

# Inclusive Beginnings

A guide to using the videos  
for advocacy



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# 1: Introduction

## About this guide

EENET has produced two short videos about early childhood development and education (ECDE); one focuses on inclusive practice, the other on inclusive transition. They have been developed primarily for use in teacher training.<sup>1</sup> However, key messages from the videos can be used for advocacy or awareness raising.

Video advocacy uses visual media to enhance advocacy messaging and bring about change. Videos can be a powerful tool for change if used correctly with the right audience. They provide a creative and strategic way to get an advocacy message seen and heard. The ability to build relationships – personal, public and institutional – is very important for effective advocacy.

It can be challenging to use videos in a way that adds value to advocacy and awareness raising work, through stimulating discussions around advocacy messaging. This guide offers some suggestions you can build on. It is not comprehensive but offers a general guideline on how you might want to use the Inclusive Beginnings videos as a stimulus in your advocacy.

Transcripts of both videos can be found as annexes within the accompanying training manuals. The transcripts will help you select sections of the videos to watch and will assist in providing language or sign language interpretation. Please ensure that you have watched the videos at least two or three times before trying to use them in advocacy or awareness raising activities.

<sup>1</sup> See the accompanying 'Inclusive Beginnings' teacher training manuals for more details.

## Who is this guide for?

The guide is for facilitators and activists who already have some experience of organising and facilitating sessions, but who would like some additional advice on using the inclusive ECDE videos effectively as an advocacy tool.

Users of this guide might include:

- non-governmental organisation (NGO) staff;
- in-service and pre-service teacher trainers;
- parents, guardians, and caregivers;
- community workers;
- members of parents' organisations;
- members of disabled people's organisations;
- members of the general public.

## General guidance on using videos in awareness raising and advocacy activities

### What do we mean by video advocacy?

Video advocacy is the process of integrating video and other visual media into advocacy activities to encourage specific audiences to create change. The term advocacy is the process of supporting a cause or proposal to influence a particular position or result.

Globally, visual media including videos is increasingly embraced as a strategic tool to support education and encourage organisational and political participation. Video has long been used in the context of development, to help document and convey the way in which a community identifies solutions to the challenges it faces. Videos have a wide reach and resonate with audiences because they are a simple and visual way to convey the main points of a message. The video often creates an emotional response in the viewer which is a driver to action.

## Clear messaging in video advocacy can boost basic understanding and commitment

Good communication has a clear, concise message. This will help your intended audiences understand what you are saying and what action you want.

Important questions to ask when thinking about using video for advocacy activities include: What problem are we trying to resolve, and what solutions are we proposing? Is our campaign advocating for a change in legislation or a change in attitudes and practice? Or both?

It is not always easy to demonstrate to a 'new' audience that inclusive education and practice is possible. Stakeholders often benefit from being able to see a 'model' school or meet with an education authority that implements inclusive approaches or listen to parents and caregivers of children who are learning in inclusive environments. However, such opportunities might not be available nearby. Videos can help to bridge this gap by showing real-life examples of what is possible.

A good video may convey the voices of different stakeholders involved in an inclusive education initiative and offer a more convincing argument than you can do your own. This is a crucial benefit to using video in advocacy efforts.

It is important to understand the environment around you when addressing any issue. Within inclusive education, different organisations and individuals play a different role in advocating and influencing. Therefore, know who you want to target, and work collaboratively with those who can help get your video message across and bring about a change.

## How video advocacy can get your message to the right people

Videos can be useful for creating awareness about issues that need to be addressed in your country, community or school. They can act as an entry point or stimulus for a discussion, or for a reflection and planning process.

A good video may challenge the audience's existing perceptions by demonstrating a different approach, or by acknowledging that marginalised groups have an opinion and a voice. It is not always possible to offer educators and education officials or ministers enough hands-on training opportunities, but videos can help to fill the gap.

**The true power of advocacy video storytelling lies in the message delivered with emotion. Video allows you to bring emotional content to life in a way that it is hard to do with a blog post. You can see, hear and feel what is going on. That is why it is so engaging. You see your organization's message come to life, and that can help with engagement and donations.**

During advocacy efforts, videos can be used to prepare educators, NGO staff, government officials, parents and caregivers, etc, for new working environments and situations. Videos may, for instance, demonstrate and advocate for inclusive teaching methods, ways of involving parents and caregivers in the ECDE, inclusive policies and practices, and so on.

In many cases reaching a key government committee, NGO or education decision-maker will be critical to your advocacy efforts. Many top decision-makers are not regularly exposed to the voices of those affected by the lack of inclusive learning environments in their communities. Bringing these voices directly to them in a visual form such as video can be an effective tool to drive action from those who are key in making a change happen.

## Key points to remember when using video for advocacy purposes

- Know the objective of the video you wish to show to your audience; what is the purpose of the video and why are you showing it?
- Know your audience; who will be watching the video and responding to your message? Who has the most influence on the change you seek? Is this audience accessible to you or do you need to collaborate with others? How should your activities during the session be adapted in accordance with the audience?
- What action do you want your audience to take after seeing the video? What change are you trying to bring about through this video and what does this look like in reality?

### Consider multiple ways to get your audience to see the video

Advocacy campaigns work best when video is used in multiple ways and in within different forums.

Examples include:

- Share the video online.
- Get the video included in a teacher training course.
- Submit the video as evidence during a consultation exercise or government roundtable.
- Use the video during presentations at conferences, webinars, etc.
- Show the video to grassroots organisations and community groups.
- Find ways to get extracts of the video included in news media.

<sup>2</sup> [www.thecampaignworkshop.com/power-advocacy-video-storytelling](http://www.thecampaignworkshop.com/power-advocacy-video-storytelling)

# Practical advice for facilitators

## Prepare

Make sure your IT equipment is ready before the session starts. Set up your computer and projector, check that they are working, that all cables are plugged in, and that you have an internet connection to access online videos. Open any online video at least 10 minutes before you want to show it. This will help the video to play as smoothly as possible and stop the content 'buffering' too much (stopping and starting while content is downloading from the internet). If you open the video in advance and have problems viewing it, try reducing the video's quality to fit your internet connection. Test the video and adjust the quality downwards until the video runs more smoothly.

Make sure you have a 'Plan B' ready, in case there are problems with your computer, projector or internet connection which prevent you from showing the video. Avoid spending lots of time trying to fix the problem – your audience will get bored. If the problem cannot be fixed within 1-2 minutes, move on to your back-up activity instead. You may be able to return to the video later in the session or at another time.

## Get to know your audience in advance and ensure the video is accessible to them

All good facilitators try to find out about the expected audience when they are planning an advocacy or awareness session. This helps them create activities and presentations that suit the interests, skills and levels of understanding of the participants. It is equally important to find out about accessibility issues in advance.

When planning a session using videos, check the following:

1. Does every participant understand English (if the video is in English)?  
If not, check whether the video has optional subtitles available in the necessary language. If subtitles are not available, prepare a translated transcript in the chosen language so you can give the audience a written copy; and/or arrange for simultaneous interpretation while the video is playing. Even if the audience has good English skills, be prepared to explain English terminology that is unfamiliar.
2. Do you have participants who are deaf or hard-of-hearing? If yes, you could prepare a transcript of the video (in English or other preferred relevant language); and/or try to arrange for simultaneous sign language interpretation while the video is playing.

3. Do you have participants who are blind or visually impaired? If yes, ensure that they are able to sit as close to the video screen as they need to. You may choose to provide a large-print or Braille transcript of the video. You might also arrange for someone to sit with the participant to discreetly describe what is happening in the video and read captions to them.
4. The facilitator of course needs to remember to check that the venue is generally physically accessible, sufficiently spacious to allow people to move easily to their preferred position in the room, suitably lit, not too noisy, not too hot/cold, is well-ventilated, and so on.

## Presenting your advocacy message

Presenting advocacy messages to stakeholders is slightly different from a training or workshop environment. You may not have long to state the message. Everything you say and do needs to reinforce your message and the action or change you wish to see. The following steps during a meeting with stakeholders will help to create a concise, strong advocacy message that can be tailored to different audiences.

- Start all meetings with introductions – of yourself, your team (if you have colleagues with you) and your audience members. Take notes throughout the meeting and try to assign tasks during the meeting to ensure any action that is promised is concrete and accountable.
- Open with a testimonial that engages your audience straight away. This is a good time to state your clear, straightforward advocacy message. Make it a short and concise declaration.
- Present the problem to your audience. What is the problem? Who does it affect? How does it affect them? Why does it need to change? Back this up with data and facts to support your position.
- Use storytelling to give an example of the problem – this is where video advocacy comes in. Show the video, or a relevant segment from the video, to reinforce your message and give a personal feel to the problem. Use the activities in this guide for short, creative ways to get the audience to engage emotionally and logically with the issue to better compel them to action. Use this time to connect to the audience's values, link how this issue is related to them and how they can make a difference. Make sure you know your audience in advance and what will specifically get their attention.
- Prepare your arguments in advance. Anticipate the questions you will be asked about your advocacy message and know how to answer them clearly.
- Finish the meeting by clearly stating the action you want the audience to take – it may be collectively or individually. Make sure you know who to follow up with, and always leave your own contact information.



## 2: Advocacy messages linked to the video on inclusive practice in ECDE

This section includes some advocacy messages that can be pulled from the video on inclusive practice to be used in an advocacy campaign, through meetings and workshops.

Potential advocacy uses for this video:

- The video could be used to call on policy-makers and education authorities to fully implement policies on equal access to quality, inclusive education for all children.
- It could be shared with parents and caregivers in a community where children with disabilities are not being sent to ECDE settings due to fear or misinformation. The video can help show the benefits to the child and the community as a whole. The video can also be used to encourage parents and caregivers to value ECDE and the vital skills that it nurtures, especially in contexts where there are negative attitudes towards sending children to a setting where they are perceived to ‘just play’.
- The video could be shown to potential funders to highlight the importance of improving ECDE teaching and learning practices through better training, professional development and support for educators. It could also help highlight the importance of supporting improved accessibility, assistive devices and age-appropriate educational resources.
- The video could be shown to schools as a tool to support transitions. The video can show educators what ECDE environments look like and give them ideas for how they can make the school setting more familiar for new learners.

Showing a video to decision-makers or stakeholders is not a standalone activity. Video advocacy should always be part of a larger campaign of awareness raising to bring about change.

There are four broad advocacy messages highlighted here, related to inclusive practice in ECDE settings. With each audience you will probably choose one message that relates to your own advocacy objectives. It is not expected that you will use all of these messages and all of the suggested discussion points.

## Advocacy message 1: ECDE settings must embrace inclusive practice

**This activity could be aimed at:** education officials/ministers, committees within education settings, educators and trainers.

Throughout the video, various comments are made about inclusive practice and why it is important for ECDE settings to use inclusive practices. The video highlights that:

- inclusive practice ensures all learners are valued;
- inclusive practice teaches understanding and acceptance of diversity;
- an inclusive ECDE setting makes adaptations to the different needs learners have whilst ensuring they all learn together;
- by being inclusive, ECDE settings can better support and build on the range of skills that children have;
- being inclusive does not have to be expensive; instead it links things that children already find interesting and enjoyable to learning and play.

**Explain your own advocacy message/campaign to your audience and the action you wish to see.**

**Possible objective:** to encourage reflection on inclusive practice and why it is important.

### How to use the video

Show the video, or selected segments, and ask viewers to brainstorm (in plenary or small groups) what inclusive practice is, and why it is important to parents and caregivers, educators and children. Use the above bullet points as a guide. Encourage the audience to reflect on their own experiences too.

As a facilitator you may find it useful to go through the transcript and highlight all quotes that support your advocacy message.

Suggested discussion points include:

- Did the viewers list most of the reasons why inclusive practice is so important? Have you linked the list they created back to your own advocacy message to reinforce the need for action?
- If the young children with disabilities and/or diverse needs in the video were not able to attend their respective inclusive settings, where do the viewers think they would go? Would they go to a 'special pre-school'? Would they stay at home? Ask viewers how they think this would affect the children's development? Link the discussion back to your own advocacy message and reiterate why your desired action is so important to ensure no child misses out on education as a result of exclusive practice.

**End the session by repeating your own advocacy message and the action you now wish to see.**

## **Advocacy message 2: It is everyone's responsibility to ensure ECDE settings are inclusive**

**This activity could be aimed at:** educators and other staff in ECDE settings, parents and caregivers, community members, education officials/ministers.

A 'whole-school' approach is essential for success in an inclusive ECDE setting. Working together, parents, caregivers, families and other learning facilitators are responsible for helping children learn important skills, for noticing when a child is struggling to develop certain skills or learning other skills quickly, and for finding appropriate ways to provide the necessary support. In line with global commitments – such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – parents, caregivers, families and educators have a responsibility to ensure that all young learners learn together in their local community, regardless of disability or other status.

Every early childhood educator is responsible for inclusion. Inclusive ECDE settings welcome all learners and every educator welcomes a diverse class. They do not have separate rooms or units, or specific educators or assistants solely responsible for certain learners (e.g. those with disabilities). This means every educator and assistant needs to be trained in inclusion principles and practices, they do not just pass responsibility to a 'special needs' educator. There might be one or more staff members in the setting who has additional expertise in disability or other diverse needs experienced by learners. They will support their colleagues to include learners, they will not run segregated 'special' classes or activities.

Not only do all children have a right to learn together, but children with disabilities and/or different learning needs learn best alongside their peers and in inclusive settings. Children without disabilities also benefit from this approach in many ways, such as learning about diversity and valuing everyone.

## Explain your own advocacy message/campaign to your audience and the action you wish to see.

**Possible objective:** to explain why a whole-school approach to inclusion is vital in an ECDE setting.

### How to use the video

Show the video, or selected segments, and ask viewers to work in pairs to brainstorm what a whole-school approach looks like in reality. As a facilitator you may find it useful to read through the transcript and highlight any points that reinforce your advocacy message in advance.

You may want to use this list to prompt or fill gaps in the discussion. A whole-school approach includes:

- all staff at the setting being trained in inclusion practice;
- learning that is adapted for all learners in the class;
- no segregated classes – all children learn together;
- educators working in a team and sharing experiences to help them solve any challenged that arise;
- harnessing the flexibility of an ECDE setting to bring different learners together;
- ‘team teaching’ to provide a support network for all staff. If an educator encounters a new challenge, maybe one of their colleagues has more experience and can offer ideas or explain how they responded in a similar situation.

Suggested discussion points include:

- Do you agree with what the audience has said about a whole-school approach? Do audience members all agree with each other? Did they talk about any situations when a whole-school approach is especially vital, such as during transition times?
- Ask the viewers about the examples of collaborative working between education settings, parents and caregivers, children, and communities that they saw in the video. Do they understand why collaborative working is critical in inclusive education and what benefits it has? Can they reflect on their own experiences of collaboration in education? Link this back to your own advocacy message. Without everyone working together, there is a risk that some children will get missed out.

Here are some ideas highlighted in the video that you may want to draw attention to:

- Parents and caregivers should be acknowledged as experts in their own children.
- Two-way communication should be encouraged between education settings and parents and caregivers – to share learning and insights into what the child can do and what they should focus on next.
- Parents and caregivers can increase the child's independence by helping them to develop life skills at home – getting dressed, eating, etc.
- Parents and caregivers can complement activities and reinforce learning at home by doing activities that build on what the children have learned at the ECDE setting. Likewise the setting can do activities that build on what has been learned at home.
- Education settings should provide a familiar, welcoming environment and offer opportunities for parents, caregivers and families to get involved.
- Educators should be pro-active to reach out to families and make home visits to better understand what is helping or hindering learning in the home environment and provide support to the parents and caregivers.

**End the session by repeating your own advocacy message and the action you now wish to see.**

### **Advocacy message 3: ECDE settings should not be run like mini-schools; play is the medium of learning**

**This activity could be aimed at:** education official/ministers, school staff, parents and caregivers.

The main role of early childhood educators is not to make young children ready for school, for instance by ensuring that they can achieve a certain set of literacy and numeracy skills by a certain age. Learning so-called school skills early does not give children an advantage later in life. In fact, it takes time away from learning the important skills that are appropriate for that age and that will prepare them for learning school-level skills later. For instance, a child who can read already but has difficulty cooperating with other children may be at a disadvantage when they join a school setting.

ECDE settings should not be hot-houses in which we artificially quickly make young children grow and develop so that they can be 'ready' for primary school. The 'schoolification' of ECDE settings is a problem around the world and it is putting very young learners under pressure to achieve academic success at a time when they should be focusing on developing basic core skills. Play is the medium (or vehicle) of learning at this age.

The role of adults is not to provide a formal structure or programme like in school, but to allow children to play, then guide and facilitate learning by challenging the children, asking them questions, introducing new knowledge and skills into their play.

**Explain your own advocacy message/campaign to your audience and the action you wish to see.**

**Possible objective:** to highlight that play is the vehicle of learning for young children and inclusive ECDE settings must reflect this.

### How to use the video

Ask the viewers to get into groups and think about what was mentioned in the video. You could ask them to consider:

- Why is play so important?
- What are some of the benefits of play that the stakeholders spoke about in the video?
- Think about children in your own lives – how do they like to play? What are their favourite toys or objects? Do they role-play, do they build, do they create pictures and crafts? How does this assist in their development?

Points from the video that they might reflect on, or that you might want to remind them of, include:

- Children learn by playing.
- Play is the most effective medium for learning at this age.
- Play aids interaction and experimentation.
- Play helps children to socialise.
- Play helps children get physically stronger and fitter.
- Children communicate with each other when they play together.
- Children learn about teamwork and how to share when playing.
- Play can help bring together different learning goals (for example counting, sports and nature).
- There are various ways to play which ensures all children are included and learn.
- Play can be low-cost and effective to do – using real-life stimuli in play helps children learn.
- Play-based learning should be child-led (children making decisions about their activities) and not just involve teacher-led activities which the teacher tries to make fun or playful.

The audience can feed back to everyone in the meeting.

Further discussion points include:

- What role could your audience play in your advocacy campaign to bring about change?
- How can your audience assist with making the changes needed to ensure that ECDE responds to diverse learners using a variety of play-based activities and allowing children to choose what activities and resources to engage with?

**End the session by repeating your own advocacy message and the action you now wish to see.**

## **Advocacy message 4: Inclusive early childhood educators must be trained in child development and responding to diverse learners' needs**

**This activity could be aimed at:** education officials/ministers, universities, training colleges, school management teams.

Inclusive early childhood educators must understand child development and observe learners to see how they are developing and what support they need. Educators need to understand their role in supporting every child to develop social, physical, intellectual/cognitive, communication/language and emotional skills.

It is no longer considered appropriate to set rigid expectations that every child should achieve a specific skill by a certain age; every child's development is unique. Nevertheless, early childhood educators need to observe closely to notice if any learner is developing certain skills more slowly or more quickly than expected. To do this they need at least a basic understanding of child development. The educator can then: support areas of development where the learner needs more help or needs to be challenged more; work with parents and caregivers to encourage them to support these areas; and – if a development delay seems unusually pronounced (well outside typical parameters) – seek extra advice from colleagues and/or health and rehabilitation workers. Providing effective early support to a child can help prevent a developmental delay from becoming more pronounced over time.

Early childhood educators are never expected to be medical experts who can identify and diagnose disabilities or health conditions, but they need the basic skills to be able to flag when something seems unusual and then seek more advice or help.

**Explain your own advocacy message/campaign to your audience and the action you wish to see.**

**Possible objective:** to advocate for early childhood educators to receive pre- and in-service training on child development (integral to training on inclusive education).

### How to use the video

Observation is important for understanding and tracking each child's interests and development strengths and needs. It is not about measuring one child against another. Early childhood educators need to know when to just observe and when to intervene or help.

After watching the video, or selected segments, ask your audience to work in pairs or groups to write down the different ways educators can observe children in an ECDE setting. You could ask them to think about:

- Which methods were mentioned in the video?
- Which important observation methods were not mentioned in the video?
- Can they share their own experiences of observing children's development, at home or in their workplace?

Points from the video that they might mention or you may want to draw their attention to include:

- watching children's actions, expressions, gestures and behaviours;
- listening to their talk and interactions, their language development and communication skills;
- joining in with their play and conversations;
- watching them on their own, in pairs and in groups;
- watching them doing a range of activities that illustrate social, physical, intellectual/cognitive, communication/language and emotional skills;
- taking notice of what seems to interest or bore them;
- watching how they interact with adults or older children.



During plenary discussion, highlight the risks that exist if early childhood educators are not trained to observe and understand the development and diverse needs of learners. Also stress the importance of effective early learning support and how it can change a child's developmental path and improve outcomes for children, families, and communities.

**End the session by repeating your own advocacy message and the action you now wish to see.**

# 3: Advocacy messages linked to the video on inclusive transition

This section includes some advocacy messages that can be pulled from the video on inclusive transition to be used in an advocacy campaign, through meetings and workshops.

Potential advocacy uses for this video:

- The video could be used to call on education decision-makers to consider transition issues when working to develop and implement policies on equal access to quality, inclusive education for all children.
- It could be shared with government departments and NGOs that work in education, social welfare, health, and other sectors to highlight that inclusive transition often requires inter-sectoral inputs.
- The video can be shown to educators and school-level committees to highlight the importance of actions such as home visits, developing individualised transition plans, and prioritising inter-setting activities that ensure and enhance a continuum of support during transitions.
- It could also be used to show both parents caregivers and educators the important role that parents and caregivers play during education transition, and to highlight the priority that needs to be given to their opinions and engagement.

Showing a video to decision-makers or stakeholders is not a standalone activity. Video advocacy should always be part of a larger campaign of awareness raising to bring about change.

There are four broad advocacy messages highlighted here, related to inclusive transition. With each audience you will probably choose one message that relates to your own advocacy objectives. It is not expected that you will use all of these messages and all of the suggested discussion points.

## Advocacy message 5: Transition periods must be well planned and supported.

**This activity could be aimed at:** education officials/ministers, education committees within schools, parents' groups, teachers and educators.

The video highlights that everyone's education is punctuated with periods of transition. Young children transition from being at home with their families all the time, to attending an education and/or childcare setting for at least a few hours a day. They move to other education settings as they get older. Even within a setting there is usually a transition each year to a higher class, which might mean a change of teacher(s), change of classroom(s), etc.

Each transition has an impact on the learner and can cause anxiety within the whole family. Every learner has needs and preferences during transitions, and some learners have more specific support needs.

Transitions are also not just the bigger changes that happen when moving from one class or setting to another. Children experience transitions all the time – for example, moving from home to school each morning, or from class to lunchtime are transitions. Such changes may be particularly challenging for children with autism or learning disabilities, but any child can find a routine transition upsetting. We therefore need to think about ensuring we notice the needs of children during any transition, whether it is something that happens regularly or as a one-off.

Periods of transition can pose significant barriers to inclusion for many learners. Problematic and upsetting transitions for very young learners can have a negative impact on the rest of their education. To ensure we are developing an inclusive education system, we must focus on making sure transition periods are well planned and supportive.

**Explain your advocacy message/campaign to your audience and the action you wish to see**

**Possible objective:** to encourage the audience to actively think of ways transitions could be better planned and supported.

### How to use the video

Show the video and ask your audience to think of all the different transitions a child makes (large ones within and between education settings, and routine ones that occur during a typical day). They can recall what they have seen in the video and add other ideas from their own experiences. They can call out ideas as they think of them.

Then ask them to think further about how these transitions might make the child feel, or how the parents and caregivers might feel.

- Can they remember how they felt during an education transition as a child?
- Can they recall how they felt when their own child was going through an education transition, especially the very first time they started in an ECDE setting or school?

Ask the audience to think about how they, in their different positions, could help to improve how education transitions are planned and supported.

- Is there anything they can do about the resources needed to support inclusive transitions for all learners, or for learners with specific needs?
- Can they support or lead relevant policy changes?
- Can they support educators to improve their practices?

Restate your advocacy message and the action you are striving for.

As a facilitator you may find it useful to go through the video transcript in advance and highlight all quotes that support your advocacy message.

**End the session by repeating your own advocacy message and the action you now wish to see**

## **Advocacy message 6: Parents and caregivers play a central role in education transitions and need support**

**This activity could be aimed at:** education officials/ministers, NGOs, social workers parents' groups, teachers and educators.

The video highlights how parents and caregivers are children's first – and most important – teachers. It is vital that we understand and support their roles in ensuring children have a smooth transition from home to school, and from one setting or class to the next.

The role of parents and caregivers is not about making children 'school-ready' and planning the logistics for starting to attend an education setting. Parents and caregivers support their children with physical development – encouraging them to move and develop gross and fine motor skills and hand-eye co-ordination. They support social and emotional development through interacting with the child and modelling human interactions and behaviour. They support language development by communicating with the child and encouraging and supporting the child to communicate with them. This vital role played by parents and caregivers in child development is the reason why they must be supported to play a central role in their children's transition into education. They know their children's needs, interests and abilities.

## Explain your own advocacy message/campaign to your audience and the action you wish to see.

**Possible objective:** to encourage the audience to consider why parents and caregivers play a central role in education transitions and how their role can better be enhanced and supported.

### How to use the video

After your audience has seen the video, ask each person to turn to the person next to them and discuss the parent's and caregiver's role in education transitions.

You could encourage them first to discuss parents' and caregivers' roles in early child development:

- What skills did they notice that the parents and caregivers in the video were encouraging children to learn at home?
- Can they recall from their own experiences who helped them to learn these skills when they were young?
- Are they parents or caregivers themselves? If so, can they empathise with the parents and caregivers in the video? What skills did your audience members teach their young children at home before going to their first ECDE setting or school?

You could then encourage them to reflect on the role of parents and caregivers during education transitions. They could discuss:

- Why are parents and caregivers such a key part of smooth and successful transitions, especially but not only for children with disabilities or other diverse needs? Can they recall any personal experiences, for instance as a parent supporting their own child's education transition?
- What could be done to support them more during education transitions?
- How can we ensure parents and caregivers play a more central role during transitions? How can we listen more to their experiences and ideas?

Think about how you link this back to your advocacy campaign – what action do you want from the audience?

- Do you want policy or resource changes to ensure that parents and caregivers receive more support (practical or financial) before, during and after education transitions?
- Do you want attitude or practice changes so that parents and caregivers are more closely involved in supporting early childhood development and / or in planning every education transition?

Link their answers and recollections back to why your advocacy message is so important.

You might also want to encourage further discussions around the following points raised in the video:

- Does the video raise anything that you had not thought of before, in relation to the role of parents and caregivers in early childhood development and/or their role in education transitions?
- Parents and caregivers who actively engage in supporting early development and learning are more likely to notice if their child is experiencing difficulties. They can take steps to investigate or seek extra help early, or they can inform the child's first education setting and ask for help. How can parents and caregivers be better supported in this role? What support services already exist, are they sufficient, and how can they be improved?
- Have you considered whether parents and caregivers feel under pressure to teach their young children numeracy and literacy before they enrol in their first education setting? Why might they feel this pressure, where does such pressure come from? What could be done to reinforce the message that while parents and caregivers might introduce the concepts of letters, words, numbers and sums into play-based learning, their children do not have to be able to read and write before then enrol. The development of core social, physical, intellectual/cognitive, communication/language and emotional skills is more important. What kind of core skills might parents and caregivers teach their children?

**End the session by repeating your own advocacy message and the action you now wish to see.**

## **Advocacy message 7: There must be a smooth continuum of support for children throughout all education transitions**

**This activity could be aimed at:** education officials/ministers, ECDE settings and schools, NGOs, social workers, parents' groups, teachers and educators.

Transition periods increase the likelihood of learning being disrupted. With older learners there is often a risk of drop-out, particularly between primary and secondary levels in contexts where secondary education is not free and compulsory.

The aim for inclusive transition should be for young learners to move smoothly from learning at home to learning in their first setting and then on to subsequent settings throughout their education, without experiencing any break in the levels of support they receive and with minimal disruption and stress. The reality is often far from this.

## Explain your advocacy message/campaign to your audience and the action you wish to see

**Possible objective:** to encourage the audience to reflect on the importance of a smooth continuum of support during education transitions.

### How to use the video

Show the video. You could also read out and display this quote:

**“The best possible transition can perhaps be defined as being one where the ending and beginning are merged to create a smooth, seamless move from one setting to another, retaining elements of the old until the new feels safe and familiar.”<sup>3</sup>**

Ask the audience (in plenary or small groups) to reflect on the role inclusive ECDE settings can play in offering a smooth continuum of support: supporting parents and caregivers before their children enrol, and then supporting them during and after the transition into the ECDE settings, and then again during and after the transition into school.

- What are some of the practical things ECDE settings can do to help ensure inclusive transitions?
- What were some of the methods and tools mentioned in the video?
- Link these actions and tools with any specific outcomes you want to see emerge from your meeting.
- Can the stakeholders in your audience provide or support any of these tools and methods, can they be written into policies, can they be funded through existing or new funding opportunities?

You may want to highlight some practical ideas for inclusive transition from home to first education setting, many of which are seen or mentioned in the video:

- transition plans for every learner created jointly by educators and parents and caregivers – at least 6 months before enrolment;
- transition planner who co-ordinates and monitors plans made by parents and caregivers and educators;
- home visits by educators or other ECDE staff and/or support services;
- visits to the ECDE setting by parents/caregivers and children;

<sup>3</sup> Bridge of Hope (2017) 'Strategy to Maximize the Inclusive Learning Environment for Children Project. Transition Guidance to Support Smooth Transition from Pre-school Institutions to Primary School'. P.12.  
[www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/Final-Transition-Guide\\_English-3.pdf](http://www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/Final-Transition-Guide_English-3.pdf)

- sample sessions and fun activities for the children in the setting, getting to know the environment, perhaps gradually increasing in the term before enrolment, and ideally with a friend or sibling from home and with parents and caregivers present as much or as little as the child needs;
- setting helps parents and caregivers liaise with other service providers regarding any special needs that they know about or that become apparent during home and school visits and sample sessions;
- setting ensures staff are trained generally for inclusion but also specifically when they know learners with certain needs are due to enrol;
- setting uses familiar play-based, active-learning, child-led approaches – with adaptations for each child’s abilities and interest – so that children are not suddenly facing a change to a rigid regime of lessons, timetables and inflexible, adult-led activities.

Here are some further discussion points to expand the focus to transitions after ECDE:

- What are the consequences for the learner if the transition is not inclusive, and if there is a large, unexpected, or unsupported change? What happens in your context? What needs to be done to provide better continuous support in this context?
- Transition to primary school should be planned from when a child joins the ECDE setting. This does not mean that the ECDE setting should be used as a mini-school that grooms children for primary education. It means the ECDE setting should be collaborating constantly with the primary school to ensure familiar, smooth transitions for each child when the time comes. What are some ways in which ECDE staff can collaborate with their primary level colleagues?

The video highlights some ideas for supporting a smooth transition from the ECDE setting to the next school. You may want to highlight these for the audience and encourage them to add more of their own ideas and experiences:

- learner portfolios jointly compiled by educators and parents and caregivers;
- information booklet for parents and caregivers and children about the next school;
- buddy booklets – older children write, draw, photograph or even personally present positive and helpful information for children who are due to transition soon;
- buddy systems – older children from the primary school meet up with pre-school children to play and discuss experiences;



- joint events organised between the two settings, so learners are used to visiting, learning, playing or performing in either setting;
- team teaching – new and old teachers work together on some sessions in both the ECDE setting and primary school so learners do not feel there is a sudden change between teachers.

Ask your audience to reflect on their own potential role in facilitating, supporting or funding the ideas that have been raised for a smooth continuum of transition support. What can they do from a practical, policy, resource or attitudinal perspective? How could they contribute to your advocacy campaign?

**End the session by repeating your own advocacy message and the action you now wish to see.**

## **Advocacy message 8: Learners must have a voice in the transition process**

**This activity could be aimed at:** education officials/ministers, ECDE settings and schools, NGOs, social workers, parents' groups, teachers and educators.

While consulting children is becoming more typical, it is often assumed that very young children cannot express their thoughts and ideas. This is not true – the problem is we just do not ask in the right way or give them the right opportunities to communicate what they think.

Very young children do have opinions, they know that they feel excited or scared about going to a new setting and they will have lots of questions. As adults we must find a way to help them express themselves or ask questions. Bringing in other children to facilitate the discussions can be one useful option – they are closer in age and can often elicit more from young children than adult can.

**Explain your own advocacy message/campaign to your audience and the action you wish to see.**

**Possible objective:** to remind or encourage stakeholders that children need to be given a voice before, during and after periods of education transition.

## How to use the video

We need to be aware of the changes children have to adapt to during an education transition, and help them deal with these changes. We can better understand these challenges and create better solutions if we ask the children themselves.

After watching the video, or selected segments, ask your audience what they recall from the video about listening to and consulting children and ask their opinion about this.

- Do they agree with listening to / consulting children, even very young children?
- Why is consulting children so important before, during and after an education transition? What benefits do they think it could bring to the transition process, for the learner, the family and the teacher/school?
- Do they have experience of consulting children and can they share what happened and how it worked? Was their experience with older or younger children?
- Have they ever tried the idea of working with older children to consult younger children? Can they share their experience?
- What other ways can we use to consult young children; ways that are appropriate to their age and abilities? (Your audience might mention ideas such as using drawing, role-play or toy/puppet-based role-play to help young children express themselves.)

**End the session by repeating your own advocacy message and the action you now wish to see.**