Debating the role of special schools in inclusive education

**Dimity Taylor on behalf of the Eastern Africa e-group**

**There is still much disagreement around the role of special schools in the move towards inclusive education. This topic was recently debated by EENET Eastern Africa's email discussion group (see page 29 for more information). Here, Dimity Taylor, the first co-ordinator of the e-group, highlights key points raised by debate participants.**

The discussion highlighted reasons for promoting an inclusive approach to education, including: the social and education benefits for children with and without disabilities; and the support that inclusive education gives to the development of an inclusive society. It acknowledged the need to not simply ignore special schools in this process, but to find creative ways of uniting special and inclusive education systems.

## Using special education to build skills

Some contributors discussed the idea of using special schools or classes for several years to build learners' specific skills, such as Braille, Sign Language and other language skills, before including them in mainstream classes. One contributor illustrated how the 'inclusive school' she had attended – which she felt provided her with 'academic inclusion' but not the skills and confidence necessary for 'social inclusion' – could have been supported by special education. This example is from the USA but nevertheless offers important lessons for our activities in Eastern Africa:

"I am deaf...I did have sign language interpreters for...classroom lectures, but never for social interactions in the cafeteria or on the playground... I had very little social interaction with most of my hearing peers for most of my education... perhaps I would have stronger social skills...if I had had the opportunity to attend a 'deaf school' for at least a few years of my early childhood."

Contributors felt that this transitional approach could draw on the positive characteristics of special schools – such as ensuring children with disabilities can interact with and support each other – as well as on those of inclusive education. This approach can be particularly useful if the special classes are located within mainstream schools, and all children share break times, recreation and other activities. Such a process can help prepare the mainstream school for the inclusion of children with disabilities. However, effective planning for this transition is essential, to ensure that inclusion, and not merely integration, takes place.

## Developing 'specialised' inclusive schools

The idea of developing mainstream schools that specialise in the inclusion of children with a particular impairment has been debated (e.g. a mainstream school that specialises in including children with visual impairments). This would not exclude children with other (or without) impairments from attending the school, nor prevent children with that particular impairment attending other schools.

This approach could build on a positive aspect of special schools; the fact that some (though not all) are centres of excellence in a particular area of education. However, every child has the right to attend school close to their home, and specialisation can be expensive. So, 'specialised' inclusive schools

need also to be resource centres that support 'non-specialised' inclusive schools to educate children with specific impairments in their community school.

## Creative, flexible solutions

The discussions demonstrated the need for constant creativity and flexibility in developing education systems that cater for the needs of *all* learners. Every approach developed in a particular situation must be constantly re-evaluated and altered to ensure it really addresses every learner's needs – and it may not work as well in another situation.

The debate reminded us that if inclusion is not done well it can cause more problems for the children we are trying to assist. Participants suggested there is no need to draw a hard line between special schools and inclusive approaches to education. Both systems have benefits, and drawbacks. Some felt that inclusive education is not about 'inclusion at all costs' (i.e. putting children into a situation where they are not able to learn). Inclusive education is about ensuring the best education, both socially and academically, for *all* children, including, but not limited to those with disabilities.

The discussion reinforced the need to develop a system that uses the best elements of all approaches to education; blended in a way that addresses the needs of, and upholds the rights of, every learner.

This is a controversial issue. What role, if any, do you think special schools can, should or have played in the development of inclusive education? EENET wants to hear from you!

## Useful publications

### **Education's Missing Millions: Including disabled children in education through EFA FTI processes and national sector plans**

World Vision, 2007

This report details the findings of a study to assess how the Education for All Fast Track Initiative Partnership is tackling the challenges of disability and inclusion in education.

Available from:

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Website: [www.worldvision.org.uk/server.php?show=nav.1780](http://www.worldvision.org.uk/server.php?show=nav.1780)

French translation available on

EENET's website:

[www.eenet.org.uk/other\\_langs/documents.shtml](http://www.eenet.org.uk/other_langs/documents.shtml)

### **Family Friendly: Working with deaf children and their communities worldwide**

Deaf Child Worldwide, 2008

This book aims to raise awareness of the role of parents and families in the lives of deaf children.

It provides examples of families, service providers and deaf people working together. The book takes an action research approach and contains case studies and practical guidance.

Available from:

Deaf Child Worldwide

15 Dufferin Street

London EC1Y 8UR, UK

Tel: +44 (0)20 7549 0454

Fax: +44 (0)20 7251 5020

Email: [info@deafchildworldwide.org](mailto:info@deafchildworldwide.org)

### **Inclusion in Action DVD**

ZAPDD and MoEVT, with NFU/Atlas Alliance, 2008

This 95-minute DVD with workbook documents inclusive education experiences in Zanzibar. It can be used for awareness-raising and as a practical training tool.

Available from EENET.

### **Inclusive Education:**

#### **Where there are few resources**

Atlas Alliance, (updated 2008)

This revised edition of the book first published in 2002, looks at inclusive education concepts and strategies in resource-poor contexts. It has been updated to present a wider perspective on inclusive education – looking beyond the school and beyond disability issues. It also contains a new selection of case studies.

Available, after October 2008,

from EENET and from:

The Atlas Alliance

Schweigaardsgt 12

PO Box 9218 Grønland

0134 Oslo, Norway

Fax: + 47 23 16 35 95

[atlas@atlas-alliansen.no](mailto:atlas@atlas-alliansen.no)

### **Making Schools Inclusive:**

#### **How change can happen.**

#### **Save the Children's experience**

Save the Children, 2008

Case studies from 13 countries illustrate inclusive education approaches that: target specific groups of vulnerable children; build inclusive school communities; promote change throughout an education system; and address financial barriers to inclusive education. It aims to inspire others, by showing what can be achieved. It also highlights important lessons learned from the challenges that Save the Children has faced in different situations.

A limited number of printed or CD copies are available from EENET. Download PDF version from [www.eenet.org.uk/theory\\_practice/theory\\_practice.shtml](http://www.eenet.org.uk/theory_practice/theory_practice.shtml)

### **Teachers for All – with a focus on learners with disabilities**

This website is an interactive teacher training tool featuring text, video and audio files about the practicalities of inclusive education from a disability perspective. It is a joint project with universities, teacher training colleges and ministries in Kenya, Norway and Uganda.

See: [www.intermedia.uio.no/teachersforall](http://www.intermedia.uio.no/teachersforall)

### **Young Voices: Young people's views of inclusive education**

Åse Driveness and Ingrid Lewis/Atlas Alliance, 2008

This resource consists of a short DVD and a booklet. The booklet contains photographs taken by disabled and non-disabled students in Tanzania and Uganda. The students use the images to explain their views of education – what makes them feel included or excluded. The DVD shows some of the students discussing their views of education and engaging in their daily activities at school. Available from EENET after October 2008.

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