Summary of Save the Children Sweden's Inclusive Education Programme in Yemen

# Introduction

The inclusive education programme was initiated in 1997, in Taez, Abyan, and Lahj due to them being governorates that had well established CBR (community-based rehabilitation) programmes.

The overall aim of the programme was to promote the inclusion of children with special needs, i.e. disabled and marginalised children, and children in difficult social and economic circumstances.

In order to achieve this aim, the activities took place within different timeframes in order to achieve the sub-objectives that were formulated.

The components were generally as follows:

# Advocacy and awareness creation

Before transferring disabled children to school there was a need for intensive advocacy efforts within the schools. Thus, the preparatory activities included the 'school box', which consisted of materials for simulation and role playing in order to sensitise on the needs of the disabled and affect attitude change. In addition to that, discussions with the school staff and students were held in order to set up the structure within the schools for receiving the disabled children.

# Linking the CBR programme and involving disabled people's associations

The CBR programme was initiated in 1994 in Taez, Abyan, Lahj. The programme aimed at:

1. Supporting disabled children and linking them to available services through the establishment of a referral system.
2. Providing home-service rehabilitation for the children.
3. Capacitating the community through attitudinal change and encouraging active participation.
4. Helping the children and their families through provision of supporting materials.

When the inclusive education programme was initiated in 1997 as mentioned earlier, the choice of governorates was based on the presence of the CBR programme which acted as preparatory ground. The children were later on - after preparation - referred to schools that were prepared to receive them. However, there was a process of misalignment in the programme where children who were in the CBR programme were not referred to schools that had been prepared by the inclusive education programme, and vice verse.

# Community participation

In the past, the parents and communities were not very much involved in their children's education, and in order to change attitudes and to have a successful programme it was extremely important to do this. The CBR programme involving the parents in their children's rehabilitation and education and in mobilising the whole community had set the stage for inclusive education.

Then, agreements were made with the ministry of education to officially initiate a programme of inclusive education.

Parents' committees were formed in inclusive schools where disabled children were being transferred. There were several joint activities that were meant to give the families and local communities a sense of ownership of the programme.

# Training

The programme focused on establishing a national resource team who have been sent to Jordan at the cost of the Social Fund for Development, for a diploma degree in Specific Learning Disabilities.

# Monitoring and follow up

The Ministry of Education's capacity was enhanced through the establishment of the Inclusive education directorate at the central ministry in Sana'a. The involvement of the government and the full adoption of inclusive education is important for sustainability, since ultimately these pilots would have to become systemic. In addition to that, a documentation and monitoring mechanism was put in place.

The efforts were later on focused on the decentralisation of the inclusive education programme and that was by establishing directorates in the selected governorates. These directorates were managed by the core of national trainers.

# Expansion of the project

It was later on decided that the IE programme was to be expanded to 10 governorates based on the model governorates, in order to achieve the target that was set for the comprehensive adoption of inclusive education by the year 2015. However, certain technical considerations were missed which gave rise to a chain reaction of constraints, like keeping up with the follow up and monitoring process and prioritisation of activities in an organised manner.

# The refugee project

Save the Children Sweden (SCS) is considered a partner along with the UNHCR in a programme which targets Somali refugee children in the urban area Albasatin, Aden and in a camp in Kharaz, Lahj. SCS mainly focuses on the children who attend the two schools in the camp area and those who attend in Albasatin, Aden.

The refugee children in the camp study the Yemeni curriculum from Grade 1, in addition to studying the Somali language as well as English language. They are transferred to a Yemeni school near the camp after Grade 8 in order to sit for the Yemeni (Ministry) exams that will enable them to continue their secondary education in Yemeni public schools. The curriculum is designed to help dual purposes, i.e. integration in the Yemeni educational system as well as maintaining their language and culture for future repatriation.

The children are then transferred to a public school after Grades 8/9 where they study the Yemeni curriculum and finish up to high school. This is done within a rights-based approach, and the main aim was to mainstream them in society and not to further marginalise them with limited boundaries.

SCS is looking into possibilities of adding transitional activities to ensure a smooth transfer from the school they go to and the public school system. SCS is also responsible for the CBR programme in the camp, where disabled children are integrated in public schools and are referred to medical services when the need arises. Therefore, SCS is considered an important partner in education for UNHCR.

# Future focus

The present attempts are aimed towards establishing comprehensive models of inclusive education in a few selected governorates, filling in the technical gaps and perfecting pilots before they are replicated in other governorates. Perhaps, the rapid expansion and establishment of resource rooms had the advantage of getting the government on board the programme. However, it also had the disadvantage of somewhat diluting the programme in each governorate. Thus, the need for a more holistic approach within fewer pilots has become apparent, taking into consideration that the role of international agencies should not be to take on the role of the government but should focus on presenting to the government successful and replicable models to be adapted by the government.

There will also be a greater focus on children's participation where they will be the focal target group in the action research and their opinions will be taken into account pertaining to improvement of their circumstances and education. In addition to that, they will be involved in advocacy and in helping disabled children integrate through establishing a buddy system using peer education with a child-to-child approach.

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