



# Teachers for All: Inclusive Teaching for Children with Disabilities



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## Summary

- There is a global shortage of teachers, particularly of teachers who are sufficiently trained and motivated to include children with disabilities (and children from other marginalised groups) in regular schools. Yet such inclusion is vital for achieving Education for All goals and bringing the millions of currently excluded children into education.
- In order to develop the skills, experience and confidence to be inclusive of all children, teachers need to learn about and practise inclusive education during pre-service and in-service training, and they need to be given opportunities for continuing professional development (which extends beyond simply attending training courses) throughout their careers.
- Governments and donors need to strengthen investments in educational improvement, and prioritise improving the educational opportunities of marginalised children and communities.
- Policy-makers and trainers responsible for developing and delivering teacher training and for recruiting teachers need to understand inclusive education and its importance in any drive for educational improvement. They need to grasp the concept of inclusive education as a twin-track approach which can improve the quality of education for all yet also provide specialised support where needed for children with disabilities.
- Every teacher needs to learn about inclusive education, from day one of their training. This should be achieved by embedding inclusion, rights and equality throughout all training and not simply covering these issues through stand-alone courses.
- Every teacher also needs opportunities for inclusive education practicum during their training, and to feel supported (for instance by specialist colleagues) to continue trying new ideas throughout their employment. There needs to be an effective balance of theoretical and practical learning for teachers at pre-service and in-service stages.
- Inclusive education training and continuous professional development need to be designed and delivered with inputs from diverse stakeholders, in particular community members and professionals with disabilities, to give a stronger sense of reality to teachers' learning experiences.
- The teaching workforce needs to be more diverse, and targeted efforts are needed to ensure that people with disabilities can train as teachers, find work and be supported in their jobs.

# 1. Introduction

Globally we need more well-trained and motivated teachers.<sup>1</sup> Good teachers can help ensure that every child learns to their full potential from an early age and enters adult life well-equipped to be active citizens and support the development of their community and country. Many countries do not have enough teachers, let alone enough teachers who have received sufficiently high quality pre- and in-service training and access to continuing professional development.<sup>2</sup> The lack of well-prepared and motivated teachers impacts on the enrolment, participation and achievement of all children – but can be particularly detrimental to the education of children from marginalised groups, who may need some extra encouragement or assistance to reach their educational potential.

Teachers are often simply not trained or supported to teach children with disabilities, which makes these children among the most marginalised in terms of educational opportunity and attainment. An estimated 15% of the world's population has a disability.<sup>3</sup> Globally, 93 million children are estimated to have moderate and severe disabilities<sup>4</sup> – and many of these children are out of school. That means they are not being given the chance to become empowered as individuals and support their communities. The exclusion of children with disabilities from education and from fair life chances requires urgent and sustained attention. In particular, attention needs to be paid to preparing teachers who are capable of including children with disabilities in the education process.<sup>5</sup>

This paper first provides more detail about the context and scale of the challenge. It then outlines five broad issues that need addressing if we are to prepare, recruit and support enough teachers, with appropriate skills, to educate *every* child – including those with disabilities.

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1 In the context of this paper we discuss formal and informal training for teachers at both pre-service and in-service stages, and continuing learning opportunities throughout their careers.

2 While this paper mainly discusses 'basic education' (early childhood, primary and lower secondary levels), it is important to recognise that we need more well-trained, supported and inclusive teachers at all levels of the education system – from pre-school educators through to lecturers in higher education.

3 WHO and World Bank (2011) World Report on Disability, [www.who.int/disabilities/world\\_report/2011/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/en/index.html), p.29.

4 *ibid.*

5 This paper, and the recommendations it makes, have been inspired by findings from global research into 'Educating Teachers for Children with Disabilities' carried out by Richard Rieser (from World of Inclusion) and Enabling Education Network on behalf of UNICEF's Rights, Education, and Protection (REAP) Project.



## 2. Context

### 2.1. The education of children with disabilities is an urgent issue

The number of children of primary school age who are out of school fell from 108 million in 1999 to 61 million in 2010, but progress has stalled in recent years.<sup>6</sup> Although there are 25% more children in secondary school today than in 1999, 71 million adolescents of lower secondary school age were out of school in 2010; as with primary education, progress has stagnated.<sup>7</sup>

Children with disabilities are disproportionately represented among those who are missing out on education. Research indicates that having a disability more than doubles the chance of never enrolling in school in some countries. Disability is often a more significant factor in relation to exclusion from education than gender or geographical location.<sup>8</sup> Coming from a poor family and having a parent with a disability also increases the likelihood of a child being out of school, by 25% in the Philippines and 13% in Uganda.<sup>9</sup>

We also know that the quality of education for those attending school is unsatisfactory. For example, ‘approximately 200 million children are currently in school but are learning very little because of inefficient and inadequate education; between 25% and 75% of children in poor countries cannot read a single word even after several years in school’.<sup>10</sup> As a consequence of these quality issues, children with disabilities who do access education often do not participate on equal terms with their non-disabled peers, or achieve to their full potential. This has enormous implications for their chances of finding decent work and playing an active role in their country’s social, political and economic life.<sup>11</sup>

The international community has committed itself to achieving universal basic education through the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All goals. Yet these frameworks pay insufficient attention to marginalised groups such as children with disabilities – which is a major reason why they continue to miss out on quality education. Education goals, targets and indicators in the post-2015 development framework must be based on human rights principles and focused on eliminating inequalities faced by persons with disabilities (this in turn requires gathering of disaggregated data). Moreover, the education aspects of the new framework need to incentivise states to build and strengthen inclusive systems of education. One vital step that can be taken to this end is to pay greater attention to recruiting, training and supporting teachers to respond to the diverse needs of learners.

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6 UNESCO (2012) Youth and Skills: Putting education to work, EFA Global Monitoring Report 2012, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002180/218003e.pdf>, p.3.

7 *ibid*, p.4.

8 Filmer, D (2008) ‘Disability, poverty, and schooling in developing countries: Results from 14 household surveys’, *The World Bank Economic Review*, 22(1): 141–163, [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DISABILITY/Resources/280658-1239044853210/5995073-1246917324202/Disability\\_Poverty\\_and\\_Schooling\\_in\\_Developing\\_Countries.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DISABILITY/Resources/280658-1239044853210/5995073-1246917324202/Disability_Poverty_and_Schooling_in_Developing_Countries.pdf), p. 141.

9 UNESCO (2010) Reaching the Marginalized, EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001866/186606E.pdf>, p.184.

10 See: [www.globalpartnership.org/our-work/areas-of-focus/learning-outcomes/](http://www.globalpartnership.org/our-work/areas-of-focus/learning-outcomes/). See also: Banerjee, A and Duflo, E (2011) *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty*, New York: PublicAffairs, chapter 4.

11 Singal, N (2007) Conceptualising Disability and Education in the South: Challenges for Research, RECOUP Working Paper 10, <http://recoup.educ.cam.ac.uk/publications/combinedWP10-NS.pdf>.

## 2.2. Preparing teachers to teach children with disabilities is essential

A fundamental reason for poor quality education is the severe lack of well-trained teachers who are adequately supported and managed throughout their careers. In Niger, for instance, ‘... there are just 1,059 trained teachers at lower secondary level for 1.4 million children’<sup>12</sup> – that’s 1,322 children for every trained teacher. Compare this with a pupil to (trained) teacher ratio in the UK of approximately 16:1 in secondary education, and the massive shortage of trained teachers in developing countries like Niger becomes very obvious.<sup>13</sup>

The Global Campaign for Education argues: ‘... high quality education requires sufficient recruitment of teachers who are trained, supported, paid and managed as professionals’.<sup>14</sup> An estimated 1.7 million more primary teaching positions need to be created in the period 2010–2015.<sup>15</sup> Policy-makers also need to better understand teacher attrition (the number of teachers leaving the profession) and work to reduce it. However, improving recruitment levels and reducing attrition must not lead to countries employing less qualified teachers or lowering national standards. Of 100 countries with data on primary education, 33 have less than 75% of teachers trained to the national standard.<sup>16</sup>

National standards for teacher training can vary considerably between countries, and are often inadequate. Teacher training for regular teachers also rarely prepares teachers for working in diverse classrooms, and in particular does not equip them with the confidence, knowledge and skills to effectively support learners with disabilities. This is a key reason why so many children with disabilities remain out of school, or excluded from the learning process within school. If we are to reignite progress towards quality basic education (early childhood, primary and lower secondary schooling) *for all*, then regular teachers need to be prepared to meet the learning and participation needs of children with disabilities. To do this they need to be given appropriate initial training, ongoing training and professional development, and ongoing access to adequate high quality support and advice from specialist personnel, as the following case study highlights.

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12 See: ‘Drive for quality in global education post-2015’, [www.irinnews.org/Report/97695/Drive-for-quality-in-global-education-post-2015](http://www.irinnews.org/Report/97695/Drive-for-quality-in-global-education-post-2015).

13 See: Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009) School Workforce in England (including pupil: teacher ratios and pupil: adult ratios), January 2009 (Provisional), <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20101119131802/education.gov.uk/rsgateway/db/sfr/s000844/index.shtml>, p.3.

14 Global Campaign for Education and Education International (2012) Closing the Trained Teacher Gap, [www.campaignforeducation.org/docs/reports/ECNAT%20Report\\_RGB.pdf](http://www.campaignforeducation.org/docs/reports/ECNAT%20Report_RGB.pdf), p.3.

15 UIS (2012) The Global Demand for Primary Teachers – 2012 Update, [www.Uis.Unesco.Org/Factsheets/Documents/lb10-2012-Teacher-Projections.Pdf](http://www.Uis.Unesco.Org/Factsheets/Documents/lb10-2012-Teacher-Projections.Pdf), p.1.

16 UNESCO (2012) op. cit., p.8.

### ***Specialist support from itinerant teachers: Uganda***

Teachers specially trained to work with children with disabilities can aid the inclusion process in the classroom. Sightsavers supports the training of itinerant teachers (one type of specialist teacher) in a number of countries, including in Uganda. Itinerant teachers perform a range of functions. They find children with disabilities who are not in school and work with their parents and the wider community to ensure that the children will be found a place in school. If a child with disabilities does not feel confident to go to school, itinerant teachers can visit the child at home to help prepare them for school. This support includes helping the child use a white cane or starting to teach them Braille. Itinerant teachers also answer any questions that the parent or child has about school.

These specially trained teachers also have a crucial role to play in supporting inclusion in mainstream classrooms. For example, they can provide one-to-one help to children in the classroom (such as teaching numeracy skills using an abacus) and provide practical advice to regular teachers on educational inclusion. The nature of this advice varies, and can include providing guidance on the best position for a child in the classroom, transcribing tests from Braille into text and sharing information on basic eye health as it relates to particular students.

Sightsavers' research in Uganda<sup>17</sup> has demonstrated that itinerant teachers are not able to visit all children in their caseload as often as they would like. In part this is because they have various responsibilities (as noted above), and must divide their time between community-focused work (e.g. identifying new cases) and child-focused work (e.g. teaching a child Braille). In addition, itinerant teachers experience other challenges, for example time-consuming travel and obtaining permission to be released from their regular teaching commitments. All of this suggests that there is a need for greater investment to increase the 'pool' of itinerant teachers.

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<sup>17</sup> Lynch, P et al (2011) 'Inclusive educational practices in Uganda: evidencing practice of itinerant teachers who work with children with visual impairment in local mainstream schools', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 15(10): 1119-34.



### 2.3. The importance of donor support for fundamental improvements to teacher training

Bilateral and multilateral donors must work with developing countries in order to ensure the right to education for all children, particularly the most marginalised, such as children with disabilities. Donors need to:

- research the most effective approaches to training, supporting and managing teachers to include all children in different contexts. This will include piloting innovative projects, rigorously monitoring and evaluating all initiatives, and supporting efforts to scale-up, adapt and transfer successful pilots;
- develop the capacities of those responsible for organising and providing training and ongoing support to teachers;
- document and share good practice in relation to training quality teachers who deliver effective learning and participation for diverse students in inclusive ways.<sup>18</sup>

All of this must link to other 'building blocks' of the education system (i.e. policy and governance; financing; curriculum and assessment; equipment and materials; infrastructure; and management information systems) and ensure co-ordination with other sectors such as health and nutrition.

Donors can support the necessary improvements to teacher education by encouraging and developing inclusive education policies and targets for including the most marginalised. But this must be matched with more ambitious approaches to education financing, such as increasing aid<sup>19</sup> and reducing debt in developing countries, and supporting governments to build fair and robust tax systems and to trade at regional and global levels. Donors further need to ensure that the International Monetary Fund does not undermine global education goals though enforcing cutbacks in education budgets, such as restricting increases to teachers' wages<sup>20</sup> – because good quality, motivated teachers need fair and improving remuneration.

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18 Save the Children (n.d.) Review: Teacher Support and Development Interventions, [www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/Teacher%20Support%20and%20Development%20-%20Summary%20-%20v4.pdf](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/Teacher%20Support%20and%20Development%20-%20Summary%20-%20v4.pdf); Mpokosa, C and Ndaruhutse, S (2008) Managing Teachers: The centrality of teacher management to quality education. Lessons from developing countries, London: CfBT and VSO. [www.vsointernational.org/Images/Managing\\_Teachers\\_tcm76-20998.pdf](http://www.vsointernational.org/Images/Managing_Teachers_tcm76-20998.pdf).

19 Donors only allocate 4.1% of their aid to basic education when the international benchmark is 10%. See: Global Campaign for Education (2011) Fund the Future: Education Rights Now, [www.campaignforeducation.org/docs/reports/ftf/Fund%20the%20future\\_education%20rights%20now.pdf](http://www.campaignforeducation.org/docs/reports/ftf/Fund%20the%20future_education%20rights%20now.pdf), p.3.

20 Rowden, R (2011) Wrong Policies at The Wrong Time: Impacts of IMF Policies on National Education Budgets and Teachers, [www.educationincrisis.net/component/k2/item/download/36\\_23077c2234f28a4809f05dec3db3b7f0](http://www.educationincrisis.net/component/k2/item/download/36_23077c2234f28a4809f05dec3db3b7f0).

## 3. Key actions

### 3.1. Policy-makers and teacher trainers need to understand inclusive education

#### ***Why do policy-makers and teacher trainers need to understand inclusive education?***

Those who are developing and implementing policies around education and teacher training (e.g. Ministry of Education personnel and directors and trainers in teacher training institutions) need to have a sound understanding of inclusive education, because they need to be able to promote inclusion across all areas of work for which they are responsible, and not simply allocate responsibility for inclusion to a small number of isolated experts.

A ‘sound understanding of inclusive education’ means:

- **understanding that inclusive education is an issue that cuts across all aspects of education, at all levels** – it is not just a separate or one-off project, but an approach and philosophy that underpins educational improvement. This means it is not just an issue for staff who have been given a specific remit to educate students with disabilities. Rather, it is an issue that *all staff* working in education policy and teacher training need to engage with, even if they do not become ‘experts’ in it. Further, it is an issue that needs attention among those responsible for curriculum and material development, examinations, school infrastructure, education data and information management, etc., to ensure that all these areas of work focus on the most marginalised, are accessible and promote accessibility, and seek to reduce inequality.
- **recognising the crucial ‘twin-track’ approach to inclusive education.** In other words, teachers (and those who train and employ them) need to embrace inclusive beliefs and practices that *generally support all learners* and make education a welcoming and positive experience for all; and they need to be sufficiently confident and skilled to *meet the specific learning needs of students with disabilities*. Many of the learning needs of students with disabilities can be met by generally making the education system more flexible, welcoming and responsive (‘track’ one) – but they will also have needs that require more specialist attention, so this second ‘track’ has to be part of an inclusive education approach.
- **understanding that inclusive education does not just happen in isolation within the education sector.** Successful inclusive education efforts are connected to work happening in other sectors. For instance, ensuring that all children are included in and benefitting from a quality education often requires effective links with the health sector (because poor health or nutrition impact on participation and learning); with the water and sanitation sector (because children cannot participate in learning if they are thirsty or if they lack access to toilet facilities); or with the public transport and judicial sectors (because children cannot access education if the journey to school is impossible or if it puts them at risk of violence or abuse). Inter-sectoral links can play a particularly important role in ensuring the inclusion of children in early years education, and the early identification of specific learning or support needs.

***How can policy-makers and teacher trainers be supported to understand inclusive education?***

To achieve the level of understanding needed among policy-makers and teacher trainers, advocacy and awareness-raising efforts aimed at these audiences need to present clear messages about inclusive education, stressing its relevance across all aspects of education and explaining the twin-track approach.

Beyond initial advocacy and awareness raising, there should be follow-up training and support for policy-makers and teacher training staff, to help them keep developing their understanding of inclusive education so they can provide increasingly more informed and relevant training, advice and support to pre-service and in-service teachers. A key part of this might be ensuring that policy-makers and teacher trainers actually have regular exposure to schools and to children from diverse backgrounds (because too often individuals in positions of authority spend insufficient time in schools observing, consulting or teaching). This might include both local exposure and also study visits to other districts or even countries.

### ***Enabling policy-makers to experience inclusive education first hand: a study visit from Ethiopia to Zambia***

Enabling Education Network (EENET) had been working on an action research initiative in northern Zambia for several years. The action research was geared toward supporting in-service teachers to develop their capacity and confidence with inclusive education using practical methods rather than just training workshops. A follow-up piece of work was developed to enhance children's participation in the action research – using participatory photography, art and drama techniques to find out what the children thought of their schools, what made them feel included, etc. This follow-up work also sought to build local teachers' skills with using participatory approaches in inclusion-focused action research.

Information about this work had been published globally and was attracting attention. Save the Children in Ethiopia began developing its own inclusive education action research activities along similar lines. As part of this they felt the need to support national and local ministry of education personnel to develop a more practical understanding of both inclusive education and participatory action research. Save the Children therefore arranged for several Ethiopian ministry personnel from different levels of the system to participate in an action research field visit in Zambia.

After an initial training day, during which they learned about the principles of action research and image-based activities and had a chance to practise techniques, the Ethiopian participants spent several days in rural/semi-rural Zambian schools. They firstly observed the image/art-based action research activities being facilitated with children, then interviewed teachers, head teachers and local education officials, and eventually became involved in facilitating elements of the activities themselves with the children. For some participants, who, in the course of their ministry jobs had become somewhat disconnected from schools, the fieldwork in Zambian schools was their first opportunity for practical engagement in classrooms for a long time.

The visit was considered a success, although for some of the ministry personnel it had been perhaps too hands-on, with not enough emphasis on meeting and discussing with counterparts in the Zambian authorities. However, participants did benefit from opportunities to discuss, compare and contrast education in Ethiopia and Zambia with Zambian educators. The context of education and schooling in Zambia and Ethiopia was similar enough to have stimulated productive discussions of inclusive pedagogy (e.g. how to facilitate learning with large groups of children, positive discipline and democratic practices in the classroom), but also different enough to have sparked participants' curiosity and offer insights into a different education system.

### 3.2. Inclusive education should be integrated into *all* teacher training

#### ***Why does every teacher need to know about inclusive education?***

We highlighted above that inclusive education is a philosophy that cuts across all aspects of education – it is not just a separate project for the attention of a few specialists. For this reason it is vital that every teacher, working at any level of the education system, should learn how to make education more inclusive: this means learning how to improve the presence, participation and achievement of all learners, and learning how to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in particular. The development of a human rights culture and the nurturing of critical thinking skills are vital if inclusion is to become a reality.<sup>21</sup>

Teaching is considered more effective if it is differentiated – that is, if the teacher adapts lessons and activities to suit different students in their class. A good inclusive teacher therefore learns how to: identify students' specific learning needs and any wider (cross-sectoral) issues that may be impacting on presence, participation and achievement; develop innovative ways to help students participate and learn; and seek appropriate extra help from colleagues or other professionals when their own knowledge/skills are not sufficient to fully address a particular problem (for instance if they need support with planning and delivering education for children with particular learning difficulties). Such a flexible and responsive approach to teaching may appear to be particularly challenging in under-resourced or other difficult circumstances, but nevertheless needs to be the standard that all education systems strive for.

#### ***What sort of teacher training is needed?***

It is vital for trainee teachers to learn about inclusive education from day one of their training, so that focusing on quality and inclusive teaching and learning is seen as a natural part of every teacher's job. It is equally important for existing teachers to participate in ongoing professional development that helps them to constantly reflect on their attitudes and practices and strive to improve the inclusiveness of their schools. Such professional development can include formal in-service training courses and ongoing learning opportunities, such as having access to relevant reading materials and being given the time for individual study, participating in action research initiatives and engaging in teacher discussion groups.

It is not sufficient for teachers/trainee teachers only to be offered one-off or stand-alone courses on inclusive education. Such courses are often not compulsory and/or might not contribute to the trainee teacher's final grade, offering the trainee little incentive to take the course. Stand-alone courses also potentially send out messages that inclusive education is a special topic for a handful of specialist teachers, not an issue that is important for every teacher. Finally, stand-alone courses often perpetuate misunderstandings that inclusive education is a separate initiative/project as opposed to an approach for whole-school improvement. These last two points can be significant barriers to encouraging all teachers to take responsibility for all learners.

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<sup>21</sup> Myers, J and Bagree, S (2011) Making Inclusive Education a Reality, Sightsavers policy paper, [www.sightsavers.org/in\\_depth/policy\\_and\\_research/education/16079\\_Sightsavers%20IE%20Policy%20Paper%202011%20-%20FINAL.pdf](http://www.sightsavers.org/in_depth/policy_and_research/education/16079_Sightsavers%20IE%20Policy%20Paper%202011%20-%20FINAL.pdf).



To ensure that every child has a teacher who is trained on inclusive education and acknowledges their responsibility to be inclusive, there needs to be:

- **attention given to addressing inclusive education in pre-service and in-service teacher training and through continuing professional development activities.** While NGOs have often intervened to provide in-service training programmes, these may reach only a small percentage of serving teachers. Countries need their governments to support the scale-up of such in-service training and development for teachers and to develop inclusive pre-service training.
- a mixture of (i) **specific courses** that focus on inclusive education, and (ii) a concerted effort to **'embed' inclusive education** principles into all teacher training courses and activities.
- **a review and revision of teacher training courses, curricula and materials;** with the review process involving training institutions and ministry of education personnel, as well as trainers, teachers and other education stakeholders from diverse sections of the community.
- **advocacy to encourage teacher training institutions and ministries to undertake such changes;** and to build the capacity of teachers and other education stakeholders to demand comprehensive improvements in teacher training and continuing professional development opportunities at all levels.

### ***Integrating inclusive education into all teacher training: Papua New Guinea***

In Papua New Guinea, efforts have been made to ensure that inclusive education is a topic within all teacher education. This dates back to the early 1990s when St. Benedict's Teachers College in Wewak decided to offer a training course for all student teachers in how to teach children with disabilities in regular schools. This would be an integral part of the curriculum for a new three-year Diploma in Primary Teaching. When discussing their plans with the government, the college highlighted the country's constitutional obligations towards child rights, and the fact that the educational needs of the country's 60,000 children with disabilities could only be met through regular schools. The pilot teacher training approach in Wewak was funded by CBM in partnership with Callan Services. It was supported by the Churches Education Council, the National Education Board and the National Board for Disabled Persons.

After further lobbying, a National Special Education Policy was published in 1994 which recommended the Wewak pilot be extended to all teacher training colleges. This initiative was subsequently included in the education budget for 2004. The plan outlined a curriculum for inclusive education at the teacher training colleges. It also contained ideas for including related disability topics in other areas of the teacher education curriculum, e.g. within the health curriculum teachers could learn about primary ear and eye health; and in the general education curriculum students could learn skills in identifying children with learning difficulties.

The enrolment of children with disabilities in regular schools became national policy. Existing special schools were transformed into resource centres with their teachers salaried by the national government. Regular teachers were given basic knowledge in enrolling children with disabilities, and also learned to identify and refer many children at risk of developing disabling conditions. Teacher training colleges received support in providing the inclusive education curriculum from the staff of the Special Education Resources Centres (SERCs), which were funded by the National Department of Education with support from overseas funding. Regular teachers also had the chance to gain higher education in more specialist topics (e.g. postgraduate degrees in Hearing and in Vision). Regular and continued opportunities for in-service training for mainstream teachers were also supported by SERC staff.

Despite these successes, negative attitudes to disability and inclusion inevitably persist in some institutions, and schools remain under resourced. No single NGO initiated project can achieve change across an entire national education system, but they can offer ideas and motivation for more widespread and sustained government-led initiatives.

### 3.3. Teacher training must bring together theory and practice, especially around inclusive education

#### ***An effective balance of theory and practice***

Teacher training around inclusion (but also in general) needs to offer a balance of theoretical and practice-based learning. In relation to inclusive education this means that trainee teachers and experienced teachers need to learn about the concept of inclusive education, but then also need plenty of opportunities to both observe and implement the theories in practice, ideally with support from experienced colleagues or mentors. They need to be facilitated to reflect on how their practices relate to educational theory, and how they can turn theoretically good ideas into sound practice. Practice-based teacher training needs to be relevant to the local context and culture, and needs to be a well-managed process so that teachers/trainee teachers are not overwhelmed.

The split between theory and practice needs to be well-balanced. Too much theoretical and too little practice-based learning can leave teachers ill-prepared for the real-life challenges they will face in class. Equally, however, if there is very little theory-based learning, teachers can miss out on vital opportunities to learn from wider sources of information, and to learn how to be more reflective and analytical practitioners.

There are various options for supplementing teacher training with disability-specific hands-on experiences. For instance, disabled people's organisations (DPOs), people with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities can be directly involved in designing and delivering the training (discussed in more detail in the following section). Also, where special schools exist, they can often provide practical and technical advice and support to teachers and trainee teachers – and increasingly special schools are evolving into this resource role in support of regular schools who are including children with disabilities. However, while special school staff often have expertise in specific areas of disability, they may also need training on inclusive education and how to support mainstream schools to be inclusive.

#### ***Cascade training needs more effective follow-up***

The popularity of cascade training mechanisms – among NGOs and ministries of education – needs careful review. Cascade training may seem like an efficient way of passing factual messages from one group of teachers to another, thus reaching relatively large numbers from a fairly small initial investment. However, the approach often fails to offer trainees the depth of learning – especially practical learning and experience exchanges – that is needed, and can even result in inaccurate or incomplete information being cascaded down the line.

One of the main weaknesses of cascade training is that it is often not accompanied by effective follow-up. Teachers who have received information via a cascade mechanism still need a lot of support after the training – particularly considering they have potentially received information from colleagues who themselves are not experienced enough to answer all the teachers' questions or explain how a particular real-life situation could be handled.

Cascade approaches to in-service teacher training therefore need to be accompanied by at least some of the following:

- school-based (or cluster school/resource centre-based) support and advice made available to all teachers who have queries about how to turn the training messages into practice in class.
- mentoring of inexperienced teachers by other teachers (or even other professionals or community stakeholders) who have hands-on experience of developing inclusive education and working with people with disabilities.
- peer-to-peer support, such as opportunities for teachers to share their experiences of implementing what they learned on the training course.
- regular follow-up training events.

Cascade training needs to be seen as one tool in a much more comprehensive box of tools for preparing inclusive teachers, and clear messages are needed that cascade training is not an inexpensive, quick-fix for developing a new generation of inclusive teachers.

***Balancing theoretical and practical learning about inclusion:  
Leonard Cheshire Disability***

In the last three years, Leonard Cheshire Disability has provided training to over 6,300 teachers in 15 countries, including Kenya, Sierra Leone and India. The training strikes a balance between providing teachers with the practical skills and confidence needed to plan lessons for classes that may include children with disabilities, alongside a theoretical understanding of sustainable inclusive and participatory teaching and learning methods. This is reflected in the themes covered by the training, which typically include:

- Introduction to theories behind child-centred and inclusive learning
- Classroom management
- Education assessments to identify individual child needs
- Devising individual learning programmes
- Monitoring and assessing the progress of individual children
- Making and using appropriate teaching and learning materials.

Taking part in teacher training provided by Leonard Cheshire Disability developed Mukwana Martin's confidence and skills in teaching children with disabilities. Mukwana teaches at a school in Nkokonjeru, Kenya. One of his pupils, Robert Ibombwe, is physically impaired and uses a wheelchair. "I have discovered that Robert and other disabled children have the same potential as non-disabled children", says Mukwana. "What is important is that teachers like me support the children to develop that potential. The biggest challenge for most teachers is that they are often not exposed to children with specific needs, as well as not having adequate training in inclusive teaching methods. After I attended inclusive education training I have been able to understand Robert better and draw him closer to me through continuous counselling."

### 3.4. People with disabilities should be involved in teacher training and other aspects of education planning and management

#### ***Why do people with disabilities need to be involved in teacher training?***

A key reason why teacher training often fails to address inclusive education – and in particular the inclusion of students with disabilities – is because those involved in planning and running teacher training do not have disabilities, and often have no direct experience of working with people with disabilities.

There is a growing movement towards community involvement in and management of schools. If this is to be successful it must include representation from diverse groups in the community, including people with disabilities. This needs to be further extended to ensure that teacher education, and the ongoing support and professional development of teachers, is done with the involvement of people with disabilities (and people from other marginalised groups too).

As we saw above, teachers/trainee teachers need their training to be practical and contextually relevant. This means training needs to be designed with input from a range of stakeholders living, working and studying in the communities in which the teachers will work – and this must include inputs from people with disabilities.

#### ***How can such involvement be facilitated?***

Teachers often say that including learners with disabilities is the aspect of inclusive education that they find most challenging.<sup>22</sup> Stakeholders with disabilities (individuals or representatives of DPOs) can play an active role in preparing teachers for this challenge in the following ways:

- Ministries of Education should seek the contribution of people with disabilities during policy discussions (at all levels) about teacher training structures, curricula, etc. (as well as during discussions about other education issues).
- Positive action should be taken to train, deploy and support teacher trainers who have disabilities, who can act as positive role models and provide ‘first-hand’ information about disability, inclusion and exclusion to the trainee teachers.
- Pre-service and in-service training programmes should be designed with the flexibility to feature guest trainers and speakers from among different stakeholder groups, including people with disabilities (e.g. academics and researchers with disabilities, local role models with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities).
- Pre-service and in-service training and continuing professional development programmes should find ways to give teachers/trainee teachers ‘exposure’ to working with children and adults with disabilities and with their parents/carers (e.g. by having teachers work some voluntary hours with a sports club or other facility/event for children with disabilities).
- Local education authorities and schools should be enabling people with disabilities to be actively involved in school life, management committees and parent-teacher associations, so that serving teachers (and trainee teachers doing practicum) are meeting and working with (and can ask questions to) people with disabilities regularly and for different purposes.

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<sup>22</sup>Rieser, R (2012) Teacher Education for Children with Disabilities, Literature Review for UNICEF REAP Project (unpublished draft).



### ***Ensuring people with disabilities have a role in teacher training: Iraq***

In the north of Iraq (in the three governorates of Sulaimany, Dohuk and Erbil in Kurdistan) the Ministry of Education developed courses for Ministry-employed teachers and awareness raising sessions for education leadership. The courses are 'introduction to inclusive education' courses for in-service teachers who want to support children with disabilities in schools. It was initially delivered through training of trainers courses, and is now provided regularly to teachers. The courses are sometimes funded by UNICEF and sometimes by the Ministry.

As part of the courses, adults with hearing impairments and adults with visual impairments have shared their personal education stories and helped participants to understand the role education has played in their life. They have also demonstrated assistive resources and tools, as well as techniques used for daily living with one or more impairment(s). Adults who are deaf have been engaged in the courses to teach basic sign language to teachers, using lists of words the teachers wanted to learn, and also demonstrating visual storytelling.

At seminars for school principals, education officials and decision-makers, people with disabilities have been included as participants to bring their perspectives on inclusion into discussions, and personal accounts of education. Parents of children with disabilities have also participated through question and answer panel sessions. Disability rights advocates have contributed to the training as guest lecturers, providing detailed theoretical and practical information, and delivering hard-hitting messages on combatting discrimination

Course feedback has indicated that the active participation of people with disabilities in the training courses has helped teachers to see people with disabilities as partners in upholding the rights of children in their classes, rather than as passive recipients of charitable services.

Contributors to the courses have mostly been identified through local DPOs. The training activity has helped to initiate or reinforce co-operation between DPOs and the inclusive education programme. Although in some countries not all DPOs have the capacity to support teacher training, it is crucial to learn from and build upon efforts, in order to ensure that both community members and professionals with disabilities play a role in designing and delivering training on inclusion and equality.

A consultant helped the Ministry of Education to design the courses and run the initial training and awareness activities. The Ministry also formed a committee for the awareness seminars, made up of education and DPO representatives (the latter covering physical and sensory impairments, and they were also requested to be people with expertise in media/communications or the arts). The committee designed the awareness campaign (which also involved art and music) and played active roles in rolling out the seminars across the region.

### 3.5. The teaching workforce needs to be diverse and representative

#### ***Why is diversity among teachers important?***

Ensuring that every child has a teacher who can offer them a quality, inclusive education means we also need to look carefully at who becomes a teacher. Children who feel that their teachers have nothing in common with them, or do not understand them, may be less likely to engage in learning and more likely to drop out. Striving for a diverse teaching staff that represents male and female sections of the community, with and without disabilities, and from the ethnic, linguistic and religious groups found in the community, is therefore important.

Inclusive education is often explained as being a key step in developing an inclusive society. Having a diverse teaching workforce is part of this. For instance, enabling children to learn with a teacher with disabilities should help the children to grow up with a more positive attitude towards disability and the role that people with disabilities can and should play in their community.

#### ***How can more people with disabilities be brought into teaching?***

There needs to be particular attention paid to training, employing and supporting teachers with disabilities.

People with disabilities are likely to face the greatest barriers when it comes to achieving the level of education needed to train as a teacher. Flexible policies for enrolment qualifications for teacher training, and/or creating and funding 'catch-up' courses for potential trainees who missed out on education earlier in their lives, are two possible ways to help overcome this barrier.

Teacher training itself is often inaccessible – courses run in physically inaccessible buildings; lack of materials in alternative formats such as large print and Braille; lack of sign language interpretation; lack of access to assistive devices; and of course a lack of teacher trainers or training managers who know about accessibility, or who can read Braille, and so on. Ministries of Education and those working with them need to invest in teacher training facilities (whether these are large training institutions or local facilities for teacher professional development such as at district teacher resource centres) so that they become as accessible as possible to teachers and trainees with disabilities.

Accessing and completing training is not the end of the challenge for teachers with disabilities, however. They may face discrimination in finding a job (e.g. negative attitudes among head teachers or local education officials who interview them; limited choice of schools that are sufficiently accessible; or in some places even outright bans on people with disabilities becoming teachers because of very strict health and fitness assessments). Teachers with disabilities are also likely to face discrimination within the workplace (e.g. unfair or abusive behaviour from colleagues, managers or parents; employment, remuneration or healthcare/retirement policies that are inherently biased against people with disabilities; and lack of access to professional development opportunities).

Employment regulations for teachers need to be reviewed and overhauled where necessary, so that there are no legal barriers to people with disabilities becoming teachers, and no unfair conditions of employment that make it difficult or impossible for them to remain teachers.

### ***Training blind teachers and changing society's attitudes: Mozambique***

ADPP (*Ajuda de Desenvolvimento de Povo para Povo* – Development Aid from People to People) is a Mozambican Association working on project across various sectors. Within the education sector, ADPP runs 11 teacher training colleges known as *Escolas de Professores do Futuro* (EPF); one institute of higher education that trains instructors for teacher training colleges and community developers; four vocational training centres; four primary and secondary schools with a focus on orphan and vulnerable children; and an adult literacy program.

Teacher Training College (TTC) Nhamatanda has been training visually impaired primary school teachers for more than ten years, and since 2008 with financial support from LIGHT FOR THE WORLD. The TTC in Nhamatanda has established an impressive system to ensure quality training for blind teachers. First, identification of candidates is done by the local Blind School, which proposes qualified graduates from mainstream schools to apply for a scholarship at the TTC.

Over the years Nhamatanda TTC trainers have been trained in Braille by the Blind School and the Blind Union, and today all of them have at least a basic level of Braille skills, with a number of the trainers reading and writing Braille fluently. On a weekly basis, a group of interested trainers and students meet in the Braille Club to train and practise. Some of the teachers-to-be show particular interest in Braille, as most of them are studying side by side with a peer with visual impairment for the first time.

During training at the TTC, all students teach in practice schools nearby. It has been important to raise awareness in these schools and communities to ensure a welcoming environment for students with visual impairment during their practical training. Over the years, the communities have become used to their children being taught by teachers with disabilities, resulting in a general change of attitude in these areas. Similar change is expected in areas to which graduates with disabilities are posted after finishing their teacher training. ADPP and LIGHT FOR THE WORLD plan a mapping study to assess the progress of former students with visual impairment and the responses from their new teaching colleagues, pupils and communities.

Some former graduates from TTC Nhamatanda are now running TTCs in other provinces and have become strong advocates for training teachers with disabilities, requesting to join the LIGHT FOR THE WORLD /ADPP scholarship programme so that their TTCs can become inclusive.

## 4. Recommendations

International donors should work with national governments to:

- Support policy-makers and teacher educators to develop a more in-depth and hands-on understanding of inclusive education, and a better sense of how to embed inclusive education principles throughout all pre- and in-service teacher training, and all continuing professional development.
- Support education authorities and teacher educators to review their existing teacher training systems and facilitate the mapping of opportunities for embedding inclusive education principles into a revised training system.
- Support the development of improved teacher training systems that deliver a more effective balance of theory-based learning and hands-on practice, with a particular focus on teachers learning how to be child-centred and inclusive, and in particular how to teach children and adults with disabilities.
- Support education authorities and teacher educators to develop mechanisms through which people with disabilities (including DPOs) are consulted about teacher training, and are enabled to take an active role in designing and delivering teacher training.
- Support education authorities to critically review their existing human resource legislation, policies and procedures, and to develop improved laws/policies/procedures that actively encourage and support people with disabilities to train and work as teachers at all levels across the education system.
- Advocate for post-2015 goals, targets and indicators to explicitly focus on the need to include people with disabilities in education, which requires disaggregated data to monitor educational access, transition, completion and quality.
- Develop progressive and holistic approaches to education financing, ensuring that no donor economic policies are allowed to undermine international human rights law or undermine the growth of an inclusive, highly-skilled and well-remunerated teaching workforce.







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