EENET
Enabling Education Network

Seven years of conversations

An analysis of EENET's correspondence records 1997-2004

EeNET
Enabling Education Network

Contents

List of tables

List of figures

Executive summary

Why was this data analysis needed?

EENET's main aim is to 'create conversations' – to help people around the world (especially those in southern countries) to access information from each other and to share ideas and experiences with each other, on the issue of inclusive education. We summarise our activities as 'networking' and 'information sharing'.

Networking and information sharing activities are often misunderstood, and frequently under-appreciated. Yet networking and sharing activities are essential for helping people to learn from experience and feel supported in their efforts towards positive change – in whatever sector. EENET has been asked many times over the years to explain, and sometimes to justify, its work, within a development and education environment that tends to undervalue communication initiatives. The data analysis and this report will, we hope, offer some explanation of the networking and information sharing that EENET is doing, and some evidence for the importance of this type of work.

EENET will use the data specifically to guide us in our efforts to disseminate materials from our action research project 'Understanding community initiative to improve access to education'. It will also assist us to improve our activities more generally, helping us to focus on particular regions or issues that have so far been under-represented in EENET's networking.

What did we find out?

The report details the results of an analysis of EENET's correspondence records, covering seven years. Every item of correspondence in our hard-copy files was read, categorised and entered into a database. In total 1,423 items of correspondence (plus all related EENET responses) were assessed, covering 125 countries.

A small group of these countries account for the majority of the communication (the top ten countries have sent 49% of all correspondence). South Asia, Africa and Europe are the regions EENET has had most communication with, whereas regions such as Latin America and the Middle East/North Africa are still significantly under-represented in the network.

The data shows that there have been some obvious trends in the correspondence over the seven years. For example, the number of items of correspondence has grown steadily, reaching a current level of almost one new item every day. The number of countries engaging in conversations each year has also risen greatly, from 16 in 1997, to 69 in 2003. Global awareness of EENET, it's aims and its approachability is clearly growing annually.

Inevitably, in the last few years emailing has overtaken letter-writing as the main method of communication, though Africa is still less likely to use this medium than Northern countries, Asia or Latin America. Almost a quarter of communication is still hard-copy, suggesting that EENET is maintaining contact with a key target group: people who cannot access electronic media.

There have been significant increases in the range of themes being discussed in the correspondence; just five themes in 1997, but 15 in 2002. While (physical) disability is still a predominant theme, the rise in interest in other issues of inclusion (such as gender, teacher education or the inclusion of blind learners) is encouraging.

People write to us for many reasons (21 different reasons are identified in the database). Most people write asking for newsletters or to subscribe to the mailing list, but many more are writing as part of an 'ongoing conversation'. Almost 12 per cent of correspondence covers requests that are not within EENET's remit (funding applications are the most common). Overall, EENET is making good progress in its aim to 'create conversations' and facilitate ongoing information exchange on all issues of inclusion in education.

A wide range of people contact EENET. The largest group by far are local or national NGOs, followed by international NGOs and 'other individuals'. Encouragingly ten per cent of communication is with ordinary teachers (with the main increase having come in the last couple of years), though few parents are in contact with us. EENET is achieving its aim of networking and sharing information with grassroots level practitioners and organisations, though still needs to improve its contact with primary stakeholders such as parents and pupils.

Key recommendations

The recommendations from the data analysis project fall into two main categories: (i) recommendations to help us deal with the growing demands made on EENET's very limited budget and team; and (ii) recommendations to help us reach different groups, and maintain and develop links with other key grass roots groups.

Handling the increased demand for information

- We must continue to promote localised information sharing and networking, as EENET cannot directly meet the needs of such a diverse range of people in so many countries, especially as the demand is growing annually. Existing regional partnerships need to be maintained and new ones developed. Donors need to be encouraged to realise the value of information sharing networks and the genuine benefits of funding them.

- We should re-contact correspondents who expressed interest in 'doing networking' to find out whether they are now engaged in any

information sharing work, or whether they have the capacity to do so in future. This should also involve asking whether they can disseminate EENET's action research resources.

- We should reduce the amount of irrelevant correspondence we are handling by making clearer statements on the website and in the newsletters regarding what we can and cannot offer.

Reaching groups currently under-represented in our network

- We should look again at the correspondence from those countries/regions that communicate the most (or that have seen the greatest increases over the years) to draw out more lessons as to why they are engaging with us, with a view to applying the lessons to under-represented countries/regions.

- We should improve our efforts to offer information in other languages, particularly those spoken in under-represented regions. This should be done through seeking more volunteer translators and more funding for translation work.

- We should increase our efforts to communicate with parents: contacting parents who have corresponded with us to seek ideas for improving our practices; and encouraging other network users (especially teachers and local NGOs) to share any information we provide with parents and community members.

- We should increase the amount of communication with learners (primarily children). The planned children's website section should be a priority for the next year, as should encouraging children's involvement in the action research activities being suggested in EENET's forthcoming guidelines for action research.

- We should select one or two of the more common 'emerging' themes highlighted in the correspondence and make them priority themes for the next year, in order to build up our information resources in these subject areas, and therefore reach more people involved in these sectors.

- We should re-assess correspondence from teachers with a view to (a) learning more about why they contact us and what their needs are (so we can increase the contact we have with this group) and (b) finding people interested in using EENET's new action research resources in their schools/communities.

- We should continue to monitor hard-copy communication and the profile of correspondents using this medium to ensure that contact with 'grass-roots' people does not decline through complacency about the widespread use of email.

1. Purpose of the analysis

The analysis of EENET's correspondence records took place as part of the dissemination phase of EENET's action research project, funded by DFID.[1]

There were several reasons for carrying out this study. First it aimed to identify factors in EENET's global communications which may help in developing dissemination plans for the action research guidelines and associated materials.

Second, the analysis of seven years of EENET correspondence serves a much wider purpose. EENET was established in 1997 as an information sharing network on the issue of inclusive education. It aims to prioritise the information needs of people in Southern countries (especially education practitioners and primary stakeholders), acknowledging their frequent isolation from most existing sources of information and debate. It also aims to facilitate the growth of localised documentation and sharing of experiences. Over the years, donors, Steering Group members and general network users have shown an interest in the details of who EENET is talking to, where, how and about what issues – with a view to assessing whether or not we are meeting the Network's aims. While we have been able to provide our impressions based on our daily involvement with incoming correspondence, we have not been able to back these up with statistics. This correspondence analysis therefore offers a chance for us to present more concrete evidence, which may or may not confirm our 'gut-feelings' about EENET's networking activities!

A better understanding of EENET's communications will help us to improve our ongoing contact, networking and dissemination activities with organisations and individuals in nearly 150 countries. It may also offer insights that will be helpful to EENET's regional networking partners, or to others who are setting up or running information sharing networks.

---

[1] For details of this project see http://www.eenet.org.uk/action/action.shtml or contact EENET.

2. Method

EENET already had an Access database containing the contact details of people who had subscribed to the mailing list for "Enabling Education". To reduce the preparation time for the correspondence analysis, and to create an 'all-in-one' record-keeping system for mailing list members and ongoing correspondence analysis, this existing database was adapted with new fields and a sub-form. The new fields were selected after taking a random sample of country files and assessing the kinds of information and options the database might need to accommodate.

Because of the very diverse nature of correspondence received by EENET, it has not been possible to create a database that can capture 100 per cent accurately the content of each individual letter/email. However, the content of every piece of correspondence received or sent (for which we have a printed record) has been assessed and categorised. The categories are described in the Appendix. Inevitably the categorisation process has been subjective, particularly when an item of correspondence has covered two or more themes or purposes. In such instances, a decision has been taken by the researcher as to the primary theme or purpose of the correspondence. The majority of correspondence items has one clear overriding purpose or theme.

It should be noted that EENET's correspondence files are incomplete, particularly for the earlier years of EENET's existence, when the Network was staffed by just one part-time employee. All findings are therefore based on the available correspondence, and we cannot estimate what differences might have been seen in the findings were the missing correspondence also available for analysis.

In conjunction with the data analysis work, EENET's filing system has been restructured to enable us to quickly and easily locate all previous correspondence from an individual, and maintain more complete records in future. A full picture of the conversations that have already happened with a person can be gathered, before we respond to a new request or enquiry. We will also be able to generate reports from the database about correspondents' interests, and quickly locate the full details of their previous enquiries so that we can assess whether they may be interested in receiving a new resource or in providing information on a certain subject. A 'notes' section of the database allows us to record in more detail any key features of the correspondence which are not covered by the basic options already in the database 'drop-down' boxes. These notes have already been used to generate a list of potential Braille/tape recipients. Interest in EENET's action research approach is also recorded in this notes section of the database.

3. Findings

3.1. From how many countries has EENET received correspondence?

In total over the seven years, EENET has received correspondence from people in 125 countries. EENET's mailing list contains members in 142 countries. We therefore have records of correspondence from 88% of the countries who receive our newsletter.

Possible reason for the difference between overall number of countries on the mailing list and number of corresponding countries:

- some correspondence has been lost or not filed

- many people on the mailing list have been referred to us by colleagues and may not have written to us directly

- EENET is in contact with many 'EENET friends' or colleagues with whom we work(ed) closely (eg, regional networks, donors, former colleagues from Save the Children), but our conversations with these core colleagues tend not to be filed with the 'general public' correspondence. Such emails are kept in our personal computer files, or in files relating to a specific organisation, so that we can access them more easily. Communication with such core contacts, therefore, is unlikely to be included in the correspondence section of our database. Their basic mailing details will be in the database, however.

The number of countries from which we receive correspondence each year has grown significantly, from 16 in 1997 to 69 in both 2002 and 2003. For 2004, by mid-June, we had already corresponded with people in 42 countries.

Figure 1: Number of countries corresponding with EENET each year
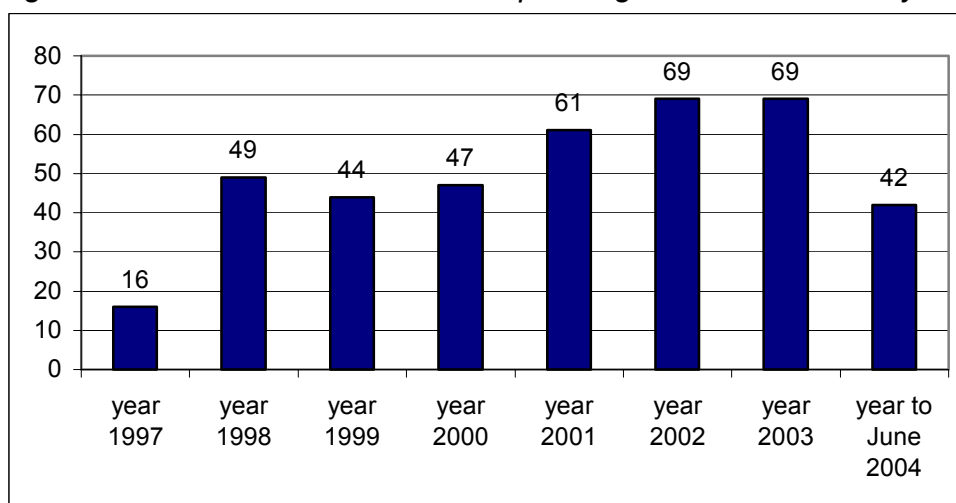
3.2. How much correspondence has EENET received, and from how many people?

Overall situation

In total 946 people have corresponded with EENET, sending us a total of 1,423 items of correspondence.

Table 1: Top ten countries for sending correspondence

Country	Total number of correspondence items sent – all years
India	195
England	137
Kenya	74
South Africa	59
Pakistan	46
Nigeria	44
Uganda	42
USA	39
Tanzania	33
Ethiopia	32

The top 10 countries for sending correspondence to EENET have sent altogether 701 items of correspondence – 49% of all correspondence recorded. The remaining 115 countries have sent 51% of correspondence. India alone has sent nearly 14% of all recorded correspondence; England nearly 10% and Kenya just over 5%.

Table 2: Breakdown of correspondence by region

Region	No. of correspondence items	Percentage of all correspondence recorded
Europe	323	22.7
South Asia	316	22.2
East Africa	180	12.6
Southern Africa	167	11.7
West Africa	105	7.4
South-East Asia	60	4.2
MENA	51	3.6
North America	48	3.4
Central Africa	47	3.3
South America	46	3.2
Australasia/ Pacific	40	2.8
Central America	13	0.9
Caribbean	11	0.8
Central Asia	11	0.8
Unspecified	5	0.4

Overall the region that has sent the most correspondence has been Europe, although South Asia is only fractionally behind (see Table 2). EENET's primary target for networking is Southern countries, and therefore it could seem that by corresponding so heavily with Europe (England in particular) we are missing our target. However, many of the people based in Europe work for international agencies, are corresponding about issues in Southern countries, or are recommending colleagues in those countries whom we could contact.

The top four regions (Europe, South Asia, East Africa, Southern Africa) account for 69% of all correspondence, with the remaining ten regions, and people in unspecified locations, accounting for just 31% of the correspondence received. While some of these regions are not primary targets for EENET (North America, Australasia) others should be (Central Asia, Caribbean, Central/South America, Central Africa, MENA – Middle East and North Africa, etc). *See conclusions and recommendations.*

Changes over the years

As Figure 2 illustrates, each region has 'performed' differently over the years. Europe and South Asia have remained the regions that correspond the most, but in four out of seven years (1998, 2000, 2001, 2003) South Asia has actually sent more items of correspondence than Europe.

Figure 2: Percentage distribution of correspondence by region
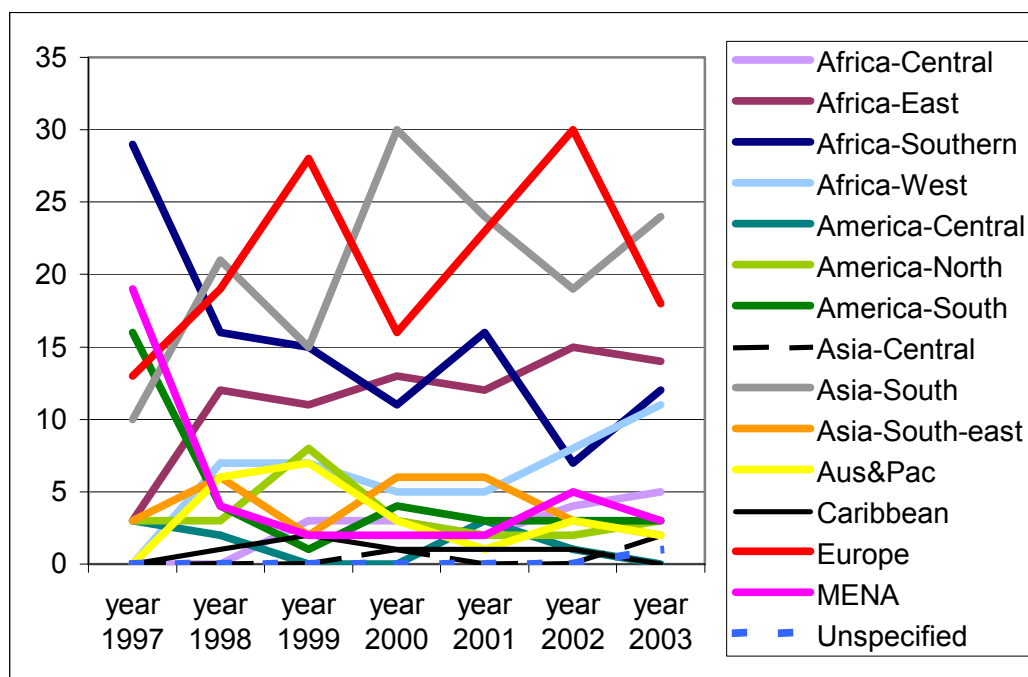
Southern Africa, MENA and South America accounted for a much higher proportion of correspondence at the start of EENET, but have been overtaken by other regions. The high proportion of correspondence with these three regions at the start of EENET can perhaps be explained by the Co-ordinator's existing contact base after working for 12 years in Southern Africa; by the presence of a Middle Eastern academic at the School of Education who took an interest in helping EENET; and by the existing links between key academic staff and government/UN staff in South America. As EENET's influence has grown, a new body of contacts has emerged within new regions.

East and West Africa seem to be emerging as regions with a growing interest in IE and in communicating and networking on this issue. Correspondence from Central Africa, while small in quantity, is also showing slow, steady increases.

Correspondence with Latin American countries remains low (despite the promising start from South America), and possibly reflects the fact that EENET does not offer information in, and cannot correspond in Spanish (and Portuguese). It could also be partly explained by the fact that internet use in those countries is relatively high, so more people can source information directly from the web, rather than needing to contact networks like EENET. This idea is supported by the very high 'hit' rates of the few Spanish documents available on EENET's website. There is also a growing IE network based in Brazil which may be 'catching' queries that would otherwise have come to EENET.

People who communicate multiple times

One question that was raised during the data-entry work was 'do some countries engage in multiple communications more than others?'. The question was prompted by a strong sense, when reading and analysing correspondence from India, that most correspondents from that country were just writing once. At this stage it would be too time-consuming to analyse the data on 123 countries to work out whether people in certain countries engage in multiple communications more than in other countries.

However, a regional analysis has been possible (see Table 3). The regional distribution of people who corresponded more than once is very similar to the overall pattern of correspondence distribution by region.

Table 3: Regional breakdown of multiple correspondents (people who corresponded twice or more).

All years, total 290 people.

Region	Percentage share of multiple correspondents
South Asia	23.4
Europe	19.3
East Africa	14.1
Southern Africa	12.8
West Africa	6.9
South East Asia	6.2
MENA	4.1
Central Africa	3.8
Australasia/Pacific	2.8
South America	2.4
North America	1.7
Caribbean	0.7
Central America	0.7
Central Asia	0.7

Overall, 69% of people corresponded once, but almost a third of people (31%) engaged in multiple correspondence (ie, they wrote between two and eight times).

Of the people who wrote to us more than once, 57% wrote twice; 22% wrote three times; 10% wrote four times, 4.5% wrote five and six times; 1.4% wrote seven times; and 1% wrote eight times.

Table 4: Proportion of multiple correspondents by region

Region	Number of people who corresponded (total 290, incl. 3 from unspecified regions)	Proportion who contact EENET once	Proportion who contact EENET twice or more
Central Africa	26	58%	42%
East Africa	109	62%	38%
Southern Africa	91	59%	41%
West Africa	62	68%	32%
Central America	5	60%	40%
North America	37	86%	14%
South America	29	76%	24%
Central Asia	8	75%	25%
South Asia	197	65%	35%
South East Asia	35	49%	51%
Australasia/Pacific	26	69%	31%
Caribbean	8	75%	25%
Europe	210	73%	27%
MENA	34	65%	35%

From Table 4 it seems the regions containing people most likely to correspond more than once are South-East Asia, Central Africa, Southern Africa and Central America. However, the Central America figure probably needs to be treated with caution, since it is based on such a small number of correspondents (five). The region least likely to engage in multiple communications is North America. This is possibly because with enquiries from regions with good Internet services we respond with suggestions of information that can be accessed online, and we openly state that we are not prioritising document dissemination to such countries. For such correspondents there is probably less need or incentive, therefore, for them to contact us again directly.

3.3. In which years has EENET received the most correspondence?

The amount of correspondence handled by EENET has grown significantly over the years. Figures 3 and 4 show this increase, with a very small drop in 2003. By 2002 EENET was handling the equivalent of almost one new piece of correspondence per day.[2]

Figure 3: Number of items of correspondence per year
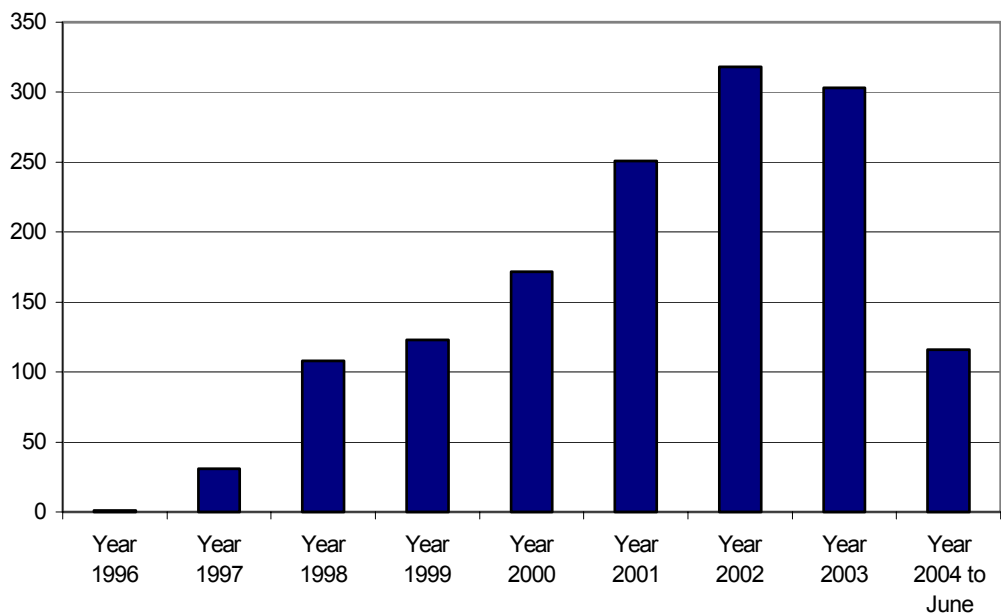
Figure 4: Yearly proportions of overall correspondence

---
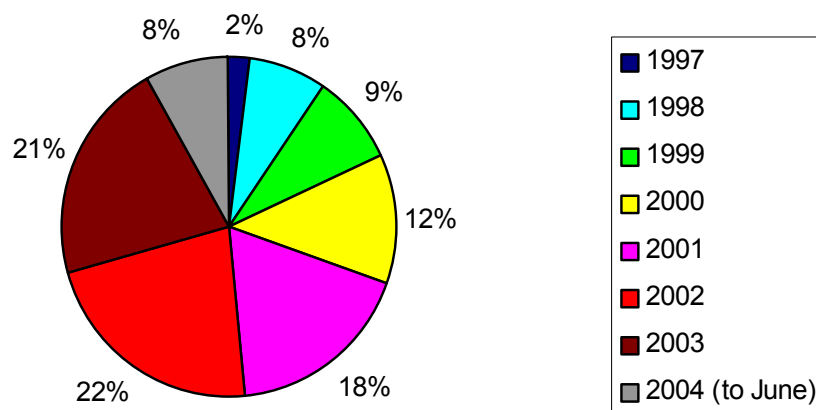
[2] This can take up a considerable amount of time, given the few staff EENET has and the nature of most correspondence which requires personalised responses, and/or individually tailored referrals to other sources or networking contacts. It often takes an hour or more to deal with a single piece of correspondence.

In 2002, EENET received 22% of all its correspondence to date. This is closely followed by 2003 and 2001. The four years before 2001 account for a much smaller proportion of the correspondence. This could illustrate the increase in correspondence received in recent years, or it could be a reflection of improved record-keeping, or a mixture of both.

3.4. What sort of people correspond with EENET

Overall situation

EENET is talking to a lot of different people!

Almost a half the people with whom we have corresponded are people working in national/local or international NGOs (30% and 13% respectively – see Figure 5). It is encouraging that nearly a third of all correspondents (the largest group) are from national/local NGOs since this suggests that EENET is managing to reach and be reached by people working at local, 'grass-roots' levels – not just people working for North-funded or North-based donors, universities, etc.

Only 10% of correspondence is from academics. EENET is a network for South-based, grass-roots practitioners and policy-makers, but as we are based within a university there is always a danger that we will attract lots of correspondence from, and focus too much of our attention on, people in other universities. The statistics show that we have managed to avoid becoming trapped within the world of academia, yet have probably maintained enough contact to keep ourselves in touch with academic-related IE work!

The proportion of correspondence from 'ordinary' teachers/school administrators (10%) is equal to the amount of correspondence from academics, and exceeds correspondence levels from government workers (6%). This is an encouraging statistic which again suggests that EENET is managing to make contact with another of its key target groups. The fact that we have received as much correspondence from teachers (who often find it hard to access information) as from academics (who generally have easy access to far more sources of information) implies that our information (or at least our contact details) is accessible to an encouraging number of grass-roots practitioners.

Perhaps a little disappointingly parents account for just 2% of correspondence. While we have succeeded in building relationships with local NGOs (and to a much lesser extent with teachers and government workers), we clearly still have a lot of work to do to reach parents. They are probably least likely to find us on the Internet, and least likely to be passed our newsletter or contact details by others, since they will not have the same kind of contacts and networks that even a small NGO will have. It is possible that parents, even if they know about EENET, may be unable to afford to send us a letter. They may feel that we are too far removed from their situation or that we will be dismissive of them because they are 'just' parents. EENET is encouraging the development of regional/national information-sharing networks to overcome these sorts of barriers to information sharing. Perhaps we could also do more to encourage our general NGO, teacher and government contacts to disseminate the information we provide to parents and community groups. Undoubtedly when materials are scarce there will be

a tendency to keep hold of, rather than share out, the documents we distribute – leaving parents 'out of the loop'.

It should be noted that 12% of correspondence comes from people listed as 'other individual'. This may be because their role does not fit with the preset categories, or because they have not provided any information about themselves. It is therefore possible that some of these people may be parents.

Students make up 9% of correspondents. Mostly they are requesting help with research projects, and none seem to be pupils/students contacting EENET to discuss their first-hand experiences or ideas of inclusion/exclusion in education.

Figure 5: Types of people corresponding with EENET
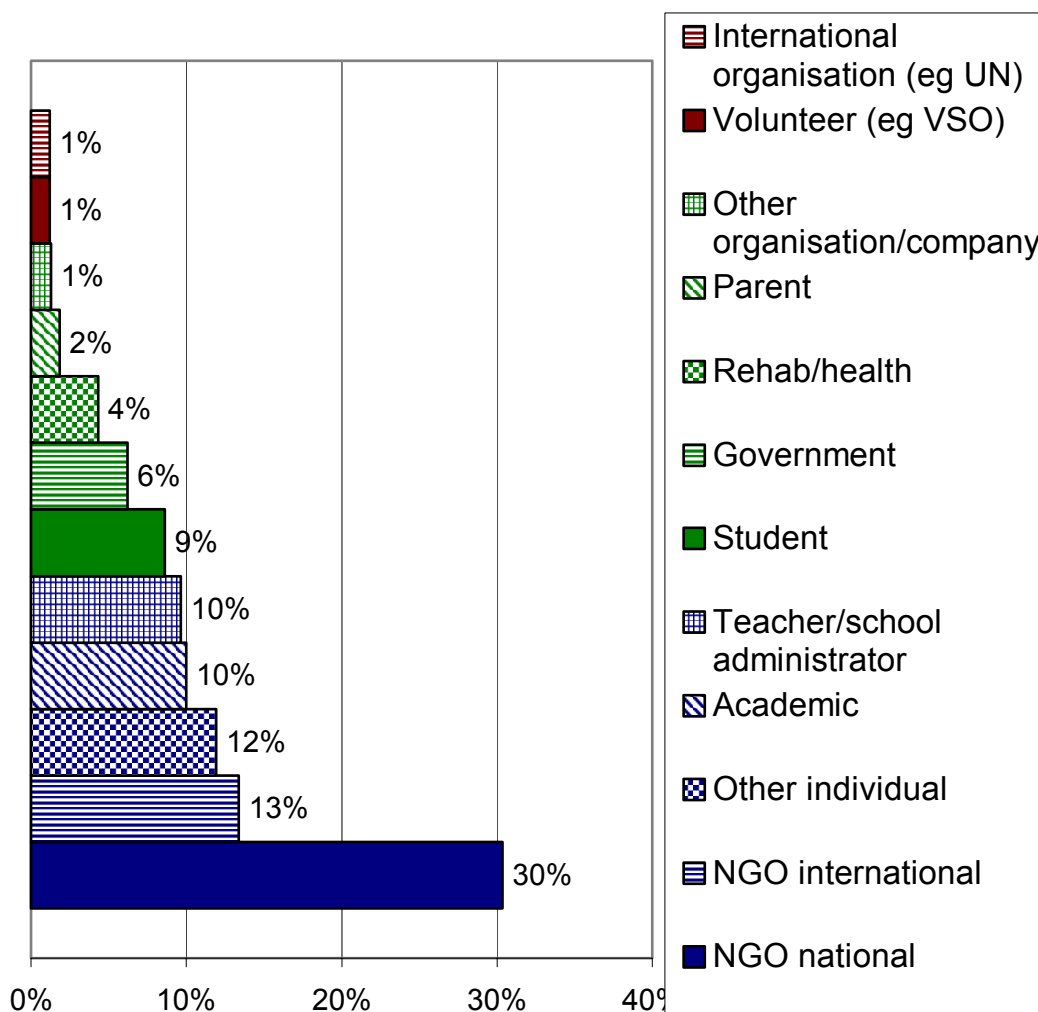
Regional points of interest

The following table (Table 5) shows the range of different types of people contacting us from the regions, as well as listing the types of people that most of the region's correspondence comes from.

Table 5: Regional breakdown of types of correspondent

Region	Number of 'types' of people contacting EENET	Most common type of person	Second most common type of person	Third most common type of person
Central Africa	7	NGO	Other individual	Rehab/health worker
East Africa	11	NGO	Teacher/school administrator	INGO
Southern Africa	11	NGO	Academic	Teacher/school administrator
West Africa	10	NGO	Teacher/school administrator	Other individual
Central America	4	Other individual	Government	Academic
North America	11	Other individual	Student	INGO
South America	8	Other individual	Parent	Academic/NGO (equal)
Central Asia	3	INGO	Teacher/school administrator	Government
South Asia	12	NGO (very much higher than the others)	INGO	Academic
South East Asia	10	INGO	NGO	Other individual
Aus/ Pacific	8	Rehab/health	Teacher/school administrator	Government
Caribbean	5	Rehab/health	NGO	Other individual
Europe	12	INGO	Student	Academic
MENA	8	NGO	Other individual	Government/ student/INGO (all equal)

Contact from students is most common in Europe and North America. This may be explained by the excellent Internet research facilities available in these regions, enabling students to find out about EENET.[3] For the Southern regions, teachers are the second or third most common types of correspondent within East, Southern and West Africa and Central Asia. EENET should perhaps look at the African correspondence more closely and investigate why and how contact with teachers/school staff has been possible here.

---

[3] EENET's website features in the top 3 sites on many search engines when you search for keywords such as inclusive education or special needs.

Changes over the years

Every year NGOs have contributed the most correspondence. Government workers only feature in the top three types of correspondents in 1998. Teachers and students enter the top three for the first time in 2003. It is possible that an apparent increase in correspondence from students in 2003 could be partly explained by changed record-keeping practices. As with correspondence relating to funding applications, request from students wanting help with research may not have been kept so consistently in EENET's earlier years, when staff time was incredibly limited.

3.5. How do people communicate with EENET?

Overall, email has been the most common method of communication; 75% of all communication with EENET has been via email; almost 23% via letter; just under 2% via fax and less than 1% for telephone and 'in-person' contact.[4]

Figure 6: Correspondence method (all years)
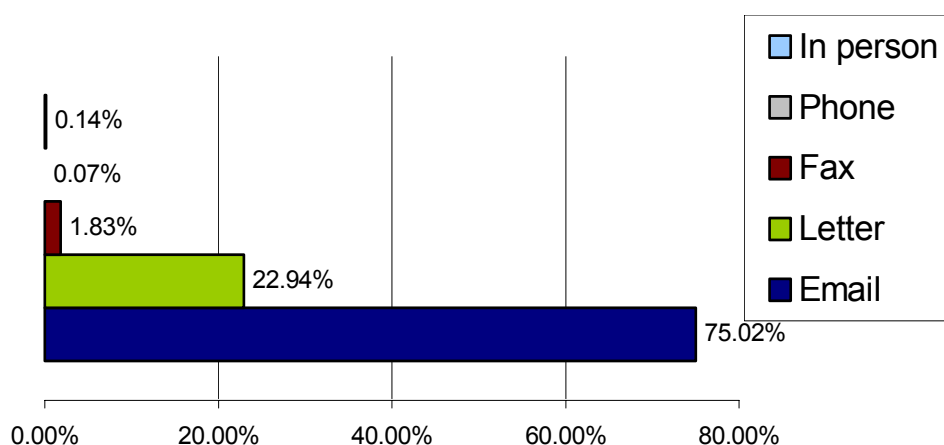
Communication with 'grass-roots'

One concern for a network like EENET, which aims to communicate with people in Southern countries, has always been: 'are we reaching and being reached by (grass-roots) people who, it is assumed, do not have access to Internet-based information and electronic forms of communication?'

The fact that almost a quarter of correspondence is in hard copy suggests that EENET is known by a significant number of people who cannot (or choose not to) use email and Internet information sources. We are therefore far from being a network just for people with access to 'modern' communication/ research facilities.

Analysis of the 'type' of people who have contacted us by email shows that even many 'grass-root's people are reaching us electronically. National NGOs make up 30% of all correspondents, and they sent 29% of all emails (making them the largest group of emailers). While national NGOs may not be as 'grass-roots' as parents or ordinary school teachers, they are still a key target for EENET's networking and information sharing activities, and are clearly able to reach and be reached by electronic media. This does not mean that EENET should reduce its efforts to communicate and to produce/disseminate

---

[4] The latter two are much less likely to have been recorded and filed, so these figures probably under-represent the amount of contact EENET has had with telephone callers and visitors.

in hard copy, but it may ease concerns that we could be totally missing our grass-roots target group![5]

Changes over the years

Correspondence from EENET's users reflects the overall trend for increased email use globally, even in Southern countries. In 1997 the majority of correspondence was by letter (47%). This rose to 56% in 1998. But by 1999 letter communication had fallen to 33% and has since maintained a level between 16% and 21%.

Again, the changes may be partly explained by differences in EENET's record-keeping – perhaps by 1999 more emails were being printed out rather than being filed only on the computer. But the changes also are likely to reflect the fact that more people now have access to basic email facilities for communicating, even if Internet use is still prohibitively expensive or slow for information gathering purposes in many Southern countries.

Another question that was raised during this exercise was 'have people switched from using letters to using email over the years?' It has not been possible to extract a report from the database which illustrates trends among individual users, but observations made during the data-entry process suggest that a number of people who corresponded more than once, have indeed changed their method of communication, from letters to fax and/or email. Some people have also reverted to letter after first using email, perhaps reflecting the unpredictable email services in some countries, or simply because a formal letter was deemed more appropriate for the request/submission being made. The fact that people do switch their method of communication suggests awareness that EENET can be reached through a variety of means.

Regional points of interest

An analysis of communication methods by region does not present any surprises (see Table 6).[6] North America has the highest proportion of correspondence by email (92%). South and South-East Asia regions are just as likely to email as Europe or Australasia/Pacific (80-85%), probably reflecting the booming IT industries in these first two regions. MENA, Central and South America and the Caribbean (and Central Africa)[7] have email rates that roughly reflect the EENET overall average (72-76%). Below average

---

[5] It should be noted that South Asia/India account for a large number of the NGOs writing to EENET. India in particular is becoming known for its fast growing IT capacity, and therefore the level of electronic media used by NGOs in this country/region is not necessarily an accurate reflection of the email capacity of NGOs in all Southern countries. This can be seen in Table 6 which illustrates the regional breakdown of email versus letter communication.

[6] Although Central Asia's 100% email record needs to be viewed with caution because of the very small amount of correspondence actually sent.

[7] Though again, based on relatively small amounts of correspondence.

email communication rates (62-64%) are seen for East, Southern and West Africa, which general knowledge tells us is where Internet use is still much more rare, slow and expensive than in most other parts of the world.

Table 6: Correspondence method by region

Region	Percentage of correspondence by email	Percentage of correspondence by letter	Percentage of correspondence by other means
Central Africa	72	28	0
East Africa	62	36	2
Southern Africa	63	35	2
West Africa	64	34	2
Central America	77	15	8
North America	92	8	0
South America	72	19	8
Central Asia	100	0	0
South Asia	80	19	1
South East Asia	85	12	3
Australasia/ Pacific	85	13	3
Caribbean	73	27	
Europe	80.5	17.5	2
MENA	76	18	6

3.6. How do people find out about EENET?

Overall situation

Not many people (only 12%) have told us how they first learned about EENET or what prompted them to contact us. The majority (42%) of people who did provide this information had found out about EENET through other organisations/newsletters (such as Healthlink Worldwide/CBR News). Word-of mouth and website were the next most common ways of finding out about EENET, with 18% and 17% respectively.

Figure 7: How people find out about EENET
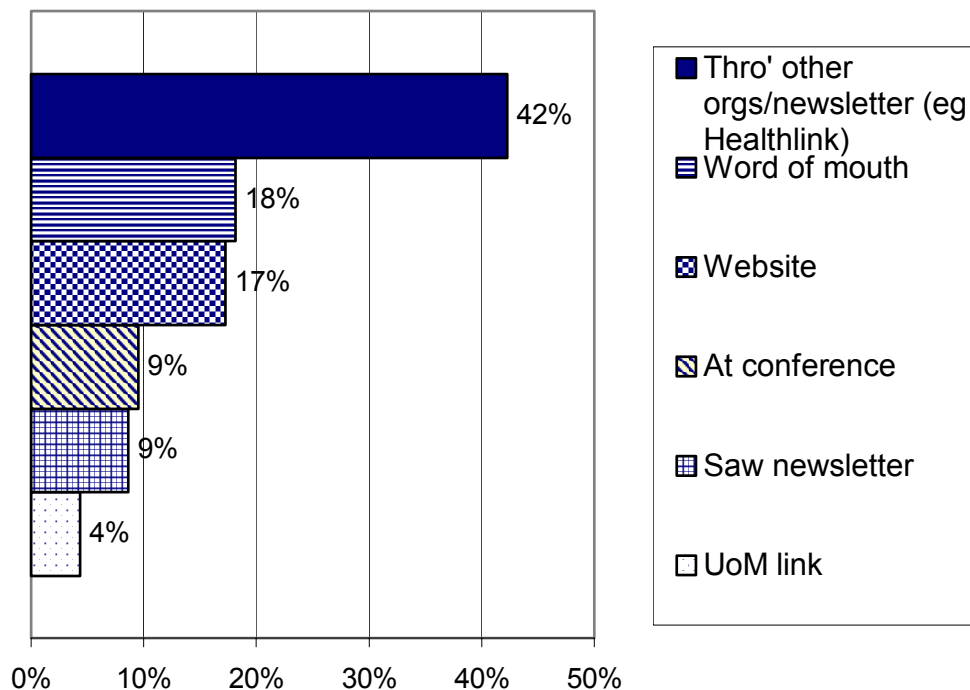
Regional points of interest

There were no major differences between the regions, though the size of the majority finding out about us via other organisations/newsletters was biggest in South Asia. Europe was the only region in which word-of-mouth was the most common way of learning about EENET, perhaps because users in this wealthier region are more likely to attend meetings, conferences and other events, or are more likely to have a wider network of contacts within the international NGO or academic community.

Changes over the years

There were also no significant differences by year, although in 2003 the website, and in 2001 word-of-mouth, were cited almost as many times as other organisations as the source of introduction to EENET.

3.7. What is the purpose of the correspondence?

Overall situation

People contact EENET for many different reasons. The database contains 21 preset options to describe the purpose of the correspondence, yet one of these options still needs to be 'other', to accommodate correspondence that does not fit any of the 20 main categories.
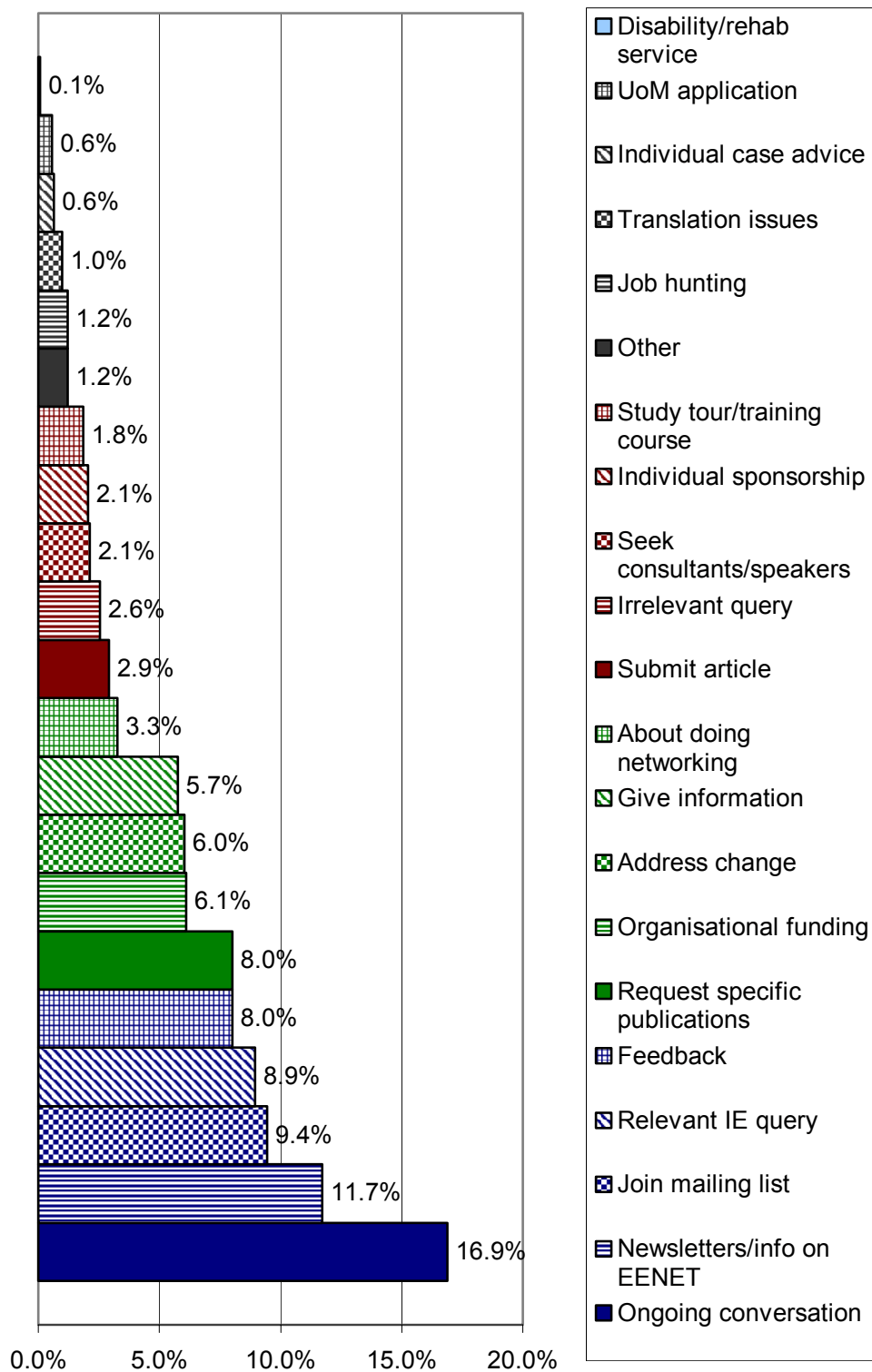
Globally, the most common single purpose of the correspondence analysed was categorised as 'ongoing conversation' (see Figure 8). This usually refers to a second or subsequent piece of correspondence about the same matter as the first.[8] However, the two most common categories after this – 'request newsletter/information about EENET' and 'join mailing list' – could be grouped together. They were created as separate categories since many people do make distinct requests for the newsletter (without asking to join the mailing list); or ask to join the list (without being aware of or requesting copies of the newsletter.) These enquiries do cover very similar purposes, and when combined they make up 21% of all correspondence. Relevant IE queries have been the fourth most common type of queries received overall.

The relatively high proportion of correspondence requesting the newsletters, more information about EENET or to join in EENET's activities suggests that the Network is succeeding in raising awareness about itself, its remit and its approachability. We know from the people who have provided information (see section 'how do people find out about EENET?'), and from other anecdotal evidence acquired over the years, that this awareness-raising is being done directly (eg, via the website, newsletter) and indirectly (other organisations/individuals/regional networks telling each other about EENET via publications, meetings, conferences, etc).

The amount of communication that is part of a longer conversation also indicates that EENET is managing to achieve a good level of two-way information sharing and networking (which is its primary purpose, more so than basic dissemination of existing information). In other words, in many cases we do not just receive a request for information from a person, satisfy them with an existing product and then lose contact with them; we maintain contact and 'create conversations'.

---

[8] Sometimes even one-off items of correspondence have been categorised as 'ongoing conversations' if the content suggests they are part of a conversation but the rest of the correspondence is missing or the conversation was started by telephone, in person, etc.

Figure 8: Purpose of correspondence (all years/regions)

Legend:
- Disability/rehab service
- UoM application
- Individual case advice
- Translation issues
- Job hunting
- Other
- Study tour/training course
- Individual sponsorship
- Seek consultants/speakers
- Irrelevant query
- Submit article
- About doing networking
- Give information
- Address change
- Organisational funding
- Request specific publications
- Feedback
- Relevant IE query
- Join mailing list
- Newsletters/info on EENET
- Ongoing conversation

Values (top to bottom): 0.1%, 0.6%, 0.6%, 1.0%, 1.2%, 1.2%, 1.8%, 2.1%, 2.1%, 2.6%, 2.9%, 3.3%, 5.7%, 6.0%, 6.1%, 8.0%, 8.0%, 8.9%, 9.4%, 11.7%, 16.9%

Just over 8% of correspondence was seeking funding for organisations or individuals (which EENET is unable to do); 1.2% was seeking employment with EENET (often expecting us to be a large NGO with global offices!); and a further 2.6% of correspondence was categorised as 'irrelevant'. In other words, nearly 12% of the correspondence received was inappropriate to EENET's goals and remit. Such correspondence still takes staff time, although standard letters have been created to deal with funding, sponsorship and employment requests.

Regional points of interest

In most regions the main purposes for contacting EENET were very similar to the overall situation described above. There were some notable regional variations however.

In North America very few people requested newsletters or to join the mailing list, perhaps reflecting the very high Internet access levels in the region and therefore a lack of need to request hard copy materials or to join in non-electronic dissemination networks. As seen in section 3.4, students are common among North American correspondents, which may be linked to the fact that this region has shown less interest in joining in network activities – students usually want one-off help with a research project, not ongoing, two-way information sharing.

People in Europe sent the most correspondence categorised as 'irrelevant'. Again, this is likely to be linked to a relatively high proportion of student correspondents from the region – the database shows 39% of irrelevant queries coming from students.[9]

South Asia was the only region where ongoing conversation was not the top (or almost equal to the top) reason for corresponding with EENET.[10] In this region newsletter/mailing list requests were quite closely followed by funding requests. This relatively high proportion of funding requests perhaps reflects the proportionately lower amount of ongoing conversations in the region. A rejection of a funding application discourages further contact, or perhaps the individuals are focused solely on fundraising and are not passing on EENET's offer of information sharing to colleagues who might be interested in starting a conversation with us.

An observation made during the data-entry process was that a very noticeable amount of funding/donation request letters/emails received from South Asia (India in particular), follow a similar template (some almost word-for-word). We believe this suggested 'funding/partnership request' letter is from an old set of guidelines for NGO resource centre capacity-building, produced by

---

[9] Though students also sent nearly 27% of all queries categorised as 'relevant IE' queries – the largest group sending these queries.
[10] Excluding Australasia/Pacific and MENA where correspondence numbers are relatively low and ongoing conversation is low down the list, but where the numerical differences between the most and least common purpose are insignificant.

Healthlink Worldwide, which is obviously still in circulation. The amount of funding requests from South Asia/India possibly also reflects the highly developed local NGO sector in these places and a competitive funding environment.

Changes over the years

There have been some changes over the years in the purpose of the correspondence received. The following table shows the top three reasons why people communicated with EENET each year.

Table 7: Top three reasons for communicating with EENET each year

Year	Most common purpose	Second most common purpose	Third most common purpose
1997	submit article	give info to EENET	ongoing conversation
1998	join mailing list	ongoing conversation	request newsletters
1999	ongoing conversation	join mailing list	relevant IE query
2000	ongoing conversation	request newsletters	join mailing list
2001	ongoing conversation	join mailing list	relevant IE query
2002	ongoing conversation	relevant IE query	feedback
2003	ongoing conversation	request newsletters	organisational funding requests

The higher level of people submitting articles and information in1997 possibly reflects the nature of EENET's work in its first year: focusing on gathering information to create a website and the first newsletter. By 1998, the website and first newsletter were complete, which is probably why mailing list requests become the most common request that year, as people learned about EENET and wanted to take part.

The subsequent years contain only two points of particular interest; the proportional increases in feedback and in funding applications from other organisations. EENET's record-keeping practices inevitably account for some of this. In earlier years, when there was only one part-time employee, irrelevant correspondence (such as funding requests, especially ones which did not have strong IE elements) was less likely to be filed.

However, part of the increase in funding requests may also be due to EENET's apparent growth as a 'global' organisation. Our huge Internet presence, combined with the wide reach of our printed newsletter (sent to 142 countries) creates for many observers the impression that EENET is a large

international NGO, on the scale of Save the Children or UNESCO. The content of funding applications often suggests that the applicant believes us to have programmes in every region, and a formal grant-giving system. It seems inevitable, therefore, that we will receive requests for financial assistance.

The increase in feedback (both praise and critical suggestions) in EENET's sixth year perhaps illustrates an increase in 'relationships' that EENET had developed by that point (maybe more Network users felt comfortable and able to offer feedback after several years of reading about/from us, corresponding with us, etc). It also coincides with a period when EENET was producing new resources (eg, the book 'Family Action for Inclusion in Education') and acquiring resources from other agencies to distribute (notably 'Schools for All' from Save the Children). The increased distribution of hard copy resources is an obvious reason for a rise in feedback and letters of thanks.

Different people, different purposes?

One query the database answers is whether certain types of people correspond for different purposes. Ongoing conversations were the most common purpose of contact for academics, government workers, international NGOs, other individuals and volunteers.

Newsletter and/or mailing list requests were the most common reasons for contact with local/national NGOs and teachers – perhaps indicative of their lack of access to reading materials from other sources which academics, international NGOs etc can afford to access.

Students' most common purpose of contact was relevant IE queries. For parents it was individual case advice – not a surprising finding, since parents are most likely to focus on their own children's needs rather than on wider educational changes. However, such queries cannot be handled by EENET and could perhaps explain why we have not yet managed to engage many parents in ongoing networking activities.

Action research

Only three people have been given specific notes in the database indicating that they have expressed an interest in using the action research guidelines once complete (one each from Finland, Yemen and Jordan). However, as mentioned above, correspondence with regular EENET 'friends' is rarely filed in the 'general public' enquiries files, so the database will only direct us to those relative strangers who have expressed interest in this piece of work.

3.8. What subjects do correspondents write about?

Overall situation

Every item of correspondence was analysed according to the subject (or main subject) it was discussing. Again, the range of subjects about which EENET is contacted is very broad (the database offers 16 preset options). Not all pieces of correspondence could be categorised with a theme, if the content was very general or vague.

Almost a third of all correspondence that could be categorised (31.3%) had a clear disability focus – mostly in relation to education and inclusion (see Figure 9). This is not a surprise. Inclusive education is traditionally interpreted as the inclusion of disabled people in education. Although EENET is advocating a broader definition embracing the inclusion of all marginalised groups, a significant proportion of the information we have available (on the website, in the newsletter, etc) still focuses on disability. We are making gradual changes to this balance of information, and indeed, as the table below shows, the diversity of themes mentioned by correspondents in relation to education has also increased over the years.

The second most common theme was 'general inclusive education', (where IE is mentioned by the correspondent, but not in relation to just a single target group). Over a quarter of all correspondence (26.3%) falls into this category, which is encouraging for EENET, as it suggests there are significant numbers of people engaging with the Network who do interpret IE more broadly than just inclusion for disabled learners, or who want to know more about a diverse interpretation of IE.

The next most common themes are mentioned by far fewer correspondents: rehabilitation/health (8.1% of correspondence); deafness (8.1%) and general development issues (6.8%).

Just 3.3% of correspondence was on the theme of 'doing networking', though interestingly almost as many teachers as local/national NGOs corresponded on this theme. This is perhaps indicative of some teachers' desire to be involved in debates and information sharing with wider groups – something that their jobs usually don't enable them to do.

Many of the general development focused emails/letters are linked with funding applications. Some NGOs will email a standard application for very general community development activities (which may or may not include education) to a long list of recipients in the hope of attracting one or two responses.

An observation made during the data-entry process is that the deafness correspondence has two obvious groups: (a) correspondence linked with EENET's ongoing information-sharing and advocacy work around inclusion for

deaf learners; (b) correspondence enquiring about sign language training, which EENET is unable to help with (as we state very clearly on our website!). The correspondence on rehabilitation/health unfortunately is mainly focused on health services or health education (often with only loose relevance to IE) and very rarely covers the important issue of linking community-based rehabilitation and IE.[11]

Figure 9: Subjects covered by correspondence (all years/regions)

---
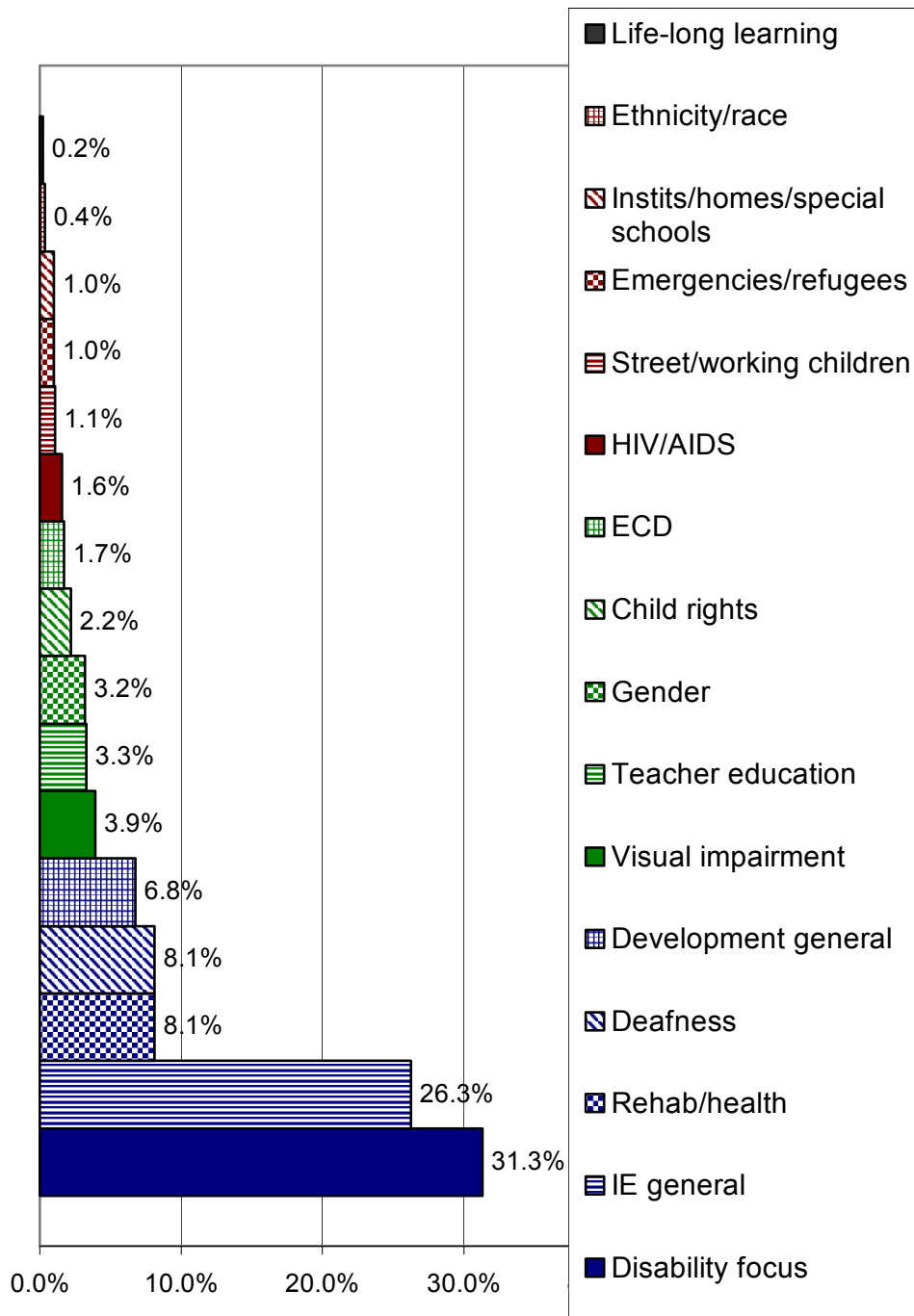
[11] This is based on observations during the data-entry work, not on statistical reports from the database.

There are a number of themes that do not get mentioned very often. One such theme is 'institutions, residential care, special schools'. Only 1% of correspondence deals with this issue. In many ways this is excellent news for EENET, suggesting that Network users support IE and are not focusing on segregated institutions for disabled or other learners. Having read through the files we know that correspondence does come from organisations and individuals who currently support specialised institutions, but their enquiries often relate to their interest in developing IE, as opposed to maintaining the institutions, and are therefore categorised as relevant IE enquiries.

Changes over the years

The following chart and table illustrate the increased diversity of themes over the years and the most common themes each year.

Figure 10: Number of different themes covered by correspondence each year
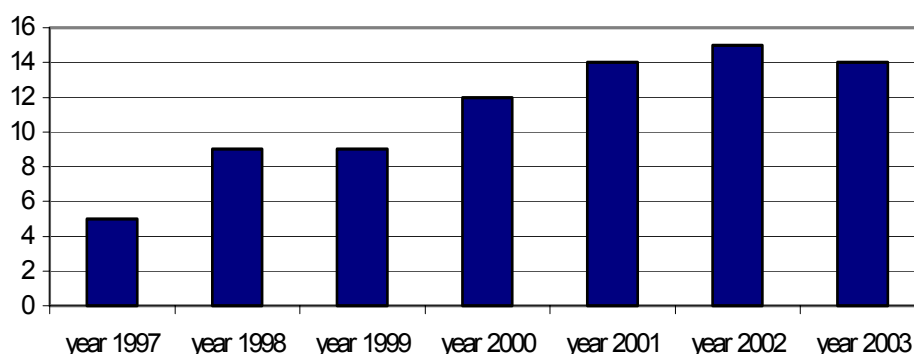
Table 8: Top three most common themes each year

Year	Most common theme	Second most common theme	Third most common theme
1997	IE	rehab/health	disability
1998	disability	IE	deafness
1999	IE	disability	deafness
2000	disability	IE	rehab/health (much lower numbers than the top 2 themes)
2001	disability	IE	deafness
2002	disability	IE	rehab/health (much lower numbers than the top 2 themes)
2003	disability	IE	deafness (much lower numbers than the top 2 themes)

There has not really been any significant change in the most common themes over the years. The main change has been in the diversity of themes about which EENET receives correspondence. In 1997 the correspondence covered just five themes, by 2002 this had risen to 15. Emerging themes include working children, gender, refugees/emergencies, ethnicity/race, life-long learning and HIV/AIDS. While the quantity of correspondence about these issues remains low, we envisage increases in future years, as EENET makes more contacts in these areas and gathers more information to share about these issues in relation to IE. This diversity again suggest that EENET is experiencing increasing success in advocating people to think about IE in a wider sense.

Regional points of interest

A breakdown of the range of themes covered by correspondence from each region was not particularly useful, reflecting closely the overall picture. However, it is noticeable that while IE is the third most common theme in North American correspondence, the quantity of correspondence on this theme is much lower than for the top two themes (disability and deafness). This is quite different from the overall situation. West Africa and South Asia were the only two regions to have 'general development' as a top three theme (reflecting the high proportion of general development project funding requests from South Asia). South East Asia was the only region with visual impairment in its three top themes, while Central Asia was the only region where early childhood development was in the top three (though this is based on very small quantities of correspondence from the region).

3.9. EENET's record keeping

When analysing the correspondence sent to EENET, all responses from EENET were also read. We looked at the communication methods of EENET's responses and recorded what resources, if any, were sent in response to the enquiries.

The most obvious finding relates to the amount of EENET responses that have not been filed (labelled 'no copy kept' in the database). In 1997 there was no response filed for 65% of correspondence received. This rose to 70% in 1998; 79% in 1999 and 82% in 2000. However, in 2001 the amount of unfiled responses began to fall, so by 2003 only 42% of correspondence had no response filed. It should be noted that 'no copy kept' does not always mean that EENET's response has been lost or not filed. There are many instances where an email/letter conversation has reached its natural end, and therefore no response was needed from EENET. However, many of the early instances of 'no copy kept' can be attributed to poor record keeping/filing – the result of overstretched staff – and/or to an email system which made saving 'sent' items difficult.

3.10. What resources has EENET distributed to correspondents?

The correspondence database allows us to record what sorts of resources we are sending to people, either in response to their direct requests for materials or to help answer their enquiries about IE.

The figures presented below must be treated with caution – they are not particularly illustrative of what EENET has really disseminated over the years! There are several reasons why these figures are inaccurate:

- for many items of correspondence there are no accompanying 'EENET responses' in the file, meaning we probably also do not have a record of what resources we sent

- the database is not versatile enough (in its current design) to record how many copies of a resource have been sent. The figures below tell us how many times we have sent a particular resource in response to correspondence – but we may have sent two or more copies, and this is not reflected in the figures from the database. A small number of people will have been sent 10-50 copies of some items, for localised distribution

- some items are sent to people automatically as 'freebies' (eg, we may 'throw in' an EENET poster when we send other items, but this has not necessarily always been recorded)

- EENET is in touch with many 'friends' or regular contacts (eg, regional networks, donors, former colleagues from Save the Children) and our conversations with these core colleagues tend not to be filed with the 'general public' correspondence, but kept in our ongoing computer files. Resources sent to these core contacts are unlikely therefore to be included in the correspondence database.

Since 2003 EENET has been keeping an informal handwritten list of all postal items sent, and also recording when certain key resources are sent. These lists indicate more accurate figures of *how many* documents have been sent out in the last year or so. (See box below for details.)

Table 9: Number of times resources have been sent in response to correspondence (as recorded in the correspondence files)

Resource	Number of times sent
Access for All (English print)	16
Access for All (Braille)	2
Access for All (cassette)	1
Agra report and/or video	9
Cambodia CD "Inclusive education in Cambodia"	13
Disabled Children's Rights (French)	3
Disabled Children's Rights (Portuguese)	1
EENET poster	12
EENET factsheet (what is EENET)	2
Family Action for Inclusion in Education	37
Inclusive Education Where there are Few Resources	8
IE in Laos	4
ISEC 2000 CD	6
Lesotho videos "Preparing Teachers for Inclusive Education"	32
EENET newsletter(s)	314
EENET newsletter (Braille)	6
EENET newsletter (cassette)	8
Photocopies of non-EENET originated documents	19
Researching our Experience (Zambian teachers' stories)	12
Schools for All	28
Schools for All (French)	4
Schools for All (Portuguese)	1
Schools for All (poster	9
Website print-outs – from EENET's or other websites	13
Website CD – EENET's website 2001	12

Of the total instances of resources being sent (572), newsletters account for 55%; Family Action for 6.5%; the Lesotho videos for 5.6%; and Schools for All for 4.9%.

While the exact quantities of items being distributed (as recorded in the database) is not accurate, the proportions are likely to be fairly accurate. Newsletters are the key resource we distribute (we have sent them in

response to nearly a quarter of correspondence received). They are the 'product' for which EENET is most well known. Newsletters act as promotional materials to answer queries about what EENET does; they are suitable for responding to general queries about IE as well as specific queries about particular target groups; and they are a great way of motivating people to send new articles, to stay in touch with us, or to make contact with other contributors. Family Action, the Lesotho teacher education videos and Schools for All are the other main resources that EENET distributes.

These most commonly distributed materials are written in simple styles, offer practical advice illustrated with examples and case studies, and are in some way interactive (eg, they contain workshop activities, video footage, etc). They represent the type of resources that EENET has stated in its objectives that it will facilitate the creation and dissemination of.

Postal records show that much larger quantities of some key resources were distributed (just between early 2003 and June 2004) than the correspondence database (for all years) indicates.

For example, in that one year alone we sent out:

48 Access for All (English print)
18 Cambodia inclusive education CDs
32 Inclusive Education Where there are Few Resources
14 IE in Laos
26 Report of action research workshop in Zambia (not listed in database)
32 Lesotho videos
66 Researching our Experience
49 Schools for All (English print)
54 Schools for All poster

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Global distribution of correspondence

EENET is corresponding with 123 countries out of the 142 on its mailing list and has seen the number of countries corresponding rise from 16 to a high of 69 per year. EENET is reaching, and being reached by people in ever increasing numbers of countries. In the long-term, this offers the Network an increasingly diverse pool of experiences and ideas to draw on and share, providing we maintain these contacts and continue to encourage two-way communication and sharing. In the shorter-term this country diversity presents us with a growing challenge to find (or ideally encourage the local development of) information, resources and contact people that will be appropriate in an incredibly wide range of contexts.

- *Recommendation*

  Localised information sharing and networking needs to be continually encouraged and supported, as EENET cannot feasibly respond to the information needs of such a diverse range of countries and contexts. This seems particularly important for South Asia and East Africa. There is already a network in South Asia (India) – Network for Inclusive Education – with which EENET must strengthen its relationship. A number of people have expressed interest in networking in East Africa (Kenya) and EENET must keep these discussions alive and actively seek an organisation that could formally co-ordinate networking in this region. There is also a network growing in South America (Brazil). Since correspondence is low from this region, before taking any action EENET needs to find out the extent to which the local network is meeting the needs of users and enabling people to avoid contacting EENET.

  EENET's work to encourage the development of regional networks has not yielded the results initially expected, for many reasons.[12] This report is not the place to debate EENET regionalisation. However, the correspondence analysis indicates that EENET needs to continue its efforts to facilitate localised information sharing, and that the agencies that support (or may in future support) EENET financially, need to embrace localised networking and sharing as a valid and essential recipient for funding. The correspondence clearly demonstrates a huge interest in inclusion issues among practitioners and grass roots organisations, which donors are failing to address.

---

[12] For example, potential regional partners often lack funding or other capacity; donors do not understand or prioritise networking and information sharing initiatives, even though they could offer many new benefits for the other programmes they fund; bigger/international agencies that could probably afford to undertake networking often lack enthusiasm for such information sharing beyond their own programmes; EENET staff do not have enough time or resources to support the development of new networks to the extent that they need, etc.

There is a fairly small group of countries which are most active, or most likely to correspond with EENET – the ten most prolific countries have sent 49% of all correspondence.[13]

- *Recommendation*
  We need to look more closely at this correspondence to see if there are any lessons we can learn about why these countries correspond the most. This might involve: weeding out the irrelevant queries and assessing in more depth the relevant correspondence; cross-checking with other information we have on an organisation that has contacted us; contacting some of the correspondents to ask for more information about how they found EENET, why they contact us, how they have disseminated information about EENET or encouraged others to contact EENET, etc.

Amount of correspondence

EENET is now receiving almost one new piece of correspondence each day. To some large organisations this might seem a small amount. For EENET – with its very small number of staff and strong commitment to 'creating conversations' and making appropriate referrals and links – this level of correspondence represents a significant amount of work.

- *Recommendations*
  As stated above, localised information sharing capacity needs to be encouraged and supported, so that EENET is not handling so many enquiries directly, but can do more referrals.

  Efforts should be made to reduce the amount of irrelevant correspondence received. The website should be revised, with much clearer statements on the home page about the type of enquiries we can or cannot respond to. There should also be a more explicit statement asking North-based people and research students to make full use of the website resources, contacting EENET only if their enquiry cannot be satisfied by the website.

Regional trends in correspondence levels

The amount of correspondence received overall has increased over the years, indicating growing awareness of EENET and its activities, and suggesting that EENET is becoming known as an accessible and approachable network. The increase is also indicative of a 'snowball' effect – people who have benefited from EENET's activities tell others, who then contact us. Certain regions are

---

[13] As we have seen, however, not all of this correspondence is directly relevant to EENET's work (eg, India sends quite a lot of funding applications and England/Europe send quite a lot of irrelevant requests or requests from students seeking research help).

'snowballing' more obviously than others (eg, East Africa), while other regions (South America, MENA) have seen their share of the correspondence drop.

- *Recommendation*
    Further analysis of correspondence from those regions that have shown increases in contact with EENET should be carried out. This should look for indicators of why networking is having more success in these places, and should also involve re-contacting people to ask how they found EENET, why they contacted EENET, what they gained from it, what other information sharing they have done locally, how many people they have told about EENET, etc.

EENET's main targets are countries of the South, yet it is still experiencing relatively poor communication levels with countries in key Southern regions (eg, Central Asia, Caribbean, Central and South America, Central Africa, MENA).

- *Recommendations*
    Certain activities are happening within EENET which have the potential to improve communication and networking with these regions[14]. EENET must ensure these initiatives are given sufficient priority over the next year or two.

    Language barriers may be a key reason for low networking levels with some regions. EENET does not have in-house translation capacity and relies entirely on people undertaking translations voluntarily (apart from the Arabic translations partnership with Save the Children). Greater efforts should be made to find volunteer translators for the international languages spoken in the regions with which we need more contact (primarily French and Spanish). Ideally funding should also be sought to enable all key documents to be translated into international languages. Future funding proposals for new documents/resources must include translation costs (as well as Braille/tape production costs), as has been done with the DFID-funded action research guidelines.

Reasons for communicating

In addition to requesting newsletters or to join the mailing list, many people are communicating as part of an ongoing conversation. This illustrates that EENET is fulfilling its goal of 'creating conversations' directly. Of course the database is unable to tell us how well we are doing at encouraging people to engage in conversations that do not directly involve EENET, which in many

---

[14] For example, a partnership with Save the Children in MENA is developing Arabic language resources and encouraging regional networking. We are slowly increasing the Russian language documents we have available, which may help bring on board more people in Russian-speaking Central Asian countries. EENET's recent participation in an IE training event in the Caribbean will hopefully result in increased awareness and interest in that region.

ways is more important than direct conversations if sustainable information sharing is to develop.

- *Recommendation*
    The database is able to tell us who corresponded specifically on the issue of 'doing networking'. This is a relatively small number of people, and they should be followed up to find out if they have managed to network locally and if so what sort of 'conversations' they are having (without EENET's intervention) and with whom. They could also be asked if they have any capacity to do more formal dissemination (eg, of the DFID-funded action research materials).[15]

There are 21 reasons for communicating listed in the database, illustrating the very diverse range of queries that EENET handles. While the majority of enquiries to EENET are about education and inclusion issues, at least six of the reasons for communicating could be seen as irrelevant to EENET's objectives, accounting for more than one-in-ten items received.

- *Recommendation*
    EENET already uses standard letters to respond to some 'irrelevant' enquiries (eg, funding, sponsorship, job hunting). The list of reasons for contacting EENET should be assessed to see if there are other types of query that could be handled with a standardised response – freeing up staff time for the increased number of relevant enquiries. As mentioned above, clearer guidance should be put on the website (and in the next newsletter) regarding the kind of enquiries EENET can and cannot respond to.

Theme of correspondence

Disability is still an overriding theme of much of the correspondence EENET receives. However, contact with correspondents interested in a growing range of other issues of inclusion has increased over the years, and this offers opportunities for EENET to diversify the information we gather and share.

- *Recommendation*
    EENET should select one or two of the more common 'emerging' themes and re-contact people who corresponded on those issues to find out if they have since done any relevant work that could be documented and shared. It is possible that by doing this we may also find people who could use the action research guidelines to help them document these experiences.

---

[15] Some of these correspondents expressed an interest in networking purely in order to enter a formal, funded partnership with EENET, so they should not be a priority for follow up on this occasion.

The website should carry a call for articles/information on one or two chosen IE-related themes (eg, gender, refugees, working children), to facilitate more contact with people interested in these issues.

Since South-East Asia was the only region to have visual impairment in its top three themes of correspondence, and because inclusion of visually impaired learners is often the least documented, these items of correspondence should be re-assessed to see if any potential article-writers are among them.

Types of people communicating with EENET

The biggest group of people corresponding with EENET are those involved with local/national NGOs, one of EENET's key targets for its networking activities. NGOs, it seems, are more likely to ask for newsletters or to join the mailing list (and in South Asia to request funding) than they are to engage in ongoing conversations.

- *Recommendation*
  EENET should pay particular attention to correspondence received from local/national NGOs to see if it is possible to improve the amount of ongoing conversations with this group. The proportion of ongoing conversations is likely to increase if the number of irrelevant/funding requests can be reduced; but EENET should also be pro-active in encouraging NGOs to stay in touch and/or engage in conversations with others in their country.

There has also been an increased level of communication with teachers and school staff, representing some of the grass-roots practitioners that EENET aims to share information with. While the amount of correspondence about 'doing networking' is low, teachers were the second largest group of people interested this issue (not far behind NGOs).

- *Recommendation*
  Teachers/school staff may be an ideal target group for using the action research guidelines – particularly if those teachers who have corresponded about 'doing networking' are keen to find tools to help them gather and share information. Their correspondence should be assessed in more detail and suitable teachers re-contacted to see if they would be interested in experimenting with the action research approach (either as individuals, to help them improve/document their own practice, or as a school/community group, to help them work together in sharing ideas).

Very few parents are in contact with EENET (and then often just about advice for their individual children), and all of the students corresponding are researching IE rather than sharing their direct experiences as participants in

inclusive/exclusive schools. There is, therefore, a need for improving contact with these two important groups.

- *Recommendation*

  It is likely that parents have least access to information about EENET, or to information disseminated by EENET, leading to few instances of contact with EENET. A lack of other parent-oriented education organisations may also lead them to contact us for case advice, even though this is not in our remit. We should focus more attention on ensuring that parents can find out about EENET and what we offer, and feel comfortable about contacting us. We also need to engage more parents in conversations, even if we cannot help with their individual child's case. We need to research further how best to achieve this, perhaps re-contacting parents who have corresponded with EENET and consulting them on ideas for encouraging and facilitating improved involvement of parents. We could also encourage users of the action research guidelines to facilitate any parents they work with to contact EENET.

  EENET plans to create a children/young person's section on its website in order to give this stakeholder group a forum for sharing ideas and experiences of inclusion and education. This should be a priority for the next year, given the poor level of contact we have with students (other than those simply wanting help with research projects).

Correspondence methods

Most communication is now by email, with decreasing amounts of correspondence by letter (though letters still make up about a fifth of all correspondence). This probably reflects improved access to electronic communication even in Southern countries, but could potentially signify a reduction in EENET's 'reach' to people who do not have Internet/email access.

- *Recommendations*

  EENET must continue to monitor hard copy communication and the profile of its correspondents. We need to ensure that levels of contact with 'grass-roots' people does not decline as a result of complacency about the numbers of people who can reach us with electronic media. EENET already has a policy of prioritising responses to handwritten letters and ensuring that they receive prompt hard copy responses, and this should be maintained.

Awareness of EENET

Not many correspondents have told us how they first became aware of EENET. Of those who did, most have found out about EENET through another organisation or newsletter.

- *Recommendation*
    EENET's co-ordinator has recently been interviewed by Disability World, which has offered an excellent chance to explain our work in detail and encourage new people to join the network's activities. Similar 'publicity' opportunities should be sought with newsletters/websites that target other stakeholder groups and deal with other issues of inclusion (beyond disability). We should aim to place at least one such call for articles, an interview, or a publication announcement each year.

    EENET should make use of this form of 'publicity' to announce the availability of the action research materials, as it has the potential to reach parts of our target audience that are not yet on our mailing list.

What next?

EENET is corresponding with a large body of people, in all regions of the world, about a wide range of issues relating to education and inclusion. The achievements are immense, given the small annual budget and the very low staffing levels of the network.

Gaps still exist; certain regions are not very active in the network and disability is still the dominant inclusion theme. The evidence from the database suggests that changes are happening; more countries are engaging with us on more issues each year, and many people are involved in ongoing conversations and multiple communications. The findings suggest that encouraging increased localised networking, facilitating more translations, improving grass-roots contact levels (especially with parents, children and teachers) and pro-actively seeking more contact with people in non-disability sectors are just a few of the important goals we should set ourselves in order to bridge the gaps in EENET's communication network.

In relation to the action research materials, the correspondence analysis offers several suggestions. Teachers interested in networking should be one of the groups targeted for dissemination and further testing of the materials. Publicity should be done through newsletters and websites of selected agencies. Users of the materials should be encouraged to facilitate any parents they work with to have contact with EENET. People identified by EENET as possible contributors of information on emerging IE themes (eg working children, refugees) should be offered the action research materials to help them research and document their experiences.

EENET's future is not guaranteed beyond the end of 2004, due to a lack of funding. The analysis presented above highlights the huge need to keep EENET in existence. The Network has achieved much, but still has a great deal to do, and a large number of people depending on its information sharing activities and conversations. The recommendations will require staff time, additional to the core work of responding to correspondence. Some may require additional funding (eg, translation work). The results of the correspondence analysis should be used to draw donors' attention to EENET's vital role in sharing information and reaching people whom most international NGOs, agencies and information producers do not reach.

Appendix: Preset options used in the correspondence database

Contact method

Refers to the method used by the correspondent to contact EENET.

Options:
- email
- letter
- fax
- telephone
- in person
  > visitors to EENET office, meetings at other venues, etc

EENET response method

Refers to the method used by EENET to respond to correspondence received.

Options:
- email
- letter
- fax
- telephone
- in person
  > visitors to EENET office, meetings at other venues, etc
- no copy kept
  > there is no record of the reply sent by EENET to a particular piece of correspondence. This may be because the reply it has not be printed/filed or because no reply was needed

How the correspondent found out about EENET

Refers to how people first learned about EENET.

Options:
- website
  correspondent first discovered EENET when they found our website on the Internet
- word-of-mouth
  > correspondent was told about EENET by a colleague, friend, etc
- saw newsletter
  > correspondent saw a copy of/found our contact details in EENET's newsletter

- at a conference
    - correspondent met an EENET staff member, regional partner, steering group member etc at a conference, or heard a presentation about/mentioning EENET at a conference, workshop, etc
- University of Manchester link
    - correspondent found out about EENET through university staff, website, etc
- through other organisations/newsletters
    - correspondent saw an article about EENET in a publication such as Healthlink's CBR News, or in other documentation/ correspondence from other organisations
- other

Type of person

Refers to the status or employment of the correspondent, as stated by themselves, or as inferred by the content of their correspondence.

Options:
- national NGO
    - includes a local or national-level NGO, religious-based organisations, campaign and advocacy groups, etc
- international NGO
    - agencies that are North-based, North-funded, working in Northern and Southern countries
- international organisations
    - agencies such as the UN
- student
    - either students studying inclusion/IE issues, or students/pupils experiencing inclusion/exclusion in their own education
- teacher/school administrator
    - includes teachers at all levels, school management, head teachers, etc
- academic
    - higher education/university staff/researchers
- government
    - includes people who work for the government at all levels, from district councils to central, national government; and in a range of departments, ministries and civil service roles
- parent
    - if they state this specifically in their email and their status as a parent is relevant to the nature of their query
- rehabilitation/health worker
    - includes physiotherapists, doctors, nurses, CBR workers, health service managers, etc
- other individual

if the person does not mention an affiliation to any organisation, or other status such as student, parent, etc

- other organisation/company
  includes people who work for private businesses or other agencies that are not NGOs, governments or learning institutions
- volunteer
  if the person specifically indicates that they are working officially as a volunteer (eg if they are working for VSO)

Purpose of contact

Refers to the reason the correspondent contacted EENET. If their communication mentions more than one purpose, the main purpose is recorded (as assessed by the researcher)

Options:
- request newsletters/background information in EENET
  people specifically asking for a copy (or copies) of the newsletter and/or ask for us to tell them what EENET does
- join mailing list
  people specifically ask to join EENET's mailing list
- relevant IE query
  people request information or advice relating to a specific query which is directly relevant to the issue of IE
- irrelevant query
  people asking for information, advice or products which have no link to education or inclusion
- organisational funding
  people submitting formal letters, applications or project proposals, or informal letters/emails asking EENET to give funding or engage in technical partnerships
- individual sponsorship request
  individual people seeking funding for their education, medical/rehabilitation treatment, basic survival needs, etc
- job hunting
  people asking for a job with EENET and/or asking EENET to help them find a job elsewhere
- study tour/training course request
  primarily people who want to visit EENET as part of a study tour of people who want to know if EENET runs training courses
- disability/rehabilitation service
  people asking for EENET to provide or advise on disability-specific or rehabilitation services, centres, techniques, etc
- submit article
  people sending an article to EENET for the newsletter/website; or asking if they can submit an article; or asking for advice about writing/submitting an article

- give us information (no request)

  people telling EENET about their work, an upcoming event, etc, without asking EENET to provide information, resources, etc in return

- feedback

  people telling EENET their (positive or negative) views about our work, documents, etc, or thanking us for advice, documents, contacts, etc we have provided

- ongoing conversation

  a piece of correspondence which is the second or subsequent contact from the same person about the same query/issue

- other

- request specific publications

  asking for a named document, video, etc, produced/disseminated by EENET or asking for help in finding/obtaining publications not directly available from EENET

- University of Manchester application

  people asking EENET for help with making an application for studying at the university, for advice on who to contact in the university, etc

- address change

  people notifying us if they have changed their postal/physical address, email address, or if the key contact person in an organisation has changed

- translation issues

  people offering to help with translations, requesting translations, etc

- individual case advice

  people asking for advice relating to a specific learner

- seek consultant/speakers

  people asking EENET to undertake (or help find suitable people to undertake) consultancies, presentation, facilitation, etc

- doing networking

  people asking specifically for information about regional networks, expressing interest in active involvement in networking and information sharing

Theme of correspondence

Refers to the theme (or primary theme) of the correspondence.

Options:
- IE general

  clearly mentions education and inclusion, but does not make specific reference to just one marginalised group

- disability focus

  primarily mentions education and/or inclusion, but with specific reference to disability issues

- deafness

    specifically mentions deafness issues, may or may not be in relation to education/inclusion

- gender

    specifically mentions gender issues, issues specifically relating to learners' status as male/female

- emergencies/refugees

    specifically mentions emergency situations, refugee/misplaced persons issues

- ECD

    specifically relates to early childhood development issues

- ethnicity/race

    specifically relates to issues of race, ethnicity, caste, tribe, etc in connection with education/inclusion

- HIV/AIDS

    specifically mentions HIV/AIDS in relation to education, the inclusion of learners affected by HIV/AIDS, etc

- rehabilitation/health

    relates to issues of physical rehabilitation, medical treatment, etc, not necessarily but may be linked with education and inclusion

- life-long learning

    relates to education of people beyond basic formal education, such as adult education, women's literacy, etc

- teacher education

    relates to the education/training of teachers at any level

- child rights

    specifically mentions children's rights, the CRC, etc, primarily in connection with education/inclusion

- visual impairment

    relates to visual impairment/blindness in relation to education/inclusion

- institutions, homes, special schools

    specifically mentions residential institutions, care homes, special schools for disabled (or other marginalised) learners

- street/working children

    relates to children who work in formal or informal sectors and/or who are homeless, street children, orphans, or in other similar situations of vulnerability – in relation to education/inclusion

- development general

    mentions general development issues/community development work usually covering multiple issues (eg wide-ranging programmes dealing with general health or education projects, income generation, environmental projects, etc) but not necessarily in connection with inclusive education

Items sent

Refers to document or other resources that EENET has sent to correspondents, either because the correspondent specifically requested them or because EENET assessed the items as suitable for matching the enquiry.

Resources EENET disseminates	Original producer/supplier
Access for All (English print)	Save the Children
Access for All (Braille)	Save the Children
Access for All (cassette)	Save the Children
Agra report and/or video	EENET/IDDC
Cambodia CD "Inclusive education in Cambodia"	teacher training materials developed by DAC in Cambodia and redesigned by EENET
Disabled Children's Rights (French)	Save the Children
Disabled Children's Rights (Portuguese)	Save the Children
EENET poster	EENET
EENET factsheet (what is EENET)	EENET
Family Action for Inclusion in Education	EENET
Inclusive Education Where there are Few Resources	Atlas Alliance
IE in Laos	Save the Children
ISEC 2000 CD	ISEC/Inclusive Technology
Lesotho videos "Preparing Teachers for Inclusive Education"	Lesotho Ministry of Education/Save the Children/Comic Relief
EENET newsletter(s)	EENET
EENET newsletter (Braille)	EENET
EENET newsletter (cassette)	EENET
Photocopies of non-EENET originated documents	various
Researching our Experience (Zambian teachers' stories)	EENET/teachers in Mpika
Schools for All	Save the Children
Schools for All (French)	Save the Children
Schools for All (Portuguese)	Save the Children
Schools for All (poster	Save the Children
Website print-outs – from EENET's or other websites	EENET/various
Website CD – EENET's website 2001	EENET

New resources for 2004 which will be added to the database and which will appear in subsequent reports are:
Schools for All (Braille)
Schools for All (cassette)