

# MODULE 6

## Advice for teaching children with disabilities in the classroom

### Aims:

- to let the trainees explore different ways to help children with mobility, hearing, seeing, learning and behaviour difficulties in the classroom.

### Task 1 Case study analysis and discussion



**40 minutes**

1. Put the trainees into five groups.
2. Give each group a different case study to read.
3. Tell each group to read their case study.
4. While the trainees are reading, write the following questions on the board.

In your case study:

- What difficulties did the child face?
  - What things were done to help the child overcome these difficulties?
  - Can you think of any other things that could be done to help a child with similar difficulties?
5. Tell the groups to discuss the answers to these questions. One person in each group should be a secretary and take notes on the group's ideas.

### Task 2 Feedback



**40 minutes**

1. Call on the secretary in each group to come to front and tell the rest of the class their answers to the questions, in turn.
2. Highlight important points and answer any questions.



## Case study 1: A child with mobility problems

Vatthanna is 9 years old. She lives in Vientiane in Laos. She has a disease that has made her bones very weak, meaning that she has not grown like other children. She is very short for her age. She is about as tall as a 4-year-old. She cannot walk. She cannot stand on her own. She cannot go to the toilet on her own either. However she is very clever. She has good coordination in her hands and she has a lively personality.

Vatthanna has just started school. She lives near the local school and every day her grandmother or her sister carries her on their backs to school.

In class, Vatthanna sits at the front so she can see the board easily. She is too small to sit at the usual desks (she also needs some support for her back) so she sits in a special chair and table, which is designed for 3-4 year olds. Vatthanna is very good at maths and all her school work is neat. She loves to learn. If she wants to go to the toilet she asks her teacher to help.

In the breaks between the lessons Vatthanna's friends carry her outside the classroom. She can't run about like them but they usually include her in their games.

Before Vatthanna started school, the teachers were nervous. They were worried about how the other children would treat Vatthanna. The head teacher had a good idea. First of all she spoke to the whole school and told all the children about Vatthanna. Then when the children went back to class, their teachers did some games with them to help them understand about Vatthanna's difficulties. For example, in one class the teacher brought in some rope and tied up some of the children's legs, so they couldn't walk. Children took it in turns to see what it was like not being able to walk.

When Vatthanna started school no one teased her.

## Case study 2: A child with hearing problems

Sandun lives in India. He is 12 years old. He had been going to school for years. He was taught the regular curriculum but he did not learn much and had to repeat many times.

The fault was not his though. The school had never identified or addressed his special needs.

Last year a new teacher, Mr Moga, arrived at the school who had learned about disabilities on his pre-service course. Mr Moga quickly realised that Sandun had a problem. He asked a local NGO for help. The NGO paid for Sandun to see a doctor. The doctor discovered that Sandun had difficulty hearing high or low pitched sounds especially when he couldn't see the person or thing that was making the noises. The doctor prescribed a hearing aid and this helped Sandun's hearing a great deal.

However Sandun's school was by a busy road and the classroom was very noisy. The hearing aid made every sound louder and Sandun found it too noisy to wear his hearing aid all the time at school.

Mr Moga made sure Sandun sat at the front of the class. In order to help him understand Mr Moga used a lot of gestures when explaining things. He would often write instructions on the board.

Mr Moga also realised that the first years spent in school had been rather of a waste in Sandun's case. He took time to find out just what Sandun had learned and what he hadn't. He focused on Sandun's strong points and used them to overcome his weak points.

In class Mr Moga asked one of the cleverest boys in class to sit next to Sandun and help him. They became good friends and the other boy really enjoyed teaching Sandun things.

Every lunchtime, Mr Moga spends a few minutes with Sandun. They go and sit under the tree far away from the road. Sandun wears his hearing aid and Mr Moga checks he has understood what they studied today.

*This case study was taken from India. When these materials were produced DAC had no examples from Cambodia. There was no public access to hearing aids in Cambodia and DAC did not know any deaf children in mainstream classes at the time of writing these materials (1999).*

### **Case study 3: A child with seeing difficulties**

Sithath is 14 years old. He is in his first year at a lower secondary school in Vientiane. He is the best student in his class even though he is blind.

He lost his sight in an accident at home when he was 9 years old. Before the accident he went to primary school and was one of the cleverest students. After the accident he stayed at home, his parents didn't know how to help him.

One day they heard about the special school for the blind in Vientiane. They took Sithath to the school at he started studying there. At the special school, Sithath learned Braille, a system where letters are represented by bumps made in paper using a simple slate and a pin called a stylus. The blind person can read by feeling the bumps with their fingers.

Sithath learned Braille quickly, and because he was clever he could remember nearly everything he had learned before his accident. After three years at the school it was decided he was ready to go to secondary school.

One of the teachers at the secondary school learned how to use Braille. He now marks Sithath's work and his exams. Otherwise the regular teachers just like the other students teach Sithath.

In class Sithath sits near the front so he can clearly hear the teacher. Sithath has developed an excellent memory to compensate for his lack of sight. Another boy, Sithath's friend helps him. The school textbooks have not been translated into Braille so his friend reads aloud to Sithath.

The teachers also adapt teaching aids to help Sithath. They have stuck pieces of string onto a wooden protractor so that Sithath can feel the angles in maths. In geography, the teacher has stuck string over all the lines on the map and used buttons to mark the cities now Sithath can feel what Laos looks like.

Outside of class, the other children help Sithath to make sure he doesn't fall down when moving around the school. They have also learned that it is important for them to touch him gently when they start to speak to him and to say their name. If they do this, Sithath knows who is talking to him and he can look at them.

When Sithath finishes school he wants to be a teacher, so he can help other blind children.

## Case study 4: A child with learning difficulties

Keo is 10 years old and is now in Grade 3 at primary school. Keo has difficulty learning. His intelligence is average but he just doesn't learn things the same way as others. He didn't start to talk until he was five. He is a cheerful boy and gets on with other children and can run and play like them. At school though he was always at the bottom of the class and he had to repeat Grade 1 twice.

When he was in Grade 2, he had a new teacher, Mrs Setha. She realised that Keo had special problems and that he was never going to learn like the other children. She tried using different ways to teach Keo.

First of all she tried appealing to all his senses. She brought in pictures of the things she was teaching about and sometimes the real thing, which she let him touch. All the children liked her visual aids. Keo was very bad at maths, so she gave him small stones, which he could use to count with. Keo began to understand about maths, but it also meant that he was much slower doing his sums than the other children. Mrs Setha thought about this and decided that she needed to reduce the work that Keo had to do. For example in maths he only has to do three sums while the other children have to do six. Keo finds writing difficult, so Mrs Setha let him answer the questions orally. Keo often writes his letters the wrong way round and he really can't spell, so Mrs Setha gives him extra time to copy things from the board or he doesn't have to copy everything.

Keo sits at the front of the class next to one of the clever students who can help him. Mrs Setha would also check that he understood all the instructions. She is also very careful to praise Keo a lot and encourage him.

Keo really improved in Grade 2 but towards the end of the year Mrs Setha realised that he would not be able to reach the required standard to go into Grade 3. She went to talk to the school principal. She explained about his difficulties. The principal listened and said that they should talk to Keo's parents as well.

Mrs Setha told Keo's parents that Keo would find it very difficult to progress from Grade 2 to Grade 3 and then to Grade 4 because every year the work got harder. Keo's parents still wanted him to go to school. There were still many things he could learn, they thought. The principal listened carefully and then he suggested that each year Keo should move up a grade like the other children even though he didn't meet the standard. Special allowances would be made for Keo. The principal was afraid that if Keo stayed in Grade 2 for another year he might get bored and then misbehave.

Now Keo is doing well. He is also happier because he can continue to study with his friends.

## Case study 5: A child with behavioural difficulties

Sokha is 7 years old. She is in Grade 2 now. When she started school last year she was very badly behaved. She wouldn't sit still. Her concentration span was very short. After about ten minutes she would get up and walk around the class. She would call out answers without putting up her hand and sometimes she would throw things. Outside of class she didn't have many friends because she was bad tempered and would hit the other children.

Her teacher, Mrs Lay, was very worried about her. She knew Sokha's aunt so first she went to talk to her. Sokha's aunt agreed that Sokha was a very naughty child. She told Mrs Lay that Sokha had 6 older brothers and sisters and her mother had just had another baby. No one had much time for Sokha in the family.

Mrs Lay thought about this. She had an idea that Sokha might be behaving badly to get attention. At school Mrs Lay started to ignore Sokha if she called out answers or got up from her desk. At first things got worse, Sokha would shout more loudly until Mrs Lay had to do something. Then she would send Sokha out of the class for ten minutes to calm down.

Mrs Lay also started using rewards instead of punishments. She would tell Sokha that if she managed to sit still and study for 20 minutes then she could take a five-minute break. Mrs. Lay gradually increased the time week by week. She also told Sokha that on days when she was good she would give her a sweet. Sokha began to learn that good behaviour, not bad, got her attention and rewards.

Mrs Lay also went to talk to Sokha's parents. Sokha came from quite a wealthy family. Her mother said that Sokha was always wanting things, so usually they gave them to her because if they didn't she would cause trouble. However since she had the baby, Sokha's mother didn't have as much time for Sokha, nowadays she was often angry with Sokha and she smacked her regularly.

Mrs Lay told Sokha's mother why she thought Sokha was behaving badly and what she had been doing at school to help her. She said that Sokha was behaving better at school but it was difficult if at home she was being treated differently. Mrs Lay said that the most important thing was to be consistent. She suggested that it might help if Sokha could help care for the baby with her mother. Sokha's mother thought this was a good idea. She also tried not to smack her and instead give her a piece of fruit when she was good.

The changes at home made a big difference. Sokha's behaviour quickly improved.




 Answers

## Case study 1: a child with mobility problems

### ***What difficulties did the child face?***

- Her bones are very weak.
- She has not grown like other children. She is very short for her age.
- She cannot walk, stand on her own or go to the toilet on her own.

### ***What things were done to help the child overcome these difficulties?***

- Someone carries her to school.
- She sits in a special chair and table at the front of the class.
- The teacher helps her go to the toilet.
- Other children carry her around the school.
- The head teacher explained to the other children about her difficulties and the teachers played some games with the children so they could understand about Vathanna's difficulties and not tease her when she started school.

### ***Can you think of any other things that could be done to help a child with similar difficulties?***

- provide assistive devices (eg, wheelchairs, crutches, leg supports)
- build ramps so the child can get around school easily.
- in sports lessons adapt the games so the child can join in whatever way they can
- be aware of the child's difficulties, but don't over protect them, try to include them in every activity.

## Case study 2: a child with hearing difficulties

### ***What difficulties did the child face?***

- hearing high or low pitched sounds especially when he couldn't see the person or thing making the noises
- his early schooling had been a waste of time.

### ***What things were done to help the child overcome these difficulties?***

- He saw a doctor and had a hearing aid fitted but the school was too noisy so his hearing aid didn't work well.
- The teacher made him sit at the front.
- The teacher used gestures and wrote instructions on the board.
- The teacher asked a clever boy to help Sandun.
- The teacher gave him some extra help every lunchtime by checking he had understood what they studied in a quiet place where Sandun could use his hearing aid.
- The teacher adapted what he taught Sandun to focus on his strong points and that way it helped him to overcome his weak points.

***Can you think of any other things that could be done to help a child with similar difficulties?***

- teacher should try to let the child see their face as much as possible
- avoid speaking and writing on the board at the same time
- speak clearly at all times
- teacher learns some basic sign language
- check that the child understands often
- give the child lots of written exercises to check they understand
- if the child has not understood, rephrase what you say, don't keep repeating the same words over and over.

**Case study 3: a child with seeing difficulties**

***What difficulties did the child face?***

- He is blind.

***What things were done to help the child overcome these difficulties?***

- He studied at a special school for the blind where he learned Braille.
- One of the teachers at the secondary school learned Braille and he marks Sithath's work and exams.
- Sithath sits near the front so he can hear the teacher clearly.
- Another student helps Sithath by reading to him.
- Teachers adapt teaching aids so Sithath can feel them and understand.
- Other children look after Sithath so he doesn't fall down.
- Everyone touches Sithath and says their name before talking to him.

***Can you think of any other things that could be done to help a child with similar difficulties?***

Some children are not completely blind like Sithath but they do have difficulty seeing. To help them:

- sit the child at the front
- make special worksheet in large letter; write in large letters on the board
- check frequently that the child has understood.
- tell the other students what they can do to help the child
- see if glasses help
- read aloud as you write on the board.

**Case study 4: a child with learning difficulties**

***What difficulties did the child face?***

- He doesn't learn things in the same way as other children.
- He has a poor memory, he can't solve problems, he writes letters the wrong way round and he can't spell.

***What things were done to help the child overcome these difficulties?***

- The teacher tried teaching to all of his senses, she used visual aids and real objects which Keo could touch eg, small stones for maths.

- She reduces or simplifies the work he has to do.
- She gives him extra time to do things.
- Keo sits at the front next to clever boy who helps him.
- The teacher checks Keo understands often.
- The teacher praises Keo often and encourages him.
- The school principal agreed to adapt the rules so that Keo could move up a grade.
- The school and parents realise that Keo will always have difficulties but they will try and teach him as much as he is able to learn.

***Can you think of any other things, which could be done to help a child with similar difficulties?***

- know the student's strengths and weaknesses; teach using their strengths
- give simple, clear instructions
- help the student gain practical skills
- guide the child to the important things he/she needs to learn, eg, underline the important parts in a text for reading
- talk to the parents, they know more about their child than the teacher.

**Case study 5: a child with behaviour difficulties**

***What difficulties did the child face?***

- badly behaved, short concentration span, won't sit still, calls out answers, throws things, sometimes hits other children.

***What things were done to help the child overcome these difficulties?***

The teacher:

- spoke to the child's aunt and her parents to find the reason for the child's bad behaviour
- ignored the bad behaviour if it was not too bad
- used rewards instead of punishments
- set simple targets, like sitting still for 20 minutes and then rewarding the child when she achieved these targets
- would send the child out of class for 10 minutes to calm down ('time out')
- was consistent.

***Can you think of any other things that could be done to help a child with similar difficulties?***

- set clear, simple rules with the child
- be fair, be consistent
- don't make a threat unless you are sure you can carry it out
- be patient, and persevere
- try to find out what things trigger the child's bad behaviour, then try avoid those situations.

**Task 3**

**Consolidation**



**40 minutes**

1. Tell the trainees to work in their groups. They should brainstorm 5 ideas on how to help children with visual problems, 5 ideas to help children with hearing problems, 5 ideas to help children with learning problems, 5 ideas to help children with behaviour problems and 5 ideas to help children with mobility problems.
2. Trainees brainstorm their ideas.
3. Listen to ideas from different groups.
4. Answer any questions.