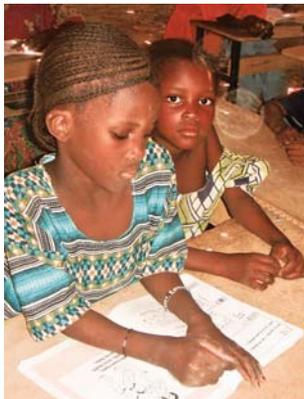




Enabling Education

ISSUE 13 – AUGUST 2009



www.eenet.org.uk



E@NET
Enabling Education Network

Contents

EENET news	2-3
Editorial	4
Education as freedom from slavery in Niger	5
A school for shepherds in Lesotho	6
An accelerated learning programme in Southern Sudan	7
Safe play in an earthquake zone in Kyrgyzstan	8-9
Early childhood care and development for all in Sri Lanka	10
Learning disability and student voice in England	11
Service-learning in Queensland, Australia	12
Learning through community service in Trinidad and Tobago	13
Supporting marginalised learners in Armenia	14-15
'Beyond Flying': A pupil voice project in England	16-17
The Green Schools of Madagascar	18-19
Changing relationships between special and mainstream schools in Malawi	20
Advocating for inclusive education in Tanzania	21
Girls' exclusion: Tackling a taboo issue in Nepal	22
Water, sanitation and inclusive education	23
Your feedback	24
Refugees and asylum seekers speak out, England	25
EENET interview	26-27
Regional news	27
Useful publications	28

Editors:
Ingrid Lewis and Susie Miles

Cover photos by: (top of page) Child Development Foundation, Armenia (clockwise from top left) Anti Slavery International, Niger; Child Development Foundation, Armenia; Save the Children, Sri Lanka; Green Schools Bara, Madagascar; Save the Children, Sri Lanka

EENET news

Enabling Education - for life!

This year's newsletter features articles that take us beyond primary and secondary school settings. Education should be an enabling experience at every level of learning, from early childhood to old-age. Effective learning does not only happen within a formal classroom environment.

Articles cover early childhood development (Sri Lanka), kindergartens (Trinidad and Tobago), safe play areas (Kyrgyzstan), and learning in the home (Armenia), as well as post-secondary education (Australia, England and Nigeria). Some articles focus on the use of art and drama to bring students together and promote pupil or stakeholder voice (Armenia and England). Education for 'forgotten' groups is discussed (child slaves in Niger, shepherd boys in Lesotho and over-age learners in Southern Sudan).

Further articles look at environmentally-aware schools (Madagascar), the relationship between special and mainstream schools (Malawi), and advocacy for inclusive education (Tanzania). We also introduce next year's newsletter theme – water, sanitation and inclusive education – with an article from Nepal about the effects of menstruation on girls' participation in education.

New website

EENET's website has been completely redesigned! The work has been done free of charge by an amazingly dedicated volunteer – Alex Hauschild – who also designs EENET Asia's newsletter. The new site should be ready to launch in October 2009. It contains hundreds of articles from over 200 authors and features more than 80 countries. The website address remains the same – www.eenet.org.uk – but we have made some significant changes to the content:

- simplified navigation menus
- improved listings of documents – you will be able to search easily according to theme, author, country, date, and type of document
- improved accessibility – you will be able to choose font size and colours, and we will gradually add audio and video files to complement some of the written materials
- easier updating process – EENET's co-ordinator will be able to update the site in-house, so materials and news announcements will be added more quickly and regularly.

We hope that you will like the new website, and look forward to receiving your feedback. As always we need more contributions for the site – so keep sending your articles, reports, posters, photos, etc.

Steering Group meeting and open seminar

In September 2008, EENET held the first meeting of its new Steering Group. The Group is made up of EENET's founders, and representatives from regional inclusive education networks, grassroots user groups and academic institutions. The Group oversees EENET's work, and ensures compliance with the network's vision and commitment to participatory ways of working. Discussions focused on regional networking, strategic planning, financial issues, improving the newsletter, and clarifying our accountability to network members. As part of the meeting we held an open seminar – The Bigger Picture – focusing on the use of images and photography in inclusive education research and projects. As well as workshop sessions there were case studies from India and Burma, and a showing of the Young Voices film. A copy of the report is available from EENET.



Participants in EENET's 2008 steering group
 Back row: Windyz Ferreira (Brazil), Evena Massae (Tanzania), Anupam Ahuja (India), Salma Khalidi (Palestine), Kalpana Kumar (India), Alex Hauschild (Indonesia), Ingrid Lewis (UK), Nafisa Baboo (South Africa), Charity Namitwe (Zambia), Ian Kaplan (UK).
 Front row: Sue Stubbs (UK), Susie Miles (UK), Francis Simui (Zambia)

Mother tongue teaching

Last year we focused on the issue of language and how the use of mother tongue supports the learning and participation of children, especially at the start of their education. Augustine Chulube, a teacher from Zambia, was inspired to write to us:

“Working with people like you has given me the courage and optimism to carry on working well at my school. Thank you so much for sending me the newsletter. The last newsletter challenged us teachers on the importance of teaching in mother tongue. I was glad to read that teaching in mother tongue is the only means of ensuring good quality primary school education. I shared the newsletter with fellow teachers and parents here, particularly in the rural schools. I translated it into the local language, Icibemba, which is widely spoken in Zambia. Parents and teachers welcomed the idea and I provided photocopies which stimulated the interest of parents to support the use of mother tongue in school.”

If any EENET newsletters have inspired you to share information with others or to have discussions (or arguments!) about a particular inclusion issue, we'd love to hear from you.

Consultancy business

EENET has received an increasing number of requests in recent years to help other organisations find inclusive education consultants. We have also undertaken more consultancies directly, with EENET staff and founders acting as the consultants. In early 2009, the University of Manchester held a business enterprise competition. We took the opportunity to develop and submit a business plan for EENET to set up a consultancy branch. We were shortlisted in the top six of the competition. Although we didn't win, we are continuing to develop the consultancy business plan. A key focus of the plan is to find more consultants based in Southern countries, to run consultant capacity-building workshops, and then help NGOs to recruit more South-based consultants. If you would like more information about EENET's consultancy work, please email: consultancy@eenet.org.uk.

We would also like to thank Derin Adefajo and Thabo Miles 'Matli for their valuable voluntary contributions to the development of EENET's business plan.

Facebook

If you use the social networking site Facebook – www.facebook.com – please visit EENET's page and become a fan! You will be able to read latest news, find links to key documents and videos, and join in discussions with other EENET fans.

Editorial

Joseph Kisanji

Conversations about inclusive education have grown over the last 20 years. At international level, these conversations have been fuelled by numerous conferences and meetings, with their related resolutions, declarations and frameworks for action. But these international instruments are heavily influenced by policies, research findings, and practices from income-rich countries of the North. This can be confusing for countries of the South, as they develop their national policies on inclusive education.

Questions raised include:

- Is there a Southern perspective on inclusive education?
- Is enough attention paid to existing understandings and practices in the South?
- Is there a universal design that can be *adopted* by each country?
- Can a set of ideas and standards be *adapted* to suit each country?
- Are universally agreed understandings appropriate for Southern countries?

In most countries it has been difficult to establish a common understanding of inclusive education and the strategies needed to develop inclusive schools. There has often been confusion between policy-makers, researchers, and practitioners about the relevance of international statements. We cannot assume that what has worked in one country or community will necessarily work in, or become relevant to, any other country or community.

There are many factors at national and community level that determine how ideas are shaped and interpreted. These factors may be historical, social and/or cultural. In communities that have retained close-knit, extended family ties, elements of indigenous customary education exist. These elements include: education that is available and accessible to all members of the community; contents and methods of informal and non-formal education that are relevant to learners' lives; and the development of functional knowledge, attitudes and skills for cultural transmission and advancement.

Of course not all community attitudes are supportive of inclusion. Champions of inclusive education have to lobby and advocate for positive change. However, in order to understand the way a particular community already practises inclusive education, we need to analyse the indigenous understandings of the concept.

EENET provides some guidance on how to explore indigenous understandings in its action research guidelines "Learning from Difference".¹ This project aimed to help people who are involved in inclusive

education to learn from their experience of inclusive practice, document it, and share it with other people – without their stories first having to be captured and interpreted by external 'experts' in order to be heard.

The World Bank's Indigenous Knowledge for Development Results website² aims to highlight the important role played by community-based practices in the development process; and to support development practitioners to make better use of indigenous/traditional knowledge to maximise the benefits of their development assistance.

Efforts like this are more likely to lead to the formulation and implementation of policies that are nationally and community owned, and thus more sustainable. Such efforts will help communities and countries to practise inclusion in the way they understand it – not according to an outside expert's view of inclusion. By emphasising local contexts, countries will be better placed to develop education in a way that does not simply comply with international expectations. Instead attention can be paid to political and ideological visions, changes in economic performance, and external influences such as globalisation.

This newsletter is a platform for stimulating conversations on inclusive education from all perspectives – from local to international. The diversity of challenges and solutions covered in this year's newsletter demonstrate the impossibility of developing one 'international' approach to inclusive education.

Joseph co-ordinates Tanzania Education Network/Mtandao wa Elimu Tanzania (TEN/MET), a national coalition with more than 200 members.
Contact:
TEN/MET, PO Box 13547, Upanga, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Email: info@tenmet.org
Website: www.tenmet.org

¹ "Learning from Difference: An action research guide for capturing the experience of developing inclusive education", EENET, 2004 (available in print and on CD-ROM)

² <http://go.worldbank.org/CFZJDCEDM0>

Education as freedom from slavery in Niger

Romana Cacchioli

Slavery is illegal under national and international law, yet around 43,000 individuals live in slavery in Niger, the poorest country in the world. Denied their basic human rights, individuals inherit their slave status at birth. They are under the total control of their 'masters' for whom they are forced to work. Here Romana explains how an Anti-Slavery International project gives former slaves the chance to go to school for the first time, alongside the children of former masters.

The 'Securing Freedom Through Education' project focuses on the desert Tahoua region, which has high levels of slavery. Anti-Slavery International works with a local NGO, Timidria Association, whose members are mostly former slaves or descendants of slaves. The project provides community schools: their locations are agreed by local communities, who also construct the buildings using local materials. Schools have been built in villages established by families fleeing slavery. These villages have appointed their own chief – a former slave.

Attending school means children increase their chances of achieving a livelihood beyond slavery. Teachers are hired and paid by the government. The national curriculum is supplemented with learning about human rights, equality and non-discrimination. This helps to break down the barriers imposed by tradition and culture, and empower and build confidence among children of the slave caste. Social workers attached to the schools monitor enrolment equity. Half of the pupils in these schools are girls; while nationally only 31% of girls are in primary education.¹ To encourage mothers to send their daughters to school, the project provides them with micro-credit to start a small business (like goat rearing) and earn an independent living. The fund is managed by the schools' mothers groups. Each school helps about 30 mothers.

The communities are nomadic or semi-nomadic, so the schools provide an important focal point. The school social workers run a school pharmacy and give health and HIV/AIDS advice; they raise awareness about the impact of child marriage on girls' education; and give child welfare and development advice to parents. The schools also provide breakfast and lunch, as most families face food shortages. Each school has a concrete-lined well, offering safer water supplies to pupils and the wider community. Five schools have been built so far, teaching 276 children; 73% of pupils pass the end-of-year exams. Three more schools will open in the next three years. Annual reviews involving children, parents and school management committees will ensure that the schools



Six-year-old Aicha at school in Dalloussaye village

are meeting learners' and communities' needs. An annual meeting of school management committee representatives will enable schools to learn from each other and work together in the future.

"I have been promising people for years that Timidria would help us set up a school but the masters said it would never happen and that our dreams were pie in the sky. I am so happy that our school is now a reality... Now we have our self respect. The children love school, they are so excited about everything they are learning and every day come home with new ideas and thoughts. Now I can see that my children really do have a future." (Illin Cheho, former slave, now village chief of Danlousey)

Romana Cacchioli is Africa Programme Co-ordinator with Anti-Slavery International. Contact: Thomas Clarkson House, The Stableyard, Broomgrove Road, London SW9 9TL, UK Email: r.cacchioli@antislavery.org Contact Timidria Association at: Koira Kano, BP 430 Niamey, Niger. Email: timidria@intnet.ne

Slavery in the context of this story involves men, women and children being forced to work, through mental or physical threat. They are owned or controlled by a 'master', they are dehumanised, bought and sold as property, and have limited freedom of movement. Children are born into the 'slave caste'. Slaves are at the bottom of society's hierarchy; they are not allowed to own land, marry outside of the slave caste or engage in any decision-making processes.

¹ UNICEF (2009) State of the World's Children

A school for shepherds in Lesotho

Tara Baanen

Life in the mountains of Lesotho in southern Africa can be tough, but for young shepherd boys it is particularly difficult. Here Tara describes a school for shepherds in Semonkong, a small settlement in the heart of the mountains, which takes place in the evenings. It is the only chance most of the shepherds have to receive an education. The school was started in 2007 by a dedicated teacher, Ntate Julius Matoso Majoro. He was once a shepherd who was denied access to school.

Life as a shepherd

Boys become shepherds as young as six years old. Often they are orphans who have no other way of surviving. They spend each day searching for grazing for their goats, sheep or cows. Their whole lives revolve around the needs of their animals. The shepherds only own what they can carry, including a traditional Lesotho blanket to keep them warm.

Winters in Lesotho are long and very cold, and then the shepherds graze their animals around Semonkong. But during the summer (January to April) they move to higher ground. The local chiefs hold a 'pitso', a community meeting, to decide exactly when they should go. The shepherds leave in a big group. A donkey carries their maize meal, cooking pot and washing bowl. Some boys ride horses, but most walk for several days to get to the higher summer pastures. They have dogs to protect them from cattle thieves. The first frost is the sign to return to lower ground – but the chiefs may decide it is too early and send them back for another month.

What happens at school?

The shepherd school in Semonkong was established next to a Children's Centre which cares for 82 orphans and vulnerable children. Currently 62 shepherds attend the Semonkong school. Lessons in Sesotho, English and Maths are held Monday to Thursday, from 7pm to 10pm, after the shepherds have taken their animals to the kraal (animal pen) for the night. After lessons, students are given a nutritious meal.



Shepherds attending the school in Semonkong

Students start by learning basic reading, writing and counting skills; most cannot count their animals or money when they join the school. They also learn important life skills such as respect for others and the environment. Shepherds are provided with HIV/AIDS advice and, where possible, free HIV testing as Semonkong has a 1-in-3 infection rate. Many of the shepherds are also talented singers and practise at the school.

The school is only open in winter (May to December). However, during the summer months when the shepherds are away, school staff try to visit them and provide reading materials, clothes and medicines.

There are other shepherd schools in Lesotho – one school in the south of the country has students aged 8 to 62 years!

Impact of the school

Attending school brings the shepherds together, relieves the loneliness of their lifestyle, and gives them opportunities to share ideas and socialise. It has also improved their behaviour. The process of learning has relieved the boredom and sense of hopelessness that had previously resulted in the shepherds fighting and stealing cattle. They have greater confidence and self esteem, are no longer looked down upon by others in Semonkong, and their good behaviour has been commended by the local chief.

"I know how to read and write. I know how to count money and animals. I get advice from my teacher and my class mates: to respect, to be kind, honest and trustworthy." Makalo Senone, 19 years old, class 2

Tara Baanen has worked at Semonkong's Methodist Children's Centre since December 2007. The work is funded by church-based organisations.

Contact:
P.O.Box 173
Semonkong 120
Lesotho
Email: familybaanen@ilesotho.com

An accelerated learning programme in Southern Sudan

Emily Echessa

Countries affected by conflict face many challenges in achieving quality education, such as large numbers of children who do not enter primary school at the right age. Education reconstruction often focuses on formal primary education, ignoring those who previously missed out. Yet over-age learners still try to enrol in primary schools, 'blocking' places intended for young children, expanding class sizes, and thus challenging teachers to support learners from diverse age groups. Accelerated learning programmes, as Emily explains, are one way of tackling these problems.

- 60% of children who do not start school at the age of 6 will remain out of school¹
- in Southern Sudan, one million children (75% of total school-age population) are out of school; only 2,500 children (0.8% of girls and 2% of boys) complete 8 years of primary education.²

When older children enrol they can double class sizes. Teachers struggle to meet all learners' needs, causing high drop-out rates. Older children are often stigmatised and traumatised. They often face verbal, physical and sexual abuse inside and outside school. Lack of learning materials compounds their problems.

In Rumbek, Southern Sudan, I saw a 15-year-old boy sitting under a tree, intently reading a tattered textbook. His dream was to have access to more books; he loved reading and was thirsty for knowledge. His teacher had lent him the book for just a few hours so he could revise for an exam.

Children who have missed years of education often have particular needs not met by standard primary education systems – e.g. flexible timetables that allow time for household and/or paid work, and more supportive relationships with teachers. The primary curriculum content may also be irrelevant to older children, as they and their communities want more immediate practical benefits from education. Formal education systems therefore need to provide services tailored to the needs of older out-of-school children. An accelerated learning programme (ALP) gives children an opportunity to access education at a level appropriate to their ability and age.

Key features of ALP

- promotes inclusive and comprehensive formal education for a wide range of out-of-school children
- decongests schools, freeing up primary spaces for younger children
- condenses the primary curriculum
- involves positive discipline methods and child-friendly, age-appropriate active learning

- speeds up learning for older pupils; they quickly gain qualifications and re-integrate into mainstream education or vocational/technical education
- often builds in life skills
- arranges class times around children's lives
- supports teachers to develop more equitable, participatory relationships with students, more in keeping with their age.

ALP needs to be accredited and linked to current national standards of achievement. Setting up an ALP centre within or linked to a mainstream school can help with regulation, monitoring and sustainability. With training and support, mainstream teachers can use ALP methods; some use it to make their mainstream classrooms more flexible and learner-centred.

Save the Children's pilot ALP programme in Southern Sudan was created in 2001 to educate 3,500 demobilised child soldiers aged 10–18 years. Eight years of primary curriculum was condensed into four years. Volunteer teachers and regular teachers trained in active learning methods. Classes were conducted in existing schools or at other locations agreed by communities. Learners were taught during afternoons or evenings. Those who passed end-of-year exams could join formal schools in age-appropriate classes. Based on the pilot, the new Government of Southern Sudan has adopted ALP and plans to roll it out nationally to educate the high numbers of out-of-school children and young people and help achieve Education for All goals.

Emily is Save the Children UK's Education Adviser (Children in Conflict). Contact:

Save the Children
1 St. John's Lane

London

EC1M 4AR, UK

Email: e.echessa@savethechildren.org.uk

¹ MoEST (2008) www.moest.gov.sd/start/index.php

² UNESCO (2008) Global Monitoring Report, Overcoming inequality: Why Governance Matters

Safe play in an earthquake zone in Kyrgyzstan

Tolkun Jukusheva

In an emergency situation, relief and reconstruction work focuses on basic necessities such as food, water and shelter. Children's play needs may be forgotten, yet they are central to the development of every child. In this article, Tolkun explains how Save the Children helped to establish safe play areas for children in two affected villages – Karasogot and Temirkoruk. This collaborative effort with the Ministry of Emergency Situation, district education departments, school administrations, community members, adults and children became so popular it has continued even after the emergency.

Kyrgyzstan is located in Central Asia among many 'young' mountains which are still growing. This causes more than 2,000 earthquake tremors each year. After a large earthquake in the south of Kyrgyzstan in January 2008, Save the Children decided to implement a project called "Child Protection in the Aftermath of the Earthquake in Kyrgyzstan", funded by the UK Department for International Development. The project aimed to reduce the impact of the earthquake on the lives of children and their families in affected villages through providing immediate relief and support to children.

What is a safe play area?

The creation of safe play areas is a key intervention within Save the Children's emergency responses. The areas provide children with protected environments where they can participate in organised activities. Children play, socialise, learn, and express themselves as they rebuild their lives. This is a key intervention for protecting children from physical harm and psychosocial distress, and for helping them to continue learning and developing, both during and immediately after an emergency.

Each play area is equipped with toys, books, sports equipment, washing stands, temporary paddling pools, furniture, a CD player, etc. In Karasogot village, with support from the Ministry, two big shelters were provided for use as the safe play area and school kitchen. An old carpentry workshop was repaired with support and contributions from community members and teachers in Temirkoruk village.

What happens in the safe play areas?

The areas open at 9am and close at 5pm, and operate two shifts. They are closed on Saturdays. They are open to all children from 3 to 17 years old – younger children attend in the morning, older ones in the afternoon. Volunteers organise work and are on duty to supervise the children in the play areas.

Save the Children staff initially trained safe play area volunteers, parents and children on child rights, hygiene and sanitation, tolerance, effective communication, natural disasters, etc. Volunteer facilitators then conducted similar sessions with users of the play areas (children and parents).

Save the Children staff organised children's games and competitions. We used ideas from a manual on 'safe spaces' by the American Red Cross, and games and activities compiled by an emergency education specialist from Save the Children US. Child-to-child approaches have also been used, through which children volunteer to organise games and competitions, and facilitate trainings, etc, with other children.

Community involvement

When we started to establish the safe play areas in the affected villages, community members didn't like the idea. Many said they didn't need playgrounds for children, they needed to rebuild their houses before winter and their children would help them with this. They said nobody would be able to use the play facilities or work as volunteers.



Volunteers and children in a safe play area

But we decided to start anyway, conducting training and organising games, and signing a collaboration agreement with the school administration and district education department. The local authorities helped us to organise meetings with community members and elderly people so that we could persuade them to change their attitude. Building a relationship with community members and local authorities is an essential step in establishing a project like this.

Once we had secured community support, children and parents were the main actors in implementing the project and they worked as volunteers in each safe play area. In both villages, 30 volunteers (21 children and 9 adults) were identified. All 30 received Save the Children's training. Volunteers then developed the schedule of work, designed the area, informed other children about the project, and divided responsibilities among each other. During the opening ceremonies for the play areas, short plays about the earthquake were performed by volunteers and they talked about their work to promote safe play.



Young volunteers preparing activities

Volunteers help disabled children to use the play areas. Each volunteer is responsible for one street and they invite all the children from this street to attend. If children live far away their parents take it in turns to accompany them.

Volunteers also identify equipment needs and 'play co-ordinators' are appointed through an election process. Volunteers have also conducted a public awareness campaign on child rights, and community members have helped volunteers to run sport, drawing and essay-writing competitions for adults and children.



Children perform a play about the earthquake

The right to play

- 1 States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
- 2 States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity. **Article 31, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**

Sustainability

Save the Children has handed over all equipment and relevant documents to the school administration, and each safe play area in Karasogot and Temirkoruk is continuing to run. Our volunteers are also continuing to work, even after the emergency period, because community members and children like the play areas. Now approximately 1,380 children from these two villages participate in the play activities.

Tolkun Jukusheva is the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer with Save the Children in Kyrgyzstan.

Contact:
27, Logvinenko Street
Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
Tel: +996 312 664839 / 664827
Email: tolkun@savechildren.kg

Early childhood care and development for all in Sri Lanka Palanisamy Krishnakumar

Approximately 60% of children aged 3-5 years are involved in early childhood care and development (ECCD) in Sri Lanka. The government plans to increase this to 80% by the end of 2009. However, the inclusion of young children from marginalised groups has not yet received much attention. In this article, Krishnakumar outlines Save the Children's work to include disabled and other excluded children, using tools such as the 'Index for Inclusion in Early Years'.

Background

In Sri Lanka early childhood usually means from birth to age 5, although there is on-going debate about including the early primary school years, up to age 8. This would ensure continuity of experience and a smoother transition into formal schooling. ECCD is mainly provided by private and non-governmental institutions with only a few pre-schools directly supported by the government.

There is poor co-ordination between the various ECCD programmes and services (which have different models and standards); limited community participation; and too few trained ECCD teachers. Nevertheless, these issues are being discussed and gradually resolved, with technical and financial support from non-governmental actors – a process which is making central government more responsible and accountable.

Exclusion

In Sri Lanka, large numbers of children with disabilities, poor and marginalised children, and those belonging to low caste and minority ethnic groups are excluded from play, learning and development services. In 2005, a Save the Children study found that children with disabilities make up a significant proportion of those excluded. Their exclusion is due to social stigma, a lack of early screening systems, and the perceived inability of ECCD teachers to accommodate children with disabilities in their programmes.

Supporting teachers to work with children with disabilities

Save the Children started a programme of community mobilisation and awareness to help stakeholders understand the importance of ECCD from a rights perspective. We stressed that all children, regardless of their abilities or status, should enjoy their right to survival, growth and development, participation, and to be heard.

However, we found there was a lack of user-friendly materials and relevant inclusion training available.

We therefore developed a culturally appropriate teacher training package with modules, session plans and a training-of-trainers programme. The package was created through a consultative and participatory process with communities, government and non-government ECCD actors.

More than 5,000 ECCD teachers have been trained to identify, enrol and include children with disabilities, seeing difference as a resource for learning and development rather than a problem. So far, over 300 children with disabilities have been given a better start in life. Our training package is recognised by the government and government officers have also been trained.

Using the Index for Inclusion

However, other excluded children also need attention. The barriers to their inclusion need to be identified, as do ways of overcoming these obstacles. We also need to map the resources that can be used to promote inclusion in ECCD with a focus on community participation and leadership.

In 2008, Save the Children started to localise the '*Index for Inclusion in Early Years*'¹ (published by the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education) to fit into the Sri Lankan ECCD context. The process started with translating the *Index* into local languages and with a series of consultations. The material was piloted in selected ECCD centres representing both Tamil and Sinhalese communities in six districts, and the lessons learned were documented. The final output will be a Sri Lankan version of the *Index* that can help ECCD teachers and communities understand and practise inclusive approaches in ECCD centres, benefiting all Sri Lankan children.

Krishnakumar is an ECCD Adviser with Save the Children in Sri Lanka. Contact: 58 A, Horton Place, Colombo 7, Sri Lanka
Email: krishnakumar@savethechildren.lk

1 See EENET's website to download the Index in various languages.

Learning disability and student voice in England

Shaffia Ahmed, Mark Atherton, Tracey Burns, Frank Lee, Kavita Lunj, Lee Noonan, Lorraine Pugh, Hannah Scott, James Ward and Claudine Willis

This article describes a one-year participatory research project with students who have severe learning disabilities at The Manchester College (of further education¹). The project investigated ways of empowering students to research their preferred ways of learning. It involved five students aged 19–25 years and college staff, one of whom is a PhD student at the University of Manchester.

Activities

Students, their tutors and support staff shared project responsibilities. Students chaired reflective meetings, interviewed students and staff, filmed and photographed activities, looked after files, reflective journals and portfolios; tutors and support staff facilitated the process. The research methods aimed to encourage self-reflection and group discussion.

Methods	Reflection on the process
Observations: Hannah, a tutor, observed the students and noted how they were learning.	Hannah adapted her tutor role to that of a tutor-researcher and placed the students at the centre of the inquiry.
Body collages: Students drew around each other on large sheets of paper. They were given a selection of pictures showing different learning activities. They chose images that represented themselves as learners and stuck these on their body drawings. They then presented them to the group.	Body collages, portfolios and photo voice were the most accessible activities, and the most effective for getting responses. They enabled students to control the research process, with little or no help from staff
Portfolios: Students collected examples of their work and pictures throughout the year. These showed them engaged in different college activities that they enjoyed and that showed their strengths.	To make the body collage activity easier to understand, the team produced two identical sets of pictures – one with blue borders representing activities students found easy or liked; the other with red borders for dislikes and activities they found difficult.
Photo voice: Photographs were taken around the college relating to learning preferences, the environment and aspirations for the future.	
Reflective journal: Students recorded activities they liked doing, using writing and pictures. Staff recorded observations of the students and personal reflections about their own teaching and supportive practice.	Students found keeping and remembering to fill in a reflective journal difficult. Staff struggled to find time for critical reflection.
Interviews: Students interviewed each other. Information gathered from the observations and body collages helped with the interviews.	Students found some interview questions confusing and so could not answer all of them.
Co-operative meetings: Meetings were held to discuss learning from the activities; what staff should do to meet individual learning needs and the students' aims after leaving college. Further action was agreed.	Conversations were open, everyone contributed (through talking, filming, handing out information, etc). Everyone knew what needed to be done.

Actions taken

Many discoveries were made and new things tried out. Here are two examples:

Findings	Actions
Frank wanted to learn more about his local community, so that he could live on his own after college.	The group visited Frank's neighbourhood, local shops and leisure facilities and looked at public transport. Staff now work closely with his family and care manager to help him achieve independent living and supported employment.
Initially Lee communicated using hand gestures with limited speech. He said he chose not to speak because he felt he was not listened to.	Staff and students agreed to give Lee more time to communicate, and resisted the urge to talk and make decisions for him. Now Lee is more confident, contributes to discussions and argues his points of view.

For more information please contact: Hannah Scott c/o Lorraine Pugh, The Manchester College, Nicholls Campus, Hyde Road, Manchester M12 6BA, UK. Email: hannah.scott@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

¹ Further education means any learning that occurs after compulsory secondary education, but excludes university education, which is known as higher education.

Service-learning in Queensland, Australia

Suzanne Carrington

'Service-learning' describes student involvement in community service using knowledge gained at school or university. In Queensland, students studying inclusive education in the Bachelor of Teaching course complete 20 hours of service in a range of partner organisations. This can include care homes for elderly people and homework clubs for refugee children. Service-learning complements the students' experience of teaching in schools and builds on their university learning. Here Suzanne outlines the way she has developed service-learning.

Why service-learning?

Inclusive education is a core subject for our student teachers. Queensland University of Technology has developed relationships with community organisations that support individuals with diverse needs and disabilities. Student teachers do voluntary work with these organisations. This reinforces the students' learning about inclusive education and they see that 'inclusion' relates to all aspects of marginalisation in society. Service-learning helps students become more engaged with their learning and the teaching profession. It provides them with an inclusive ethical framework to support their teaching practice, and helps them to move from student to practitioner.

Reflective practice

This is a key aspect of service-learning. Students develop reflective practice through activities like reading and discussion and their voluntary service. Their understanding of ethics, diversity, equity, and their roles as teachers and citizens in a democratic society, is transformed by providing this service. Students complete a 'Service-learning Reflection Log', documenting their academic learning and service work. This helps them reflect on their transition from being largely unaware of inequality in society to being very aware of these issues.

Service-learning goals and students' views

1 To enhance student learning by joining theory with experience and thought with action
"The experience was challenging, eye-opening and rewarding in many ways. It helped make concrete the theory learnt at university... it made inclusive practices more accessible for me. Theory and practice are so different. Why write an assignment when you can go and experience the assignment?"

2 To enable students to help others, give of themselves, and enter into caring relationships with others through cross-cultural experiences

"My experience [at a homework support centre for refugee children] has given me a much greater appreciation of the day-to-day difficulties faced by so many people who are marginalised in our society due to their cultural background, language barriers, [and] migrant or refugee status."

3 To assist students to see the relevance of the academic subject to the real world

"I developed inclusive skills and strategies associated with communicating with, interacting with, and teaching students with a range of diverse individual needs. I gained knowledge from my co-workers at the Learning Centre about... working in an inclusive setting. I now feel better equipped to provide a diverse range of students with quality learning experiences."

4 To increase student civic and citizenship skills through volunteering with organisations that provide support to various people in society

"I am very glad I undertook this experience. The school is right across the road from my house and I never knew what went on inside. I have learnt a lot about valuing the precious moments of life and noticing the good and value in all people."

5 To challenge students to address societal inadequacies and injustices and seek remedies

"This really opened my eyes to how these families struggle, and as a future teacher I need to understand that students from such backgrounds need to be handled with care."

Suzanne is Professor and Head of the School of Learning and Professional Studies.
Contact: Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology, Victoria Park Road, Kelvin Grove Q 4059, Australia.
Email: sx.carrington@qut.edu.au

Learning through community service in Trinidad and Tobago

Betty McDonald

Not all learning has to be done in a formal classroom, and not all activities to promote inclusion have to be led by teachers. Here, Betty explains how secondary school students took up the challenge of providing a service for their community by helping children at a kindergarten. Their activities helped some kindergarten children to increase their participation in class, while the students developed useful skills and confidence.

A class of 36 secondary school students, aged around 14 years, participated in a project which encouraged their involvement in the community. Following discussion, the class decided to focus on assisting a nearby kindergarten. The project, which I co-ordinated, was part of a social outreach programme supported by a local bank in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean. The project is an example of 'service-learning', which integrates community service activities into school-based instruction and reflection. It enriches the learning experience for students, teaches them civic responsibility, and helps to strengthen communities.

Planning

In small groups, we discussed the kinds of activities that were suitable for kindergarten children. Over several weeks, we planned the activities using checklists developed by the students. Activities ranged from kindergarten orientation, playing games, storytelling, gift giving, and bidding farewell. We performed role-plays to help the students understand the purpose and expectations of each activity.

Action

The school and kindergarten are near to each other, so the students could simply walk to the kindergarten. We chose times when both the students and kindergarten children were likely to need a break from mainstream classroom work.

The students played new games with the kindergarten children like marbles, hide-and-seek and hopscotch. The students listened to the younger children tell stories, empathised with them and took a keen interest in their needs.

We gave the kindergarten stationery, stickers, colouring books and games donated by the students. The kindergarten children loved the personal attention, and many said they wanted to be just like the students when they grew up.

Results

Although inclusion was not the project's main objective, the community service activities helped to promote inclusion. Several shy students, who would

not normally volunteer suggestions or participate, engaged with the kindergarten children. In turn, kindergarten children who were usually shy opened up to the students. We found that the students helped to improve the kindergarten children's ability to believe in themselves. The students also helped improve the children's self esteem, assertive communication, patience, creativity and confidence. The exchanges were so rich that the students requested an extension of the project.

"This is so neat...having children actually listen to us and care about what we have to share is amazing..."
"I feel moved to see innocent eyes glued to me, engaging in everything I had to say and sharing their stories..." (Secondary school students)

"Goody...nice... I like this..."
"Yippi Yeah! This is cool..."
"...I like me better now..."
(Kindergarten children)

The students received awards from a local non-governmental organisation and marks for the quality of their service which contributed to their final term grade. They were judged on: creativity, management, innovation, teamwork, dependability, humour, responsibility, discipline, multi-tasking ability and neatness. Fortunately, Trinidad and Tobago's flexible curriculum allows teachers the freedom to carry out activities like this.

Many students realised that the inclusive spirit fuelled by the activities allowed them to have a voice, understand better the challenges other people face, and feel a part of their community. The way forward is exciting, with more educators in Trinidad and Tobago recognising the importance of community service in the curriculum.

Dr. Betty McDonald manages the Professional Development Unit at the University of Trinidad and Tobago.
Contact: O'Meara Campus, Lots 74-98, O'Meara Industrial Park, Arima, Trinidad and Tobago
Email: betmcdee@gmail.com

Supporting marginalised learners in Armenia

Karine Kharatyan and Alina Manukyan

Armenia has a long history of institutionalising disabled people, but various programmes across the country are now working hard to change attitudes and practices. In particular, efforts are being made to enable disabled children to learn with their peers within mainstream schools. This article outlines two activities that are taking place to help improve the education experiences of disabled and other children. Karine, a speech therapist, explains about a theatre club that helps to include disabled children in mainstream schools. Alina, a psychologist, tells us about working with parents to help them support their children's learning.

Using drama to support inclusion

The Child Development Foundation is part of an inclusive education programme aimed at assisting mainstream pre-schools to become inclusive. The Foundation's resource centre in Yerevan, supports pre-school age children identified as having special needs or school-age children who have been left out of the mainstream educational system. Individual and group classes – facilitated by a special needs educator, speech therapist and psychologist – support children's transition to mainstream kindergarten/school, or help children already at kindergarten/school who are facing difficulties. The centre also supports the children's families. The centre runs dance, theatre and drawing clubs attended by children with and without special needs. The clubs play an important role in helping to make the educational process inclusive within the local community.

The leader of the theatre club is a producer who helps match children to roles that suit and interest them. The group work focuses not just on the final performance but also on the process of preparation – the rehearsals teach the children to become more attentive, patient and caring. For example, if one child has limited mobility, the whole group helps him/her to move around. Children gradually gain confidence and independence, which is enhanced by the group leader encouraging the children to improvise and change the script. This allows children not only to be actors but also script-writers and directors. Club members prepare everything for the performance, from decorating the stage to sewing costumes.

On the day of the performance everyone is excited. During the performance no child is viewed as having limited capabilities, they are all real actors. Many audience members may previously have thought they should avoid children with special needs and their families. But after the performance opinions change. For some children the performance may be the first



A public performance by the theatre club

time they have been the centre of attention because of what they *can* do, rather than what they can't do. They are strong and everyone witnesses this.

The theatre club helps to raise children's self-esteem and belief in their own abilities, and helps them to make friends – this can really change life for them and their families. It challenges and helps to alter the opinions of parents and other adults, which ultimately improves the inclusion of children with special needs in education *and* the community.

Aram is 10 years old and has Down's syndrome. He did not attend school as his grandmother thought he could not manage in an environment beyond the family. For a while Aram attended only individual classes with a psychologist and special needs educator at the centre. Later, at the age of 9, he became involved in the theatre club. It was the first place where he studied how to co-operate, take responsibility, and love and be loved by other people. His grandmother's fears of taking Aram into the wider society were overcome. By September 2008 Aram was attending a mainstream school.

Empowering parents to support learning at home

In Armenia, children labelled as having 'special needs' have been considered 'incapable'. Even the term 'parents of children with special needs' has been used as a negative label. Parents have been viewed as being responsible only for their children's physical well-being, while the decisions about what and how to teach their children should be made by special needs educators, psychologists, etc.

Such attitudes are now changing, and the important role that parents play in a child's intellectual development is at last being recognised, thus offering parents opportunities to become active participants in their child's development. Children who are helped to learn and practise key skills at home may also find it easier when moving to mainstream school.

While education at home exists in Armenia, improvements are still needed. In our context, learning at home currently ranges from parents teaching their children basic concepts such as colours and sizes, to performing tasks with the child that have been suggested by specialists.

"For quite a long time I kept thinking that only specialists should work towards my child's intellectual development. I thought all I could do was to conscientiously take my child to special classes. It was only when I started completing the tasks assigned by the specialists together with my child, I realized that I also could contribute towards overcoming problems my son faced. This helped me to better understand my son, become his friend and teacher, and free myself of the oppressive feeling of being incapable as a parent"
(Mother of a 4-year-old boy)



Parent supporting her child's learning at home

Our experiences as specialists based in the centre provide some lessons regarding what works well to help involve parents in their child's learning at home:

- It is crucial for parents to accept their child as he/she is – whether or not he/she has an impairment or other 'special need' – and acknowledge that their child has the right to be different. We encourage parents to support their child's development process through showing love and dedication, and **not relying totally on specialists** to do all of the necessary activities with the child.
- Parents are often not aware of, or they underestimate the extent of, their child's capabilities. Choosing the right level of activities for a child is important. We therefore **empower parents with the confidence to choose appropriate activities** and games that will help their children to succeed in learning a particular skill. Parents are shown how to support learning in small steps and at a pace that suits the child.
- All children learn best when they are interested in a task. Therefore, rather than only following preset activities, we **help parents to find out what their individual children are interested in**. Encouraging parents to take advantage of all learning opportunities in the home is essential. For instance, if a parent knows what their child's favourite game is, we help them to think creatively about how they could use this game to achieve various learning opportunities.
- Finally, we support parents to achieve a balance between working hard with their child to achieve learning objectives and still giving the child plenty of love and affection.

Contact the Child Development Foundation at:
0065, 1 R. Melikyan Street
Malatia-Sebastia
Yerevan
Republic of Armenia
Email: cdf2009@mail.ru or
kristina_baghdasaryan@wvi.org

This article is an edited version of the authors' original work, which was translated from Armenian into English by Yulia Shahnazarova.

'Beyond Flying': A pupil voice project in England

Isaac Ngugi

'Beyond Flying' is the name of an innovative creative arts project carried out in 2008 with pupils from a secondary school in London, England. In this article Isaac, a drama teacher specialising in pupil voice, explains how the project aimed to change the traditional teacher-pupil relationship, by enabling pupils to have a voice. Pupils learned drama skills, but they also learned to fly with the aid of harnesses and ropes.

We began by working on conflict resolution and group dynamics. We established ground rules and discussed expectations. With the support of artists from Scarabeus Theatre, pupils put on harnesses and learned how to swing, spin and ascend and how to perform choreographed movements while 'flying' in the air.

The pupils worked out themes for their performance, and decided they wanted to challenge stereotypes about young people and to focus on bullying and relationships. Using stage fighting and aerial skills, they devised ways of acting out these issues in a performance. Rehearsing for the aerial choreography was hard work. Ultimately there were two performances – one at the school and one at a local cultural festival.

Supporting genuine pupil voice

Although the rehearsals went well, we realised that the pupils were not telling us what they really thought about the experience. They were giving us only positive answers. We therefore encouraged them to reflect on which parts of the project they found confusing. To do this we asked them to act out the moments in the project when they felt bored and confused. They acted out the process of the project: how we had tried to encourage them and incorporate their ideas. They also showed us how the adults had related to them.

The dramas were funny, humbling and accurate. Pupils also wrote down their feedback and we had a lively discussion between the pupils, teachers and artists.

Who was involved?

- 25 pupils aged 14 and 16 and their drama teacher
- Creative Partnerships London North – provided project funding and management
- artists from Scarabeus Theatre – specialising in 'aerial' or flying performances
- Isaac from Unclassified Arts
- a 'creative agent' – helped with planning, monitoring and evaluation.

We reached an agreement that it is *how* the adults communicate, and not *what* they ask the pupils to do, that most influences pupils' sense of engagement in an activity.

After this exercise, the adults not only listened more to what the pupils said, but took their comments on board throughout the rest of the project. As a result, the performance was completely devised by the young people. They also suggested games and activities for use in the project and took more responsibility for the technical aspects of the aerial activities. The young people had developed ownership of the project.

"It was the first time anyone who has taught me has said 'I want you to tell me where I went wrong'." (*Pupil*)

"I learned not to take myself too seriously, and how I should adapt my language to ensure the young people are engaged." (*Artist from Scarabeus Theatre*)

"We have experienced improvements in how students and staff relate to one another." (*Headteacher*)

Young people are more sophisticated than adults sometimes give them credit for. They have a lot to say, and as adults we have to be prepared to hear criticism from young people. Even if we don't agree, we can at least have a debate where everyone's views are valued.

Related activities

The project included far more pupils than just those who performed:

- English students aged 12 wrote poetry based on the drama
- art students drew pictures of the activities
- music students composed and recorded music for the performance
- media students aged 16 filmed the project.

The school is also now starting another project looking at how creativity can enhance teaching and learning.

“How to Engage Marginalised Young People in Sports and the Arts”

This was the name of a conference where the pupils ran a practical workshop for adults (teachers, politicians and other professionals working with or for young people) and spoke about and demonstrated what they had done in the ‘Beyond Flying’ project.



Drawing by pupil showing aerial drama

Lessons learned

- Don't be afraid to abandon or change your plans (regardless of time spent on them).
- Be prepared for what the young people have to say, and if you can, act on it so that they can see that their input has an impact.
- Make sure that the roles of both the external artists/facilitators and teachers are clear. Teachers bring skills and knowledge of their pupils to the project; their involvement can ensure activities are continued or developed in the future.
- Focus on the creative process, not just on the final output.

Isaac works as a creative arts specialist. He is a founder partner of **Unclassified Arts**, an award-winning physical theatre company that provides performance training and arts education worldwide, with a focus on inclusion and participation.

Contact:

Unclassified Arts, Interchange Studios,
213 Haverstock Hill, London NW3 4QP, UK

Email: isaac@unclassifiedarts.com

Website: www.unclassifiedarts.com

This case study is adapted from CPLN's publication "The Challenge Of Engaging Young People Within A 'Comprehensive', Creative Learning Model". Contact Isaac for a copy.

A note from the editors on 'Listening to learners'

The concept of 'pupil voice' (also known as 'student', or 'learner' voice) is increasingly seen as central to achieving quality inclusive education. Learners are major stakeholders in education and they have a unique perspective on the learning process. In some countries this idea has not yet been explored at all. In other countries children and young people are often involved in token consultations, and their views rarely taken seriously. Listening to learners can be time-consuming and requires educators to gain new skills. But why should educators listen to, and act upon, the ideas and opinions of children and young people?

Engaging learners in a debate about teaching and learning in a meaningful way is:

- an issue of human rights
- a key principle of democracy and participation
- a strategy for improving education – for both teachers and learners.

Articles 12 and 13 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) state that all children and young people have the right to express themselves and receive information, and that their views should be taken seriously. The Convention also states that, "listening to children should not be seen as an end in itself".

All too often, learners are consulted, but little value is placed on their views and the consultation process does not lead to action. Children and young people can become alienated from the concept of 'pupil voice' if their opinions are not taken seriously. Many children and young people become disengaged from education when adults continue to make decisions on their behalf. Yet, involving learners in decision-making can transform their experience of education and so encourage them to participate in their communities.

The Green Schools of Madagascar

Sophie Küspert Rakotondrainy and Tolonjo Saranga Andriamparany Rakotondrainy

Madagascar was once covered with forests. Now around 90% of these forests have been destroyed by human activity and the country is suffering from erosion, lack of clean drinking water, floods and declining soil fertility. Many unique plants and animal species are endangered or extinct because of bush fires, damaged habitats and the unsustainable exploitation of resources. Mparany and Sophie (project co-ordinator and volunteer) explain how the Green Schools Bara* project is tackling these environmental problems, while also promoting educational inclusion.

How is this an inclusion issue?

Green Schools Bara encourages children to love and respect nature. Without this, no effort to protect the environment will succeed. Children learn that nature is something beautiful, valuable and worth protecting. Aesthetic activities are often combined with environmental work, encouraging children to create cleaner, healthier surroundings.

We want children to feel part of their community, and to understand that *everyone* is responsible for the future of the environment and of Madagascar. It is widely recognised that inclusive education helps to build an inclusive society; that's why our project believes *every* child can develop love and care for nature and can speak out against over-exploitation and destruction of their environment. All children can participate in growing trees and flowers and protecting animals. Our green activities aim to be truly inclusive regardless of the children's intellectual or physical capacity.

Linking with the curriculum

Samoela is a young teacher who works for the Green School in Tsingilofilobe. Tsingilofilobe is not the biggest or most successful school in the project, but in the last year it has seen the greatest transformation thanks to Samoela's efforts. He has an agricultural education as well as his teaching diploma. This makes him a useful resource for the school and the local community.

"We have many different activities here in Tsingilofilobe. We always combine environmental or agricultural activities with school subjects. This makes the activities even more interesting and useful, and we can include all the children, no matter which grade they are in." (Samoela)

The children carefully guard the place where they grow beans and peanuts. When their products are sold at the market they develop their maths skills and learn about finances and trading. The money earned is used for cooking, leisure and other school activities.

"We mixed together grated manioc, oil and sugar and fried it into small cakes. We had never eaten such cake before, but everyone liked it because it tasted really good!" (A pupil)

The school in Tsingilofilobe has a compost area, where the children learn how to deal with natural waste products and how to reuse them as fertilizer for growing vegetables and trees.

"This is useful for our agricultural projects, but it is also a practical experience in science lessons. It makes it easier for everyone to understand what is happening in nature." (Sameola)

Activities like making compost and planting vegetables are suitable for children of all ages and abilities. They also make the teaching more interesting and relevant – which is vital to ensure that all children feel included at school and to improve their lives in the surrounding agricultural community.

Tree planting

Every school in the project is encouraged to plant a tree nursery, thus improving the environment and counteracting deforestation. This is a whole-school activity where pupils learn to work together. Many of the Green Schools divide children into groups of mixed ages, sexes and abilities. Each group has one day per week which they devote to looking after the trees.



Pupils weeding the school field



"We like our school yard. We sit here and talk about what we are doing in school."

Geometric flower beds

Flowerbeds are laid out in different shapes in front of Tsingilofilobe school – one round, one rectangular, one square and one triangular. The teacher and students combine garden planting with mathematics. The children learn the shapes and how to calculate surface area, etc, while they decorate the school yard with colourful flowers. Mathematics is also included in activities such as measuring the tree nursery and counting how many trees are being planted.

When we, as project staff, visited recently we saw the children weeding. They were very proud that the plants were getting big. They feel at home surrounded by nature and they love their school. With this sort of friendly and welcoming environment it is easier to include all children, not only children with particular disabilities but also those who otherwise would drop out or not start to learn at all.

Including disabled learners

Inclusive education is still a very new concept in Madagascar. However, Green Schools Bara is working hard to promote inclusion and change traditional attitudes. The remoteness of the project schools and the harsh terrain make it difficult for many children to get to school. Making connections with other schools and institutions is also problematic. Our schools currently include some children with mild physical, hearing and intellectual

impairments, although they are not yet as inclusive as we would like. We have developed links with an education centre for deaf and blind learners in the town of Antsirabe, and have trained teachers on these issues. We also made a study tour to the East African island of Zanzibar in early 2009, to see the inclusive education programme there. EENET helped us to arrange this. We gathered many ideas that we will adapt and implement.

Green Schools Bara is a project within the Integrated Rural Development Project (known as SoFaBa) in the South-West of Madagascar.

Project objectives:

- improve the quality of the schools, e.g. modern teaching methods
- contribute to a better natural environment, better food sufficiency and better health for pupils and communities
- promote gender equality and inclusion of disabled children.

Key features of the project

- 11 schools, 700 pupils up to fifth grade, 21 teachers
- schools are spread over a vast, remote area, accessed only by foot (an area 'forgotten' by the government and non-governmental organisations)
- the project helps the local community to build and rehabilitate schools and supplies materials, and offers regular teacher training and motivation sessions
- teachers are employed by the government or the church, not by the project.

Contact:

Green Schools Bara
SoFaBa-FLM, BP 65, Ihozy 313
Madagascar
Email: smbara@moov.mg
Website: www.smbara.org

Sophie is a volunteer in the Green Schools Bara project and is also studying educational science. Mparany is a qualified teacher and the co-ordinator of the project.

* The Bara is one of Madagascar's 18 ethnic groups. They are traditionally semi-nomadic cattle herders, with few agricultural traditions. The Bara region is one of the island's most remote and 'difficult' areas. Green Schools Bara works in this region, although villages from other ethnic groups, not just the Bara, are welcome as project partners.

Changing relationships between special and mainstream schools in Malawi

Delix Missinzo

In many countries there is little contact between special schools and mainstream schools. In Malawi, misunderstandings about the roles of special and inclusive schools, and the unclear relationship between them, are holding back progress towards inclusion. However, the situation is beginning to change. Here Delix describes some initial activities to bring special and mainstream schools together for the benefit of deaf learners.

Background

In 1983 the first itinerant (travelling) teachers, who have some specialist training, began working with visually impaired learners in mainstream schools. Later, in 1996, an itinerant service began supporting learners with hearing impairments and learning difficulties. However, mainstream teachers were not trained to work with these itinerant teachers. This has made it difficult for the itinerant teachers to provide effective support. The government created an inclusive education policy in 2001. Yet, there is no guidance on the development of personnel and expertise, or on how deaf learners, and others with disabilities and special educational needs, can be educated in their neighbourhood schools.

Special and mainstream school relationships

Understanding how to implement inclusive education is limited in Malawi. Teacher training colleges have no specialist lecturers and inclusive education is only now beginning to be discussed. Mainstream teachers tend to think that inclusion involves the teaching of learners with disabilities in special schools by specialist teachers – a misconception which has led to teachers in special and mainstream schools having little contact with each other.

Four residential special schools cater for about 600 deaf children, yet estimates suggest there are at least 6,000 children who were born severely deaf and many more who become deaf through illness. Inclusive education may be the only way to reach these large numbers of children.

Improved collaboration in Masambanjati Zone

Masambanjati Zone in Southern Malawi has 14 mainstream primary schools with a total enrolment of 10,000 learners. With just 82 teachers, the teacher/learner ratio in the zone is challenging – 1:122.

Inspired by their Primary Education Adviser, who is a specialist teacher of the deaf, teachers in the zone formed a committee to look into inclusive practices in schools. The committee suggested visiting a

resource centre and a residential school for the deaf. They wanted to see how specialist teachers interact with deaf learners and arranged a visit to nearby Mountain View School for Deaf Children. Primary school education advisers from three zones and head teachers from neighbouring mainstream schools were also involved in the visit.

Before visiting, the district education office organised deaf awareness training for 390 mainstream teachers, with support from the UK's Voluntary Services Overseas organisation. Teachers from Mountain View School helped to facilitate the workshop.

During the visit, mainstream teachers realised what was achievable within their own schools.

"I liked this visit and now have the courage to teach all learners if given a chance. If we don't allow deaf learners in mainstream schools it will be cruel because residential schools are limited in the country. Where else can deaf children be educated? We have seen how deaf learners can be educated. I have a story to tell my colleagues and the community when I go back."

Brighton Nkolokosa, teacher of 136 learners in standard 6, Mbalanguzi Primary School.

The visit was an eye-opener for mainstream teachers, and started the process of sharing ideas and experiences between schools. This now needs further support from government and other stakeholders so that specialist teachers can organise outreach programmes that support mainstream schools.

Delix is a teacher of the deaf, a graduate of the University of Manchester and a lecturer at Montfort Special Needs Education College in Malawi. Contact: c/o Mountain View School for Deaf Children, P/Bag 16, Bvumbwe, Malawi. Email: delixmissinzo@yahoo.co.uk

Advocating for inclusive education in Tanzania

Katharina Noussi

One-fifth of the world's poorest people have a disability, yet they receive little attention in the UN's Millennium Development Goals and their right to education is often not realised. Here Katharina introduces Inclusive Tanzania, a pilot project to empower persons with disabilities to become stronger advocates for their right to inclusive education.

In 2005, Light for the World (a European confederation of development organisations) and the Tanzanian Information Centre on Disability started a 4-year advocacy project, Inclusive Tanzania, in rural Mwanza District and in Dar es Salaam. It aims to strengthen the country's disability movement to hold the government accountable and raise public awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities and those they work with define the project's priorities, develop strategies and carry out activities. Twelve local disability organisations formed the Inclusive Tanzania Consortium (MTAJU in its Kiswahili abbreviation) which 'owns' the project.

What is advocacy?

Inclusive education cannot be realised without changes in policies and laws. Advocacy involves participation in the policy-making process, and raising public awareness and support to shift the balance of power and bring about change. It is a long-term, cyclical process that:

- has measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound goals
- addresses the right audience, using appropriate information, and transmits a clear message
- builds coalitions and raises local funds.

To realise inclusive education, different actors must be addressed, e.g. Government, district authorities, international organisations, community leaders, school boards, teachers, parents, and children. MTAJU created a steering committee, working groups and local community (ward) groups. The wards groups involve persons with disabilities, parents, teachers and children who:

- identify children with disabilities
- ensure sufficient teaching and learning materials and assistive teachers
- make the learning environment welcoming
- organise events to raise awareness
- collect funds for physical access improvements.

Scaling up local advocacy

The ward level work is documented. Case studies are used in national and international advocacy, to fight

for changes to laws, policies and development programmes relevant to inclusive education. Such work needs a large movement to be built from the bottom-up, not just activities by a few 'experts'.

Empowerment

Persons with disabilities need to assert themselves as experts through their personal experiences. They need to empower themselves. Empowerment helps people control their lives and influence communities by acting on issues they define as important. Inclusive Tanzania uses training, networking and 'learning-by-doing' to foster empowerment. Workshops on advocacy and inclusive education skills are run regularly by local and regional facilitators.

Networking

Learning from experience is essential for effective advocacy. MTAJU encourages information exchange between rural and urban participants, and between local, national and international advocates.

Achievements so far

- 390 children with disabilities enrolled in 11 schools.
- MTAJU contributed to the development of Tanzania's new inclusive education policy by raising awareness through the media, lobbying politicians, and debating at public consultations.
- MTAJU members lobbied parliament to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which it did on 24 April 2009.
- MTAJU helps to monitor school budget allocations at district level.
- Project members are becoming role models in society.
- There is improved unity and co-operation between organisations working on disability rights and inclusive education.

Katharina is project adviser for the Inclusive Tanzania project. Contact: Light for the World Austria, Niederhofstraße 26, 1120 Vienna, Austria
Tel: +43 1 810 13 00
Email: k.noussi@light-for-the-world.org
Websites: www.inclusive-tanzania.org;
www.light-for-the-world.org

Girls' exclusion: Tackling a taboo issue in Nepal

Om Prasad Gautam

Going to school can be a worrying experience for many children. They may face physical barriers or encounter attitudes or practices that make them feel unwelcome in school. Girls in particular face barriers to their inclusion in education. Many of these issues – such as early marriage or sexual abuse at school – are receiving increased attention. One such issue, however, remains taboo – menstruation and its effect on girls' education. This article summarises some of the findings of a study carried out by WaterAid in Nepal.

Nepal is a signatory to the Delhi Declaration 2008: "Sanitation for Dignity and Health", which states that "...the special needs of women [should be] integrated in planning, implementation, monitoring and measurement of [sanitation] programme outcomes". Many water and sanitation programmes exist in Nepal, and they increasingly acknowledge women's and men's specific needs. Yet menstruation issues are still ignored.

WaterAid consulted 204 girls aged 12–20 years in four schools (rural and urban). This involved questionnaires, group discussions and interviews. There were four themes: knowledge and beliefs; experiences during menstruation; seclusion, exclusion and absenteeism; and hygiene practices.

Findings

Girls' knowledge: most girls knew about menstruation before they experienced it, although most felt unprepared. Their knowledge was mainly from mothers and sisters, and focused on rituals and restrictions, e.g. beliefs that menstruating girls should keep away from food and men.

Restrictions: about 89% of girls faced some form of restriction or exclusion each month, such as abstaining from religious activities. About half said they had been absent from school at least once due to menstruation. Many girls, felt unable to perform well at school due to the pain they experienced. Other girls feared they would not be permitted to use the toilet during exams.

"When we come for the exams the excruciating pain can blank us out." (School girl)

Self-consciousness: stress and worry about menstruation made girls reluctant to move around the classroom or school grounds.

Lack of privacy: this was the main reason for school absence during menstruation – mainly due to lack of washing water, or broken toilet doors. Only 42% of girls felt there was adequate privacy in school toilets. This problem also affects female teachers.

"In our school there is no water facility in the toilet – it is so difficult... sometimes I have to miss school." (School girl)

A taboo topic: schools tended to ignore the issue of menstruation. Teachers avoided teaching about it, thus perpetuating the taboos and leaving girls feeling isolated. Very few girls would talk to their teachers about their worries.

Recommendations

- **Improved education for mothers** who are a main source of information about menstruation, but who often convey myths not facts. Mothers must be able to inform their daughters and support them to manage menstruation.
- **Training for teachers** on handling reproductive health lessons and pastoral care with confidence and sensitivity; and monitoring to ensure they are not avoiding certain topics.
- **Improved water and sanitation facilities** to ensure girls have privacy and access to water for washing. This need not involve high costs. Schools and communities can adopt a problem-solving approach, so that girls can express their concerns without fear or embarrassment, and suggest low-cost solutions.
- **Integration of the issue** of menstruation into all water and sanitation projects by policy-makers and project planners.
- **More qualitative research and reporting** on the effects of menstruation on girls' attendance, participation and achievement in education.

Full report "Is Menstrual Hygiene and Management an Issue for Adolescent School Girls? A comparative study of four schools in different settings of Nepal" available from: www.wateraid.org/nepal, or on CD from EENET.

Contact:

Om Prasad Gautam, Social Development Adviser
WaterAid Nepal,
PO Box 20214, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: +977 1 5552764 / 5552765
Fax: 977 1 5547420
E-mail: omprasadgautam@wateraidnepal.org.np

Water, sanitation and inclusive education

This is the theme for the 2010 newsletter. As the article on p.22 suggests, the issue of access to suitable toilet facilities and water supplies can have a big impact on whether or not children attend school, or perform well when they are there.

Inaccessible and unsafe toilet facilities, lacking privacy and good hygiene, and inadequate or dirty water supplies affect all learners, but may pose particular barriers to disabled children and to girls. Schools which have no toilet facilities may experience higher drop-out levels, especially as children get older. Schools that cannot provide their pupils with safe drinking water find that learners struggle to concentrate in class when they are thirsty, or miss classes in order to fetch water from elsewhere.

EENET's staff have been focusing on the issue of how school water and sanitation arrangements impact on the inclusion of children in education for some time. Now we want to hear what *you* think!

We are looking for newsletter articles that focus on:

- research into how water and sanitation facilities can make learners feel either welcome or unwelcome in school
- pupils' opinions about water and sanitation facilities and the links with their participation and achievement in school
- safe and appropriate facilities for girls, and the impact of such facilities on their participation and achievement in education
- accessible facilities for disabled learners in mainstream schools, in particular studying low-cost solutions developed by pupils, parents, teachers and community members
- food hygiene issues in schools (e.g. illness resulting from unsafe food preparation and storage can mean some pupils miss lessons or fail to concentrate)
- the impact on education of water and sanitation facilities within the community (e.g. many children have to walk long distances to fetch water for their family, leaving them too tired to participate in lessons)
- making hygiene education in schools more effective and ensuring it is accessible to all groups of learners
- the impact of improved school water and sanitation on children's education and well-being – positive and negative, intended and unintended impacts.



Competition!

We really want to receive more newsletter contributions from children and young people. We are therefore holding a competition for the best youth contribution for the 2010 newsletter.

We would like to receive drawings, photographs, audio/visual materials, written articles, posters, etc, that answer the question:

“How do water, food and toilet facilities – at home or in school – affect your education, in a good way or in a bad way?”

The competition is open to anyone aged 21 years or less. We will divide the entries into ‘under 10 years’ and ‘11–21 years’. We will also divide entries into ‘written’ and ‘non-written’. Entries do not have to be in English. If you submit an entry in another language, please make sure you tell us which language you have used, so that we can try to find a translator.

Deadline: 31st March 2010

You may send entries by email or by post (see the back page of this newsletter for EENET's contact details). Please remember to provide the following details with each entry:

- name
- postal address
- email/telephone number (where appropriate)
- age
- name of school (where appropriate)

The winner in each category will receive a prize from EENET. The winning entries will also be featured in the 2010 newsletter. All other entries may be featured on the EENET website.

To submit an article, or to discuss ideas for an article, email EENET on: info@eenet.org.uk (or see back page for postal address).

Your feedback

We are always striving to improve the newsletter. We want it to provide useful information and thought-provoking ideas, be easy to read, and cover a wide range of countries and different subjects each year. Are we succeeding? We need your feedback to help us develop the newsletter!

Your name (optional):	Country:
How many years have you been receiving EENET's newsletter?	
How many other people read your copy of the newsletter, or how many people do you distribute copies to?	
What is the best part of EENET's newsletter?	
What parts of EENET's newsletter need to be improved?	
What is your favourite article in this year's newsletter? Why?	
What is your least favourite article in this year's newsletter? Why?	
Would you like to write to any of the authors this year? If so, what would you like to say to them or ask them?	
Have you written to authors in the past? What did you discuss with them?	
Would you like to write an article for the newsletter? If so, what would you like to write about?	
What themes should the newsletter cover in future?	

Please send us your feedback using this form. You can send it to us at any time, there's no deadline. If you want to write more, send us your answers on another sheet of paper or by email. See the back page of the newsletter for EENET's contact details.

Refugees and asylum seekers speak out, England

Rachel Morris

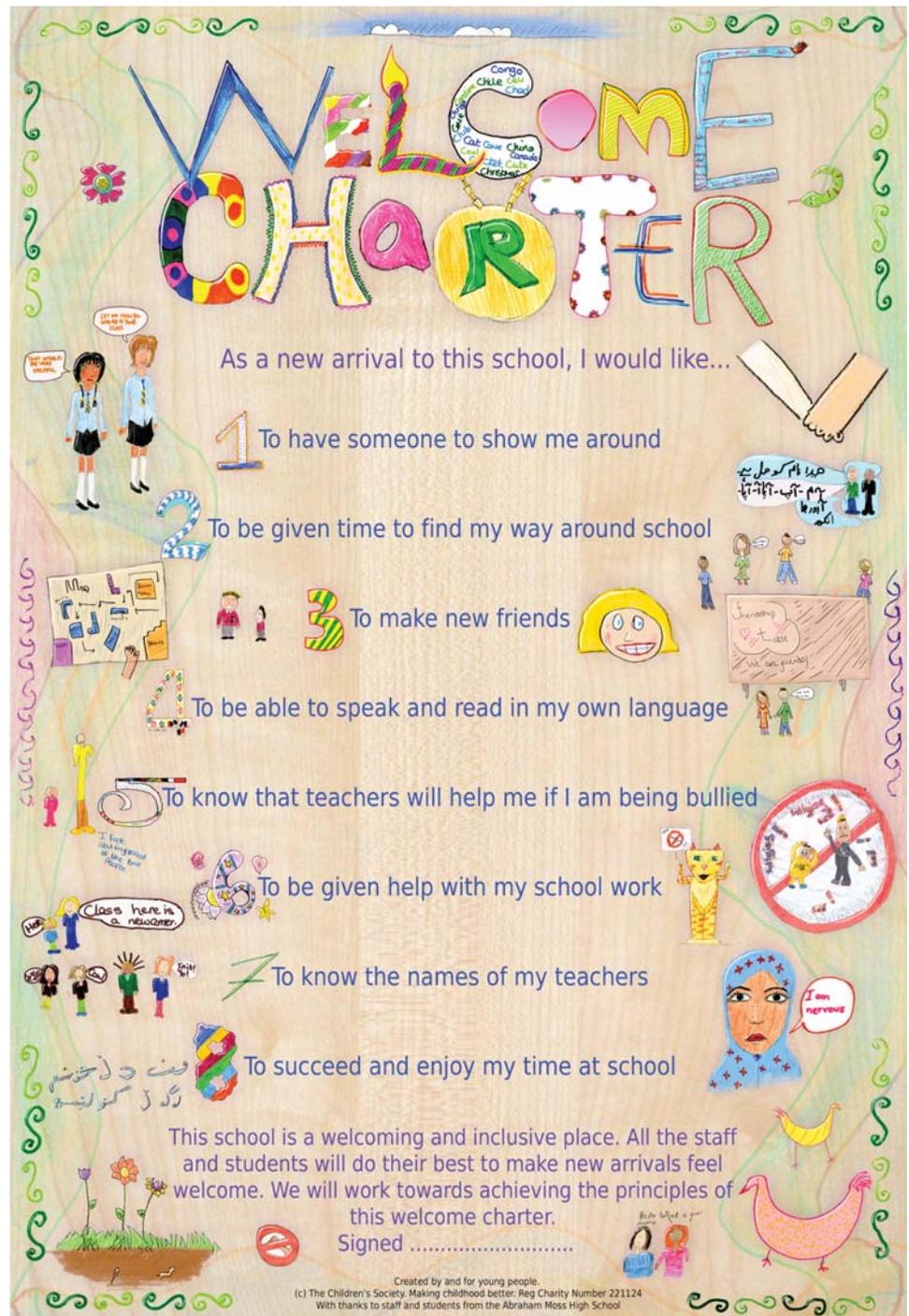
The Welcome Charter was put together by 20 young people, all refugees or asylum seekers aged 11–18 years living in Manchester. This activity was part of the Leading Edge Project – a national initiative by the Children’s Society, which aims to help all young refugees and asylum seekers enjoy and achieve within education.

We wanted to hear from young refugees and asylum seekers about their experiences of education in England and what they wanted from their schools and colleges. They came up with 8 principles and designed a poster to explain them. Implementing these principles in schools will take effort, but the young people felt such changes would make a huge difference to their lives and education.

The Welcome Charter poster provides schools in Manchester with a tool to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for all of their students.

Rachel works on the ‘Safe in the City’ project, a project for young people in Manchester. ‘Safe in the City’ works with young people who are at risk on the streets, unaccompanied young asylum seekers, young refugees and asylum seekers in education, and young people who are at risk of sexual exploitation.

Contact: Safe in the City,
The Children’s Society, 166
Plymouth Grove, Longsight,
Manchester M13 0AF, UK
rnr@childsoc.org.uk
www.childrensociety.org.uk



EENET interview

Developing a network in the Middle East

Over the last few years, EENET's work has been supported by a small team of volunteers. One such volunteer is Maha Khochen from Lebanon. After completing a Masters degree in Inclusive Education and Disability Studies at the Institute of Education in London, Maha applied for an internship with EENET in Manchester. In this interview she explains why she chose to volunteer for EENET, and outlines the work she has been doing.



How and when did you first find out about EENET?

In 2005, while I was still living in Lebanon, I was searching the internet for inclusive education materials and I came across EENET's website. I was trying to find free materials that were available to read straight away. I wanted to learn more about inclusive practice – the EENET site was interesting and easy to access.

What were your first impressions of EENET's information-sharing work?

It was obvious that EENET would be really useful for me, and for anyone who doesn't have access to a library or other source of inclusive education materials. Often it is not easy to find materials when we live and work in countries like Lebanon. Reading is an important way of acquiring knowledge. I found the material on EENET's website helpful during my studies. However, I found few materials about the Middle East, which highlights the need to share more information about inclusive practices in that region.

Why did you decide you wanted to volunteer for EENET?

I studied inclusive education for my Masters degree, so EENET's work is of great interest to me. I was attracted by the fact that EENET is keen to support regional networking. Volunteering provides a good opportunity for me to join an emerging network for the Middle East and North Africa and become part of other inclusion efforts across the Arabic-speaking region. Helping to establish a network for our region is one way of making use of the experience I have gained whilst studying inclusive education.

What work are you doing during your internship with EENET?

Since I am visually impaired, I am helping to improve the visual accessibility of EENET's global information-sharing activities. I am asking EENET's visually impaired readers what they think about the Braille and audio materials available from EENET, so that we can improve the service we give to these readers. I'm also giving advice on making EENET's global website more accessible for all users – for instance, ensuring that the site works well with screen readers. We are also planning to upload more audio files.

I am also supporting the establishment of a network for Arabic-speaking countries across the Middle East and North Africa with a member of EENET's international steering group – Salma Khalidi. Salma is based in Palestine and has many years experience of teaching inclusively. My work includes helping to build a website for Arabic speakers that will offer accessible materials about inclusive practice and stimulate debate about inclusive education in the region.

I'm working from Manchester, where EENET's global co-ordinator is supporting our work in the Middle East region. We hope to include more people and start building a strong network. Our regional network is part of EENET's family of regional networks around the world. We will be linking with and learning from other regions.

What is your vision for the Middle East network?

I hope that we can get a lot of people involved, that we can learn more about people working in this field and encourage people to share their experiences. Sharing information is vital. People working on inclusion need to share what they have learned, otherwise the same problems will keep coming up and we will keep reinventing the wheel.

Regional news

Why is helping to develop a Middle East inclusive education network so important to you?

It's important both because of my background studying inclusive education and because of the real need in the region for more people to work towards inclusion and to be guided towards better inclusive practices. Many people need advice and support. Having gained some knowledge of inclusive education through studying and working in the UK for three years, I am passionate about dedicating my time to supporting other people who have information needs. The development of inclusive education in my region is still in the early stages, so it is the right time for a network to grow.

What message would you like to give to EENET's readers in the Middle East region?

I would like to encourage readers to share their experiences – whether it is a story of a good or a not so good experience. Be open, share your knowledge and experience with others. Join our debates – we want to hear what you think about inclusive education in the Middle East and North Africa region. We want to debate important concepts and language issues. And we want your ideas about how we can develop a regional network that really meets the needs of education stakeholders on the ground. We are going to create a newsletter to facilitate further sharing of information between Arabic-speaking countries. Send us articles about your work or personal experiences of inclusion. We will review, edit and hopefully publish your articles, and the newsletter will be circulated across the region.

To contact Maha, email mahakhochen@eenet.org.uk or write to her at EENET's postal address.

Several regional and national information networks have been inspired by EENET's approach to sharing and debating inclusive education experiences. All the networks are currently run by volunteers, and they are looking for more people to join in their activities.

EENET Zambia

EENET Zambia has started an email discussion group. The e-group aims to promote dialogue on inclusive education, highlight the education challenges faced by Zambian communities, and enable local solutions to be found. The group is open to anyone interested in contributing to the development of inclusive education in Zambia. To join the group, please email simui@unza.zm or francis.simui@yahoo.com

EENET langue française

A French language email discussion group has also started with the help of one of EENET's volunteers. To join the group please email EENET_langue_francaise-subscribe@yahoogroupes.fr. If you have any questions about the email group please contact Olivia Van Den Bergen at olivia.eenet@yahoo.co.uk

EENET Eastern Africa

The co-ordinating team for this regional network is currently developing the network's first newsletter. If you would like to contribute a short article about your experiences of inclusive education in Eastern Africa, or discuss ideas for an article, please email: easternafrika@eenet.org.uk. To subscribe to the regional email group please email eenet_eastern_africa-subscribe@yahoogroups.co.uk

EENET Asia

EENET Asia's newsletters cover a wide range of inclusive and child-friendly education issues across the Central, South and South-East Asia region. The editing team is looking for articles from countries that have not yet been featured, such as Korea (South and North), the Pacific Islands, Singapore, Taiwan and Turkmenistan. They are also keen to receive more articles from teachers, parents, students and others working on education at the 'grassroots' level.

If you would like to receive the Asia regional newsletter, or would like to contribute an article write to:

EENET Asia
Jalan Panglima Polim X No. 9
Kebayoran Baru
Jakarta Selatan 12160
Indonesia
email: asia@eenet.org.uk

Useful publications

A Training Module for Accelerated Learning

Save the Children, 2008

This guide gives a short introduction to accelerated learning principles and practices which can be used within the classroom in post conflict settings.

Available from EENET in PDF format.*

Children who have Disability in Early Childhood Care and Development Centres. A resource book for teachers

Save the Children in Sri Lanka, 2006

This practical book aims to provide teachers with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them to include children with disabilities in their ECCD centres (pre-schools). It draws on the experiences of those ECCD centres in Sri Lanka that have already included disabled children.

Available from EENET in PDF format.*

Education in Emergencies: Including Everyone. INEE pocket guide to inclusive education

Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, 2009

This quick reference guide is aimed at anyone working to provide, manage or support education services in emergencies – although it is also useful for readers who are not working in emergency situations. It outlines principles for an inclusive education approach in emergencies and provides advice for planning, implementing and monitoring.

Available from EENET in printed and PDF format.*

Inclusion Rwanda

Handicap International, 2008

The short film looks at the challenges faced by disabled learners and education professionals in Rwanda. Experiences are shared with 8 education professionals from the UK who took part in 'Inclusion Rwanda', an event organised by Handicap International (HI) to promote cross-cultural approaches to inclusive education. HI's work in Rwanda encourages mainstream and special schools to work together to build a more inclusive education system.

DVD format, 22 mins.

Available from EENET.

Lessons Learnt for the Inclusive Education of Disabled Children in Cambodia

Handicap International, 2009

This document highlights learning from HI's inclusive education work. It identifies strategies that have helped to increase the participation of disabled children in school, including interventions at the level of the individual, community and national education system.

Available on CD from EENET.

Promoting Social Inclusion and Respect for Diversity in the Early Years

Bernard van Leer Foundation

This edition of *Early Childhood Matters* (no.108, June 2008) deals with issues ranging from immigrant parents to indigenous communities, and includes insights from Albania, Israel, Nepal and Northern Ireland.

Available online at: www.bernardvanleer.org

Steps Towards Learning: A guide to overcoming language barriers in children's education

Save the Children, 2009

Many children around the world are expected to learn in a language they don't understand, which affects their school performance. This guide offers evidence, arguments and practical steps to help stop language preventing children from learning. It is intended for anyone involved in education where children's mother tongue is not used in school.

Available from EENET in printed and PDF format.*

Young Voices: Young people's views of inclusive education

This booklet (advertised in the 2008 newsletter) is now available in Kiswahili (print and PDF formats), French (PDF format) and in English Braille. The accompanying film is also now available in VHS format as well as the original DVD format.

Available from EENET.*

* These items will also be available on EENET's relaunched website later in the year.

EENET
c/o Educational Support and Inclusion
School of Education, The University of Manchester
Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL, UK
Tel: +44 (0)161 275 3711
Fax: +44 (0)161 275 3548
Mobile/SMS: +44 (0)7929 326 564
Email: info@eenet.org.uk
Web: www.eenet.org.uk

Please tell us about any publications you have produced or that you would recommend to other EENET readers.



The University of Manchester