

Lao People's Democratic Republic

Management of the Integrated Education Programme

Guidelines

English Version

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Preface

Providing educational opportunities for Lao children with disabilities is one part of the national goal of providing basic education for all children. The programme is new and began in one pilot primary school in September 1993. By September 1996 it had extended to 26 primary and pre-schools in Vientiane Municipality and Province and in Khammouane and Savannakhet Provinces. The programme is led by the National Project Board in the Ministry of Education but it is acknowledged that there must be a growing localisation especially at Provincial levels. This small guide is intended to aid Provincial and District Education Services and Directors of schools in the support and expansion of the programme.

This booklet is divided into two sections. The first gives the background to integration so that the purpose and methodology is clarified for all those involved. This section could also be used as a basis for explaining the project locally. Section two sets out the current management plan which is being piloted. The section aims to set out the tasks involved and the division of responsibilities at this stage in the development of the project.

This is the English version of a Lao language booklet

*Integrated Education National Project Board
Ministry of Education
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Executive Summary

Integrated Education is the process whereby all children in a community can have access to school. This includes children with disabilities who have never been enrolled in school or, having enrolled, have then repeatedly failed as the school has been unable to help them. It forms part of the Lao primary school and kindergarten improvement programmes in that it emphasises the skill and flexibility of the teacher and relies on the use of the new curriculum. Introducing integration must be carried out carefully as there is no previous experiences in special education and expertise needs to be gradually built up at national and provincial levels.

The programme is based on improving the quality of education for all children; ensuring, that children receive the full standard curriculum with the minimum changes necessary, starting at pre-school if possible, and building high levels of cooperation with families, the communities, with teachers and schools and other services.

These guidelines detail the management structure adopted, particularly the roles of the National and Provincial Implementation Teams, and the gradual devolvement of responsibility to Provincial Education Services and how this will be accomplished.

As there is no local expertise available, the pattern for the early stages of development within a province is clearly laid down. This pattern is based on the experience gained nationally over the last two years and aims to ensure that these vital early stages are not beset by too many problems which would slow down the development of skills and experience. Advice is given on the key aspects of the programme. This includes the choices that must be made by the Provincial Education Service - which Education Service staff are needed, choosing schools to lead the way and how to approach them, and the initial training workshops needed.

The enrolment of children is a difficult task, particularly as there are no diagnostic services. Directors of schools must use their knowledge of local children to seek out those in need and to make rough estimates of the help that the children will require. Relations with the community and with families must be built so that the help to each child can be maximised within the resources available.

The changes required in the school take some time to be established and this requires a system of monitoring and support which is a joint responsibility of national and provincial teams. As this type of procedure is new to many people it is necessary to discuss this at some length.

Provincial expansion can only take place when the programme is running successfully in the initial schools and the Project Board considers the Province is strong enough to share the tasks. In order to expand, provinces must be able to demonstrate that such a sharing is possible.

Evaluation is needed and this requires record keeping and an active involvement in reviews and evaluation procedures. Information on this is included.

Section One: Integrated education in Lao PDR

1. Defining Integrated Education

a) What is it?

Integrated education, which is sometimes called Inclusive Education, is about ensuring that all children in a neighbourhood have access to basic education.

In every community there is a group of children who are outside the school system. Some of them have never been allowed to go to school. Some do enter grade 1, but after a few years of failure, repetition and further failure, they drop out. It is possible to consider this group of children as being 'excluded' from school because their access to education has been denied.

Most of these children have some additional problems because of some physical or mental disability or learning problem. The exclusion from school may be a result of:

- a decision taken by the family - they may think the child cannot learn and so school will not be useful for them or they may feel ashamed of the children and isolate them at home
- a decision taken by the school - they do not understand their responsibility towards all children and refuse to accept children who are different to others
- a decision taken by the child - they may have only experienced failure and possibly unkindness in school and so be unhappy in the class.

The difficulties faced by the children may be the result of illness, accidents or nutritional deficiency of either themselves or the mother during the pregnancy. It may also result from genetic factors within the family. The children's problems may be clearly obvious to the casual observer (such as a withered leg) or may be hidden (such as child with very poor memory or a small child who seems healthy but is failing to learn to talk). The difficulties may be mild, moderate or severe.

Although a full survey has not been carried out in Lao PD1R, it is known that throughout the world, in every country and in every community, there are at least 3 or 4% of children who need special help. This means that we would expect every school with 500 children to also have about 20 of these children living in their community. This works out at one or two children in every class in every school.

Each child will need different kinds and amounts of help in order to be included in school. It is therefore more accurate to talk about the children having 'special educational needs' rather than referring to them all as 'disabled'. Integrated Education may be defined as ensuring that all children are welcomed in school and are able to receive a suitable education. The school takes account of the children's needs and has the expertise to help children facing difficulties.

b) What are the goals?

The goals of the programme may be seen from the point of view of the child, the family, the community, and the country.

For the child:

- acceptance into mainstream society - an end to isolation and exclusion
- access to a social life - sharing in the daily life of other children, friends and companions throughout life
- greater independence now, and as an adult later on, and so the chance to contribute to the well-being of the family and society
- help in overcoming the problems caused by the disability,
- recognition of their strengths and the opening of opportunities that these strengths can give
- the same opportunities as other children to pursue educational goals.

For the family:

- an end to the shame and social isolation that many families feel
- hope for the future of their child
- more independence of the child, so freeing other family members from some of the heavy burden of care that they might be experiencing
- the probability that the child will be able to contribute to the family as an adult rather than remain a burden.

For the community:

- less prejudice and discrimination leading to a more caring society
- fewer members needing care and more members contributing to the community
- an improved school which provides flexibly for all children leading to better results for all children
- teachers who are skilled in helping children with long term or short term difficulties
- a school with low repeater rates thus freeing resources for more educational opportunities
- fewer drop cuts and so a better educated population.

For the country:

- another step on the road towards 'education for all' to which the country is committed internationally by being a signatory to the United Nations Convention on Child Rights and the agreement on 'Education for All'
- improved lives for a significant number of Lao citizens who have been neglected in the past
- a deepening of the reforms currently being introduced into pre-school and primary education leading to better schools and so a better educated population and the economic benefits that brings
- less wastage in the school system through high repeater and dropout rates - a more efficient use of scarce resources.

c) The relationship between integrated education and other reforms

The new methodology and curriculum now being introduced into pre-schools and primary schools through teacher training programmes aims to move away from some of the inflexible and formal methods often used in schools. These old methods do not foster the development of children and are only really suitable for the brightest and most able students. The reforms aim to enlarge the variety of methods available for teachers to use and involve children much more actively in the education process.

In the pre-school, teachers use their knowledge of the physical, social, linguistic and intellectual development of the child as a basis for a curriculum introduced through many activities and through play. In the primary schools, teachers increase the involvement of children by using many different kinds of activities, a greater variety of methods, visual aids and games and by planning their work and recording outcomes.

These reforms in method are being introduced along with the new more relevant curriculum already in use in grades one to three and to be introduced in grade four and five very soon.

Integrated Education relies, first and foremost, on the use of these methods and deepens their use in the school. It is only when the school is working efficiently and well that the additional task of providing for children with disabilities and special educational needs can be accomplished successfully. Integration brings the added benefit of more skilled and thoughtful teachers who are able to solve teaching problems in their classroom and be more creative and innovative. It is for these reasons that integrated education benefits all the children in the school.

d) Constraints

If 'education for all' is to have any real meaning then it is clear that the ultimate goal is for every school to work this way. There must be access for all children to their local school. A few schools in a few places is not enough. The task is enormous but Possible, just as the task of curriculum and methodological reform is being undertaken and will be completed.

The plans for the introduction of integration must take the size of the task into account. The management of the project must be designed so that the potential for national adoption is built in at this stage, even though we are still in the pilot stage trying out systems and monitoring progress. While the initiative is national this is ultimately a provincial and district task. The management system under trial at present relies on the growth of local expertise and abilities while providing sufficient support centrally.

We have certain constraints which are both financial and in terms of available human resources. Unlike many countries Lao PDR has no existing expertise in special education. Our experience must be built from very small beginnings and it will take some time to achieve.

On the other hand, we do not face the problem of some of our Asian neighbours who already have a small set of very expensive 'special' schools. Such schools only admit children with disabilities and may provide a good education for those children, especially those very severe disabilities. But the schools are based on the outmoded concept of segregation of the disabled people. After their education is finished, these children may find it even harder to rejoin the local community, particularly as they have often had to leave their families to attend school. These schools can never reach all the children who need help, especially the children with learning problems who are failing in the primary schools. Special schools are very expensive and may use up all the available resources. Sometimes special schools are reluctant to share their expertise with ordinary schools and this can delay the introduction of integration.

We have the clear opportunity in Lao PDR to build a system which reaches out to all children: a system which is workable, suitable for our situation and a model for other countries committed to 'education for all'.

Currently the project is being supported by SCF(UK) (1993 to 1998) and by UNICEF (1996) and U-N-ESCO (1993 and 1997/8). We will continue to need some international aid to carry this forward and will seek funds and fruitful international partnerships.

e) A brief history of the project

- 1989 MoE report on the quality of education on offer in Lao schools.
- 1990 Kindergarten improvement begins with work on teacher training.
Kindergarten curriculum and methodology reform starts.
- 1991 Primary school improvement begins with teacher training.
Lao PDR signs the UN Convention on Child Rights which includes the right of disabled children to have access to school.
UNESCO international conference on 'Education for All' in Jomtien Thailand.
- 1992 First classes for deaf and blind children started at the National Rehabilitation centre.
New methods in use in model primary schools. The problem of failing children becomes clearer.
- 1993 Work started on reform of the primary school curriculum.
Subregional UNESCO conference in Harbin China. Lao PDR report on the situation.
Integrated Education Project Board set up and a pilot project started in Sapanthong Neua Primary School.
- 1994 UNESCO conference in Salamanca Spain. Lao PDR sign the 'Salamanca Statement' along with 187 other countries pledging to work towards 'Education for All'.
Introduction of new grade 1 curriculum.
- 1995 Adoption of the Compulsory Education Decree which applies to all children including the disabled.
Extension of the integrated Education Project to 4 kindergartens and a further 6 primary schools (in Vientiane and Savannakhet).
Creation of the National Implementation Team.

- Introduction of the new grade 2 curriculum.
- 1996 Extension of the Integrated Education Project to include 26 schools and kindergartens in Vientiane, Khammoune and Savannakhet province and in Vientiane municipality.
- Introduction of the new grade curriculum.

2. Principles

a) Quality of Education

Integration is an opportunity to improve the quality of education. It should not be at the expense of other children. Care should be taken that integration always brings benefits for each school and class through the improvement of teaching and management skills and a new attitude that stresses the teachers responsibility to enable learning to take place.

This is the main reason for the limitations on recruitment. If all schools are integrated there should be no need for more than two children with special needs in any one class. At this level it is possible for the teacher to provide for all the children in the class. Where numbers rise beyond this the teacher will need extra help or some children will not receive the attention that they deserve.

Similarly, the overall number of children in the class must be controlled so as to ensure all children can be catered for.

The limitations for enrolment in integrated classes are:

- the total number of children in the class should not exceed 45
- no more than 3 children with special needs should be enrolled in the class. This is in addition to any children who are placed on the programme because of persistent failure.

b) Full Integration

The education offered to children with special educational needs is based on the standard kindergarten and primary school curricula. The children are expected to take part in all normal school activities with the least amount of change or extra help that is possible.

This is accomplished firstly by:

- finding ways that children may take part by using a variety of methods and activities
- making small changes in activities that will enable a child to take part in an activity that would otherwise not be possible - such as providing large, clear writing for a child with poor vision, or a similar (but easier) puzzle or question for a child with learning problems.

If this is insufficient, then by:

- providing the child with the least amount and the least intrusive form of help that is needed.

And if this is still insufficient, by:

- planning and carrying out additional activities in school aimed at reducing the particular difficulties the child is facing
- planning activities with the family so that additional training and help can be given by them.

c) Starting Young

For every year that a child with a disability is denied the chance to learn by neglecting to give them the opportunities and help needed, the task becomes more difficult. When help is given from early childhood the child has the best chance of reaching their full potential. Not only that, but the task for both families and teachers is very much easier.

It is mistaken to think that because their development is slower than other children we should wait for them to mature before offering education. In starting up in a new district, we must ensure that we do not miss these young children because there are older children who have not been offered places in the past.

Integrated education must use the kindergarten system wherever possible and admit children at 3 years old or as soon after as is possible. Where there is a shortage of kindergarten places, disabled children should be given priority as kindergarten is so very important for them.

Where there is no kindergarten, the children must be brought into the primary school at six years old like other children.

It is also a mistake to admit underage children to grade 1. The grade 1 curriculum and methodology are not designed for very young children and are not suitable for them. When underage children are admitted the teacher cannot adequately provide for their education. It may also jeopardize the education of those children who are rightly in grade 1 because the class becomes too large and difficult. This, in turn, leads to high failure rates and repetition leading to similar problems year after year. It is therefore necessary to have a policy of admitting all children to the primary school at the correct age.

Where there is a great pressure from parents to take children that are too young, districts should consider expanding the kindergarten or creating a special kindergarten class using the kindergarten curriculum and methods.

d) Developing our human resources

The programme cannot succeed unless human resources are developed to the full. There is an under used pool of skill and talent within the education service

particularly amongst school and kindergarten directors. The most important and urgent task is the development of the local implementation teams who are able to carry forward the project under the direction of the national implementation team and the Project Board.

e) Families

Disabled children will only make progress if the school and the family work together. Close working relationships with these families starts with good relationships with all parents. Kindergartens and primary schools must make every effort to build both the general relationships needed with all the families and the day to day cooperation with the families of the children with special educational needs.

f) Support from the community

The child's place in the community must be assured. Old ideas and superstition remain a problem. Schools must work with the community to explain the rights of children to education and the goals and benefits that can be achieved. They must combat superstition and wrong ideas. They must seek the active support of the community in the task of creating improvements in educational opportunities for all children.

g) Cooperation

Cooperation is needed between teachers within the school and between schools. Cooperation is also needed with other services such as health services and mass organisations. These links must be actively built.

Section Two: Management of the Lao PDR integrated education project

1) Programme management structures

The project is under the direction of the Ministry of Education. Day to day, management is the responsibility of the Project Board. Input from the National Rehabilitation Centre and SCF(UK) provide the additional technical help needed through the national implementation team.

a) The National Project Board

As a new development the IE programme is currently led at national level by a Project Board with the following members:

- Mr Kamhoung Sacklokham: Deputy Director General and Pre-school Education, MoE (Chairman)
- Mr Chandy Phommaboud: Deputy Director Teacher Training, MoE
- Dr Souplane Inthirath: Deputy Director National Rehabilitation Centre
- Ms Janet Holdsworth: IE Adviser, SCF(UK)
- Mr Sitad Uthaythany: Senior Technical Staff - Primary Education, MoE
- Ms Phannally Thepphavongsa: Senior Technical Staff - Pre-school Education, MoE
- Ms Khantavy Phachansitthid: Director Sapanthong Primary School
- Ms Vatthana Manaroth: Project Manager, SCF(UK)
- Mr Khambav Khamsey: Senior Technical Staff - Teacher Training, MoE
- Ms Mone Kheuaphaphorn: Director DongDok Kindergarten

The role of the project board is to:

- plan and guide the expansion of the project
- utilise the very limited financial and personnel resources to the best advantage and so as to ensure all IE schools can successfully undertake their new responsibilities
- arrange for teachers to receive the proper incentive allowance as stipulated in the 1995 Prime Ministerial Decree
- ensure proper coordination between the parties involved (MoE, National Rehabilitation Centre, SCF(UK) and any other Ministry or Non-Government Organisation)
- to build a National Implementation Team able to undertake training and support of new schools and kindergartens entering the project
- through the national team to support the development of provincial teams who can gradually take over their tasks at provincial and district levels
- evaluate and review the project so as to ensure that the maximum achievements are possible. This necessarily entails judging what is the

minimum national input is needed to ensure ongoing development at provincial level

- prepare reports for the Ministry on the future of the project so as to inform decision making and educational planning
- to represent the project internationally so as to learn from international experiences and to contribute to international debate.

DIAGRAM

In order to carry out these functions it is vital that provincial teams and school directors keep in close contact with the board and engage in every open discussion with the board members about set backs and successes.

It is also important to ensure that any local expansion plans are fully discussed with the Board before implementation. All provincial expansion must be within the national plan so as to ensure that it is possible for the National Implementation Team to support the expansion. The Project Board is also concerned that development of Integrated Education should be balanced across the country, and want to avoid the situation where the swift development in one province leads a too slow development in another province.

b) The National Implementation team

This is composed of members of the Board supplemented by school directors, staff of the rehabilitation centre other technical staff and teacher trainers whose growing experience in integration enables them to undertake training and support of teachers and schools joining the programme.

The role of the national implementation team is to:

- provide training for the first group of kindergartens and schools within a province
- monitor this group of schools to ensure progress is made
- provide support for these schools for two years
- build provincial implementation teams able to carry on the work within the province
- organise and run national meetings and events
- produce the newsletter
- produce training materials for national use
- prepare evaluation reports for the Board
- administer the funds available.

In the future, when experience is built a little, members of provincial implementation teams be brought into the national team and will work with the national implementation team in new provinces. In this way the expertise available nationally, will become as widespread as possible. Taking part in training and support tasks with the national team is seen as an important aspect of developing the capacity at provincial and local levels.

c) Provincial Implementation Teams

Once integration is started in a province the Board will expect a provincial implementation team to be built so as to carry forward the work increasingly independently.

The role of the team will be:

- to take administrative responsibility for the project including basic organisation of any training workshops to be given
- to support and monitor schools, at first alongside members of the national team and later independently
- to provide feedback on all aspects of the project to the Board
- to keep schools informed about the project
- to take part in training workshops and gradually take over training from the national team within the province
- to build the local cooperation needed with rehabilitation centres etc
- to plan and propose to the Board the help that districts and individual schools may need on joining the project and to carry out such plans
- to gradually widen the implementation team to include school directors and others who can provide the support new schools need.

At the start of the project, the Board envisages that the provincial team will be made up of three people, the Deputy Director of the Provincial Education Service and two members of the Provincial Education Service staff (one from each of the Primary and Kindergarten divisions). As all members of this team are facing the task of increasing their technical skill it is important to try to maintain stability within the team. The project will fail if there are too many personnel changes and technical expertise is continually lost to the project. This should be borne in mind when the initial team is selected. The province should select staff who

- will stay with the project for some time so that the training and experience they gain will not be wasted
- have teaching experience themselves, particularly at director or deputy director levels
- represent both kindergartens and primary schools - one member of staff for each division.

Within one year this team will be enlarged to include one or two school directors from schools and kindergartens which have been able to make the most progress and are able to lead by their example. The team should also include one or two teacher trainers. As the project expands it is envisaged that the Provincial Implementation team will expand as more directors will join along with others such as additional technical staff from teacher training colleges and staff from provincial rehabilitation centres.

As time goes on, the Provincial Implementation Team will need to assume more and more responsibility for the development of the work in their Province. The Project Board and National Implementation Team will provide support for the Provincial team

in this role. The length of time it will take for a Province to become independent will vary, but the Board will aim for a three year timescale as shown in Table 1.

d) District Level

It is vital that District Education Services are fully involved and understand the nature of the project. It will be their role to work with school in bringing about community participation and support. It is important that any training for schools or any support should involve the district. Each district must designate one member of staff to take responsibility for the project. They will be included in all training, and meetings. As in the provincial teams, continuity is needed and the person chosen must be able to continue with the project for an extended time.

Table 1: Sample Timetable for the Introduction of Integrated Education in a Province - showing the roles of the National Implementation Team (NTIT) and the Provincial Implementation Team (PIT) and the growth of provincial independence.

Date	Action	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3	
		by	helped by	by	helped by	by	helped by
June	decision to approach province	PB					
July	discussion with province	PB					
	selection of PIT	PES					
	selection of schools	PES	PIT				
Aug	Training workshop	NIT		NIT	PIT	PIT	NIT
	Enrolment	school	PIT	school	PIT	school	
Sept	support visit	NIT	PIT	PIT	NIT	PIT	
Oct/ Nov	any extra help needed for schools	NIT	PIT	PIT	NIT	PIT	
Jan	end of semester reports	schools and PIT		schools and PIT		schools and PIT	
Feb	review meeting	All		All		All	
Mar	support visit	NIT	PIT	PIT	NIT	PIT	
May	end of year reports	schools and PIT		schools and PIT		schools and PIT	

	discussion on results	PES	PIT	PES	PIT	PES	PIT
	Expansion plan?	PES	PIT	PES	PIT	PES	PIT
June	discussion on results	PB	NIT	PB	NIT	PB	NIT
	national expansion	PB		PB		PB	

P = National Project Board
PES = Provincial Education Service
NIT = National Implementation Team
PIT = Provincial Implementation Team

e) School level

The key implementers are directors of schools and kindergartens. The major training initiative must be for them. Directors are responsible for:

- leading the development of their school
- explaining the programme to all their staff
- explaining to parents of the children what integration is and how this will affect the work of the school
- building support for the programme from the local community
- ensuring teachers attend training workshops
- recruitment of new children from the neighbourhood and placing failing children on the programme
- working with the families to ensure that school and home work together for the benefit of the child
- monitoring changes taking place in school
- helping individual teachers plan their work and building a supportive atmosphere for teachers
- keeping the provincial and national team informed, providing reports and statistics as required and discussing the development of the school with the team
- putting into practice the measures agreed with the implementation teams
- building close liaison with other project schools
- contributing to local and national expansion as soon as the school is strong enough.

2. Initial start up in a Province

Making a good start in a province is very important. The project must have the greatest chance of success and entail the least amount of work necessary. For to happen all the steps must be carefully and correctly carried out. As far as possible difficulties and mistakes should be avoided. The initial steps will take place between June and September following a decision to start in a province. The steps are:

1. choosing the basic 3 person provincial team - (see 1c above for advice on choosing this team)

2. choosing schools and districts
3. approaching schools
4. initial training
5. enrolment of the first group of children.

a) Where to start - choosing schools and districts

Our experience over the last two years would suggest that it is easier for schools to develop if they do not feel isolated. We also need to avoid raising the expectations of families in a district and then find ourselves unable to provide access for all the children

in the neighbourhood. This puts great pressure on a school to take too many children. If we admit them all, it may be very difficult for teachers, especially in this first year when they are inexperienced. This difficulty has already occurred in two schools and is a problem the Board wish to avoid in the future. So, in deciding how to start, it would seem sensible to choose a small group of four schools such as: starting in a province – choosing 2 districts relatively close together - and - in each of these districts - choosing 1 kindergarten and 1 primary school or, (where there is no kindergarten) choosing 2 neighbouring primary schools

Selection of the schools and kindergartens is also very important. Projects that are about providing material and financial assistance are sensibly sited in weak and poor schools as they will benefit from the material help. But Integrated Education is about building,

on the skills of the teachers so that they can provide a better quality of education and provide for all children in the neighbourhood. Each new school will become a model for more schools as the project expands and so it is of vital importance that weak schools are not chosen to lead the way. An assessment needs to be made of the strength of the school and this is not usually related to the condition of the building. In schools and kindergartens one should look at some or all of the following:

- quality of the school director in terms of their technical skill and leadership
- quality of the staff in terms of their qualification and access to school improvement training
- the teaching method in use - schools clinging to outdated very formal methods are
- less suitable than those seeking to implement the new methods even if this is
- difficult for them because of lack of resources
- schools in districts with active district administrators keen to improve the
- education on offer
- schools with a good record of work with parents and active cooperation with
- village heads
- schools which help themselves rather than relying on hand outs and waiting for
- districts and provinces to aid them
- schools that are not facing great additional difficulties such as very bad overcrowding
- or poor community support.

One important aspect of the IE programme is the new attitude towards children and parents that we aim to foster. These attitudes will be easier to develop in schools that are:

- already welcoming to children from different backgrounds such as ethnic minority children
- open to ideas
- are already taking 'education for all' seriously by trying to reduce drop out rates and ensure girls stay in school
- freely agree to take part once the project has been explained. No school should be forced to take part or the decision taken at district or provincial level without discussion with the school.

b) Approaching Schools and Communities

Initial discussion with local schools and communities should attempt to explain the nature of the project. The Project Board will produce a leaflet to help with this. Information from Section 1 of this document should also be useful as should material from the school and kindergarten improvement work. In the future we hope to have a video to supplement this. As this is a community development, discussion should be held not only with the school but with parents (particularly the Parent/Student Association) and with village leaders.

In initial discussions schools should not be immediately promised a place in the project but rather (if the school is felt to be suitable) that they would be considered for a place either in this academic year or in a subsequent year. This will allow the team to refrain from using this particular school if the discussion reveals too many weaknesses at this time.

Such a discussion will be new to many people and they may not fully understand why we are doing this. What is needed initially is not a full understanding but rather an open mind and the desire to improve their school and the opportunities for all children.

If the school or community is opposed to this development then it is sensible to bypass them at this time. Later it will be possible to show them integrated schools and for the explanation to be much clearer. They can be re-approached in 2 or 3 years time.

Having approached possible schools the proposal needs to be presented to the Project Board for consideration before anything further is done.

c) Initial Training

Initial training workshops of 5 days are held for provincial teams, district staff, school and kindergarten directors and their deputies and a few teachers from each school and kindergarten. These first places are offered to grade 1 and 2 teachers as disabled children will be enrolled in grade 1. The following year other kindergarten

teachers and teachers in higher grades will be offered places on the training course, usually alongside new schools entering the programme.

The training programme includes the following:

- an understanding of what integration is and why it is necessary
- basic knowledge about disability and the educational needs of children with difficulties
- improving the general learning in the classroom
- providing for the needs of children with disabilities and learning problems
- enrolment of children into grade 1 and the kindergarten
- working with families
- recording progress
- school and classroom planning and management.

This training programme is the minimum needed for a start to be made. It has been deliberately kept short so to leave sufficient resources for high levels of monitoring and support during the first two years. In this way training can be more directly related to the real situation in each school and kindergarten and be based on the growing experience of the teachers.

If 'education for all' has any real meaning, it is also essential that (however small the start nationally) there must be a potential to reach every school and every child. The Project Board are very aware of this and are thus seeking the very maximum use of all our resources so as to expand as rapidly as possible.

In choosing staff to attend training courses it is essential that the first teachers should be qualified and experienced. The first year is not the time to upgrade unqualified teachers as they will be less able to put the methods into practise in their own classroom and to share their knowledge and skills with other teachers.

The budget for training will be administered nationally but where training is sited in a province it is expected that the need for low budgets will be understood and all efforts to hold down the cost will be made. The provincial implementation team will be responsible for the administration of any training workshops held in the province. From the second year they may be expected to take a growing part in teaching on such courses.

d) Enrolment of Children

The issue of enrolment is one of the most important aspects of the management of integrated education. Both over recruitment and under recruitment of children will lead to the slower development of the project and so this section of the manual should be studied with great care.

The school will be responsible for recruiting children from their local area. Two groups of children will be put on the programme:

- children in primary school who have a history of failure - that is children in all grades who have repeated more than one year

- children who have not been in school before and who enter kindergarten or grade 1 of primary school. Most of these children will have obvious disabilities of one sort or another.

This second group of children must be carefully selected especially by schools and kindergartens new to the programme. It is very easy for new schools to find themselves with too difficult a task. So, particularly in the first year we must ensure that the tasks the schools give themselves can be successfully accomplished.

The greatest problem occurs where there is a group of older children who have been excluded over a long period. Should the primary school suddenly open their doors and admit all of these children in grade 1 it not be possible to successfully integrate them with the class as there will be too many children with special needs in the grade 1 classes.

Furthermore, lengthy exclusion will have increased the child's problems making the teacher's task even more difficult. So, for instance, a child with a moderate difficulties at age 4 or 5 will be likely to show much more severe problems at 12 because of the neglect and lack of education that they have experienced. They may need more skilful teaching than new primary schools can offer during the first year of the project.

If younger children are turned away because their places have been taken by these older children the problem will continue in subsequent years as this group will also only have the chance to enter late. This is a hard policy to follow as it means turning away some children. Nevertheless, the long-term prospects for all children in the neighbourhood are more likely to be assured if schools build from a small start and do not try to do things that are too difficult at the beginning.

Removing a child later as 'unsuitable' is not good as this would be the result of failure by the primary school to provide for the child. This may not be the result of the difficulties caused by the disability, but come about because of lack of experience in the teachers or because the primary school has admitted too many children with problems into the class. It is best for all (children and teachers) if there is a certain amount of caution about enrolment until skills are built and until the general level of failure and repetition is reduced.

Kindergartens need not be so careful. The kindergarten curriculum is much more flexible and the accommodation of children with special needs is easier. Also, the kindergarten has time to concentrate on the development of the basic social skills which are so important for successful integration. The kindergartens are not faced with overcrowded grade 1 classes. There will be children who are not making satisfactory progress who will need to be identified and helped but these children will be distributed evenly throughout the classes because the kindergartens do not operate a fail and repetition system.

Schools and kindergartens must offer places with care. They should seek children who are:

- about the right age for grade one or within the kindergarten age range
- not more than two or three children per class (in addition to those who have been failing)

- children whose disabilities appear to be mild or moderate rather than severe.

Judging the severity of the problems facing the child is difficult. Some children will have much greater potential than is clear at the beginning, whereas others may only show the problems as the work in school becomes more difficult. Many failing children may have appeared to have no problems at the beginning but their learning difficulties are revealed in the classroom. It may or may not be possible to get help in assessing children locally so directors may have to make their own judgement on the severity of the disability.

They should remember the following points:

- the physical attractiveness of the child does not correspond to the ability of the child to learn - a beautiful child may have very severe disabilities; an 'ugly' child may have great potential. In assessing the development of the child we must look beyond physical appearance.
- In assessing a child's problems we must look at their current level of development in relation to their age and in relation to other children of the same age in the same community. Different communities and different ethnic groups will encourage different aspects of development. For instance, some communities and groups teach their young children more language than others because there is a strong emphasis on story telling. Other ethnic groups emphasise physical skills through games requiring physical prowess. Girls and boys may have different levels of development because they are treated differently. Teachers should use their knowledge of other local children from the same community and their knowledge of general child development to make an assessment of how far behind the normal pattern of development the child is at the present. The book on child development issued to every school provides guidance on what to expect from Lao children at various ages in the different aspects – social, linguistic, physical and intellectual development but this must be supplemented by the teachers' knowledge of the community because of the differences in communities. Primary School directors should use the expertise and knowledge of the kindergarten to help in this task.
- Physical problems are not so difficult to deal with. If a child cannot walk the only problem is the question of how the child can travel to school and enter the
- classroom. Where the child has problem using their hands they will need more help but the problems are usually solvable. All these children are easily integrated because the standard curriculum is suitable and needs no amending for them. They should all be in school.
- Similarly a child with visual problems can easily be accommodated in school with only minor changes. A child who is blind and has no vision will need to use Braille (the special touch alphabet) and have extra help in learning how to get about. Special help will be needed for these children (possibly, at the rehabilitation centre), but once these skills have been mastered they should

be able to come back into the ordinary school and continue their education in the normal classroom.

- Some children fail to learn the language. There are many reasons for this and help is needed in finding out why this has occurred as the child will need different types of help depending on the cause of the problem. Young children without language should be admitted to the kindergarten without delay. Older children who can understand but not speak should enter the normal primary school. Children who are severely deaf will have difficulty both understanding and speaking. They may need to use Lao Sign Language. Schools should ask for help from the Provincial and National implementation teams if they suspect a child is deaf.
- Children with learning difficulties will need extra help throughout their education. There are many such children and they will form the majority of children with special needs in every school and kindergarten. The children will show slower intellectual development than other children and possibly in other aspects such as language and social skills. Often the learning problems are not so noticeable until they face the demands of formal education. Only then do aspects of learning like memory and attention become important. This is why they tend to fail in school and become persistent repeaters if they get no extra help. They should all have places in the kindergarten and primary school. Schools should watch all new grade 1 children carefully during the first year and find those children who are in danger of failing. Extra help should be offered before failure and repetition can occur.
- Children with mental disabilities will need the most help in school. It is likely that all aspects of the development of these children will be affected and this will be quite obvious from a young age. These children should be brought into the kindergarten at 3 years old wherever possible. It is unlikely that they will successfully integrate at primary school if they have had no help before 7 years old. Children with severe mental disabilities need very special help and a specially adapted curriculum. At present we do not have the expertise to help these children.

In making any assessment of a child it is very important to remember that the issue is - what is the potential of the child? What the child can do at the present time is only one guide. Other things may have held back the child's development. A child that is always carried will not have learnt to walk; a child that is kept away from other children will not have learnt to play; a child that continues to be fed by his mother will not have learnt to eat independently; a child that is not talked to and played with by adults will not have learnt to talk; a child that has been excluded and hidden will not have learnt to behave well in company. Very remarkable and swift progress can be made with such children when the child is given opportunities to learn. This can take place at school and by working with the family to provide learning opportunities at home.

One of the most important aspects for each child is to get help early on. Schools must seek out children as early as possible and must use the kindergarten for as many children as possible.

Children can be located through local health facilities, through village heads. Through talking to parents and others. At a certain point Rehabilitation Centres may be able to carry out surveys, but schools should not wait for this to happen. Schools who do not recruit to grade 1 and the kindergarten have not done the search correctly or fully. As there is an expected number of disabled children in all countries and all communities we know the children are there. Shame may be leading some families to hide their child or lack of insight may mean disability is unrecognised locally. Persistence is needed at first. When the local people become aware of the changes in school and the integration more children will be brought forward and enrolment will be easier.

Discussions will be needed with many families and where families are reluctant to have their children in school, patience and persistence may be necessary. Schools should work together to help families understand the importance of education for their children. Other parents may also be able to help allay fears and combat the very low expectations of some families. People who think the child cannot learn will often fail to teach the child at all. Parents and teachers must come to believe that the child can learn.

3. Gaining Cooperation

The first approach to schools and kindergartens and gaining their agreement to become part of the project is the start of a cooperative relation within the project. The following aspects of cooperation will also start during the initial period but will have to actively encouraged throughout the period of the project.

a) Teachers

We need to build very close cooperation between teachers from the group of schools. This relation will start at the training course but other active steps need to be taken:

- staff meetings in schools to discuss issues
- sharing of training by teachers involved in training courses
- visits between Directors to discuss experiences
- mid year seminars to review the work and share problems
- teacher exchanges and visits
- using, the Newsletter to the full and encouraging teachers to write short articles about good practice.

b) Parents

We need support from all the parents in the school and from local communities. Schools should be working hard to strengthen the Parents Associations and contact with the local community. Approaching parents only for financial or material help is not enough. Schools must be open in discussing what the school is trying to do and the role that all parents play in the education of their children.

The parents of children with special needs will need to be closely involved with the work of the teachers. Building these special working relationships with parents is very important and will be part of the training process for teachers.

c) Health

A relationship needs to be built with health services and in particular with any provincial rehabilitation centre. Some children may need medical help and integrated schools have a duty to try to ensure that children receive any available medical help. This relationship must be built up by Provincial Implementation Teams.

d) Disabled Persons' Organisation

In September 1996 there was the inaugural meeting of this organisation. It is likely that Local committees will be set up in the future. Working with this organisation could be very fruitful.

e) General Public

As time goes on it is likely that the project will become known locally. This may lead to opportunities to use the media to increase understanding of disability in the general public. Disabled people and their families may be treated with fear and suspicion. Local implementation teams should take every opportunity to put over a message of acceptance and tolerance and to combat superstition. This is already happening nationally with reports in newspapers and on radio and television but local initiatives may be more effective. Publicity could be linked to other campaigns such as those on compulsory schooling and the right of children to receive education.

4. Monitoring and Support

Integration cannot be achieved without a system of monitoring and support. The most important aspect of this is the regular school visits of the implementation team but also includes using meetings and seminars and printed material such as the newsletter.

As this aspect of the programme is so important it is worth thinking carefully about why it should take place and how it should be done.

a) Why?

Safety for innovators - the project is dependent on the teachers and administrators introducing new ways of working. It requires the ability and confidence to continue to face and solve challenging problems in the classroom as each new child will present

the teacher with a different set of strengths and weaknesses. Innovation places the teacher in a vulnerable position. Failure could lead to professional or social sanctions, success may lead to conflict (or at least misunderstandings) with those adhering to old ways. It is unfair to place teachers in this situation - if we expect them to work in new ways we must ensure that they do not feel isolated or taking too much of a risk. By visiting and supporting the school the National implementation team demonstrate that the responsibility lies with the Project Board. This allows teachers and schools to act with greater courage. By involving directors and local Implementation teams we gradually encourage local responsibility to take over.

Making training meaningful

No matter how carefully planned, no training, workshop can address the real and complex situation faced by each teacher and school. Integration requires teachers to be thoughtful, creative, to look at problems and seek answers by themselves and in consultation with others. We cannot provide clear mechanical answers. In other words successful integration is a result of new attitudes and new skills rather than following fixed patterns. These are difficult to achieve in training workshops but are much more easily fostered when related to real children, real problems, real solutions. Visits by the implementation team are a necessary part of the initial training.

By visiting the school it is also possible to encourage the sharing of successful practice by publishing good practice in the newsletter and encouragement to present good work at meetings. The team can validate good work by all concerned.

In addition, maintaining close contact with schools enables future training to take account more closely of general problems. In our project, experience in school suggested that we needed to do more work on child development and this was incorporated in the next round of training.

Help

It may be possible to offer some straight forward help. It is unnecessary for each new school to struggle with simple problems when a few suggestions may, enable a solution to be found.

Similarly where real difficulties are seen it is possible to arrange extra support or training for particular schools or kindergartens. For instance, a school having problems introducing more active teaching may find it beneficial for the director and some teachers to spend time learning from another school. This can be arranged following a support visit. Problems of individual children may also need some more expertise and this can also be suggested or arranged.

Stopping bad mistakes

Occasionally bad mistakes are made and it is important to correct these as soon as Possible. For instance, a school may under or over recruit in the first year. A teacher may be making a bad mistake, such as getting the balance of attention between the child with problems and the rest of the class wrong. There is nothing to be gained by allowing bad mistakes to continue.

Building the Provincial Implementation Team

We need to know which schools are strong as they are a major resource for the Project. We also need to keep an eye open for people who can become part of the Provincial Implementation Team. This will have a direct bearing on how quickly the expansion can take place. Where the school is progressing well, where no bad mistakes are being made, where teachers are confident and creative it is likely that the school can become a local resource for weaker schools and the director (or possibly the deputy director) may be a candidate for the Provincial Implementation Team.

b) How?

The first support visit should happen within a few weeks of the start of the academic year followed by at least one more in the second semester. Schools with difficulties will need more than this. In addition, the provincial implementation team needs to keep in close contact on a regular basis.

A support visit should last at least half a day, so that there is time to watch and discuss teaching in classrooms. A suggested timetable would include:

- introductions (where necessary) and a very brief outline of the situation by the director
- classroom observation
- inspection of records
- meeting with the teachers and director.

The visit should be made by a mixed and balanced group from the implementation team (ie a school director, an administrator/trainer and a specialist adviser such as someone from the rehabilitation centre). Where the national team is undertaking this visit they should be accompanied by members of the provincial team and the district as they will gradually be taking over the responsibility.

It should be remembered that the general teaching of all children in the class is much more important than the teaching of individual disabled children. Where there are problems in this aspect these must take precedence. Integration is only possible where the general teaching, good.

During the discussion it is important to:

- aim for an atmosphere of joint problem solving rather than an atmosphere of inspection and grading
- be positive and build on strengths
- praise freely where it is due - teachers may not be aware of their strengths and abilities
- pull everyone into the discussion and encourage opinions from all
- allow time for teachers to bring up their concerns - questions such as "What is causing the most difficulties for you" should be asked and followed up with enquiries about the help they might need in solving the problem

- be clear if bad mistakes are being made - for instance 'You must not allow children to laugh at someone's failings. This is cruel', 'You have not done sufficient work on recruitment and this needs rectifying'
- remember that this is part of training so you must start with where the teacher and school is at the moment and when suggestions are made they should be within the capabilities of the school to do it. Where there are many, problems, extra help and training will be needed and the nature of this should be discussed later by the implementation team
- notes and records should be kept by the team.

Following visits to all the schools and kindergartens within the province a meeting should be held to discuss general results and devise plans for supporting any school in difficulty. A full report should be written and sent to the Project Board. If extra resources are needed, requests should be put to the Project Board for consideration.

c) Other support activities

Newsletter

The project is in the process of gathering articles for a newsletter which will be distributed to schools, kindergartens, administrators and parents. We hope to produce it regularly. The aim of the newsletter is to help everyone feel part of the national programme, to spread good practice and to encourage teachers to share ideas. The national implementation team will also use the newsletter to provide information which we think will be helpful.

Review meetings.

An annual review meeting should be held during the early part of the second semester. This enables the schools to come together and discuss issues and for the implementation teams to cover further aspects of integration. A review meeting could be a national or a provincial event. Such meetings are very important in monitoring progress and redefining the programme the light of results.

Records

It is essential that records are kept at each level. The Board will expect records to be kept on:

School and Kindergarten level:

- all classroom teaching - including teaching plans and outcomes
- personal records for the individual children enrolled including records of plans and
- the progress made
- general failure and repeater rates
- school and kindergarten staff meetings
- meetings with parents and local communities
- support and monitoring visits
- any extra training and support given at provincial or national level
- end of semester reports.

Provincial Implementation Team level

- meetings of the Provincial implementation teams
- support and monitoring visits,
- any training and support arranged by the team
- end of semester reports
- full accounts for any agreed financial expenditure.

These records will form the basis for ongoing monitoring of the project by the Board and the National implementation team. They should be available to implementation teams and the Board as required.

During 1996/7 the National Implementation Team have been trying out some forms on which to record data. These will be supplied to local teams. It is also important for schools and teams to come up with local methods of recording and try them out. Useful ways can be shared between schools.

5. The second year

a) Enrolment

It is expected that most of the children with special needs will have made sufficient progress to be promoted into the next grade. Schools should consult the regulations of Ministry on the issue of examinations.

This will enable the enrolment procedure to go ahead once again (now and in subsequent years) and new children brought into kindergarten and primary school. Where children are ready to move up from kindergarten to primary school, close cooperation between the kindergarten and primary school should take place so that the child has the best chance in grade 1. This includes

- meetings between directors and between the child's last kindergarten teacher and new primary school teacher
- handing over the child's file and records
- arranging for the child to visit the primary school before the end of the academic year
- introducing the family to the primary school director.

b) Provincial Implementation Team

The team should now be increased with the addition of one or two school directors, teacher trainers and others such as Provincial Rehabilitation Centre Staff. The National Implementation Team will help in the selection of these additional members. The expanded team will be expected to take much greater responsibility for training and monitoring, and support during the second academic year. It will gradually take over the responsibilities of the National team for the expansion in the province.

c) Monitoring and support

The National team will continue the support role for all schools and kindergartens during their second year. Following this, it is expected that the Provincial team will take over the support for new project schools and the continued monitoring of all schools.

6. Expansion at local levels

Once the project is successfully running in a province, expansion can be considered. It is the responsibility of provinces to put forward expansion plans to the Project Board for consideration. These plans should be presented towards the end of the school year when the end of year provincial report is submitted to the National Implementation Team. Decisions will be made by the Project Board at that time so that any training can be planned and carried during the school vacation.

The proposal should include:

- a report on the existing schools and an estimation of their continued need for support
- details of the proposed new districts and schools
- the size and background of the current Provincial Implementation Team
- proposed training plan, including a breakdown of what contribution the province can make and what help will be needed from the National team
- planned support activities - again showing the level of contribution available within the province.

The Project Board will not agree to any expansion that is thought to be not carefully thought through or presented too late for consideration by the Board.

Expansion should only be considered if:

- most of the schools and kindergartens are making adequate progress
- at least some of the schools and kindergartens have made excellent progress and are therefore able to show any new schools the way forward
- the Provincial Implementation Team has gained sufficient experience to take on some of the monitoring and support requirements
- the Provincial Implementation Team has been able to expand by the inclusion of one or two school and kindergarten directors and others.

At each stage of expansion this issue of support must be considered. If schools cannot be supported through the initial two years then expansion plans are too ambitious and must be cut back. The aim of the Project Board is to ensure that all schools joining the programme be successful and help will be given in relation to what is needed.

We need to assume that from a group of schools, all of them will need some help and advice and one or two will need extra help. We must have the resources to do this properly. This should not be too expensive (especially at Provincial levels) and money can be found from national sources. But, experienced and skilled personnel cannot be supplied from outside. We have to build these resources ourselves. So, in

making expansion plans, the capacity of the implementation teams (both at province and nationally) must be taken into account. At national levels we are already refusing to agree to expansion plans which we consider are too ambitious and not possible to achieve as the burden on implementation teams would be too great. All provinces when planning expansion should bear this in mind and be prepared for their plans to be cut back by the Project Board if it is thought to be unrealistic.

Indicators which the Project Board will use in assessing provincial expansion plans include:

- the strength of schools already in the project
- the strength and quality of the Provincial Implementation Team
- the level of cooperation achieved locally
- the ability of the implementation team to help in training workshops and provide the major input towards monitoring and support
- proper financial accounting and budgeting
- well worked out plans and budgets.

In addition the Project Board will consider:

- the capacity of the national team to support the province
- the overall budget and financial limitations including the level of outside support available from SCF(UK) and other funders
- the needs of other provinces.

7. Evaluation and Reviews

This is a new programme and it is particularly important for regular reviews to take place so that changes can be instituted where there are problems and plans can be made for its development. The annual review meetings are an important part of this process. This will be supplemented by periodic data gathering and analysis of results.

In addition, particularly as outside funding is being used, evaluations carried out with the help of donors and using outside consultants will be needed from time to time. Furthermore, Lao PDR is in the forefront of these developments internationally and we have a duty to document the project to aid international learning and debate.

In May 1997 a full review will take place so that future plans can be made. The Board will expect every province, district and school to take part in this and supply reports and data for the board. In the future it is expected that provincial teams will undertake similar activities on a provincial basis.