

Programme 5

Improving the learning environment



Programme 5: Improving the learning environment

Key points to cover during this session

Whether you run a full-day training session or just a very short discussion, try to include these key points:

- The classroom environment has a big impact on children's inclusion and learning.
- There are lots of things a teacher can do to make the classroom more welcoming and accessible, even without having extra resources.
- We need to make reasonable accommodations – these are achievable, affordable changes.

Watch the video and then facilitate your preferred selection from the following activities.

A

Basic workshop activities

Activity 5.1 – Photo elicitation: identifying and addressing barriers in the classroom environment

🕒 90-120 minutes

Main purpose of this activity

To encourage teachers to look for small, simple, low-cost adaptations that could make a difference to children's inclusion.

Present the following:

The way the classroom is organised can have a big impact on whether children are able to join in or concentrate in lessons. Many schools have limited resources – the classrooms may be overcrowded or have limited or poor quality furniture. Nevertheless, even in difficult situations, there is always something we can do to make the environment more welcoming and inclusive.

Give participants the following instructions:

- Work in 6 small groups.
- Look at and discuss the photos of classrooms in Handout 5a.
- Each group should start by looking at a different photo. Group 1, look at photo 1 first. Group 2, look at photo 2 first, and so on.
- If you have time, you can of course look at and discuss more photos once you have finished discussing your first photo.
- Think about and make some notes on the following questions (see Handout 5b):
 - What challenges or barriers to learning can you see in each photo?
 - What are the good things about these classrooms?
 - Which children might struggle in this learning environment and why?

After about 20–30 minutes, invite each small group to share their first photo with the whole group and explain what they discussed. Other groups can ask questions and add their own opinions about the photo.

After about 20–30 minutes of discussion, give participants the following instructions:

- Look again at the same photos (your group should start with the same photo as last time).

- Answer these questions. Write your answers in the spaces provided in Handout 5c. If you need more paper, please ask:
 - What simple changes could **you** make in these classrooms to ensure that:
 - Children feel more comfortable
 - Children can see or hear better
 - Children and the teacher can move around more easily
 - What changes might be needed that you could not make by yourself as a teacher?
 - Describe the changes
 - Explain who else needs to be involved and why

Allow about 20–30 minutes for the group work and then give these instructions:

- On the wall around the room, I have stuck the 6 photos.
- Cut up your notes for solutions and stick them under the relevant photos.
- Then walk around and look at each photo and read each other's suggestions for changes to the learning environment.
- Make a list of any changes you want to try in your own classrooms.

After about 15 minutes ask the participants to sit down.

Invite volunteers to say how they think the photos compare with their own classrooms. What is similar or different?

Invite volunteers to tell the whole group about one change they have discussed or seen on the wall that they will try in their own classroom, to improve the learning environment and make it more inclusive.

Possible answers to expect from participants

This box provides possible answers for just one of the photos. As the trainer you may want to think through possible answers for the other photos, before you run this session with participants. You are also free to use photos from your own schools. The photos provided here are just samples.

Photo 1

Challenges / barriers

- Not enough desks/chairs for everyone
 - This could be a barrier for children who have mobility difficulties who may find it difficult to sit on the floor.
 - It is also a barrier for any child; it is hard to concentrate if you are uncomfortable.
- Dusty floor
 - Children get dirty and their books get dirty.
 - Dirty clothes could be a barrier if their parents get annoyed and say they

- don't want them going to school if they get so dirty. Or children themselves may decide they don't want to be in class if they have to sit on a dirty floor all day. Sitting on concrete can also be cold.
 - Dirty books – it can be hard to read from or write on pages that are dusty, which could be particularly difficult for children who cannot see well.
- The children sitting at desks on the left of the picture look like they are having to twist to see the board at the front of the class (the board at the back is probably a notice board).
 - This could be a barrier for any child, as it is difficult to learn and concentrate if you are uncomfortable.
 - Children who have problems remembering or understanding may find it harder to focus if they constantly have to keep moving their body and head to look between their book/desk and the board.

Good things

- Bright, good light
- Seems to be a big room, enough space

Changes the teacher could make him/herself to overcome these barriers

- Carefully plan who sits at the desks or on the floor. For instance, children who find it difficult or painful to move should always sit at a desk. For other children, there would be a rota, so that they take it in turns to sit at a desk or on the floor.
- You could plan activities so that the groups of children who are sitting at desks do activities using books and writing, and those on the floor do other activities that involve thinking, talking, touching or making things. The groups can then swap.
- You could rearrange the desks so that children need to move as little as possible to see the board. You could even turn this into a lesson, for instance, ask children to design different layouts for the class that they think will be most comfortable. They could design layouts that will work best for group activities, for listening activities, for taking tests, and so on. You can then try out their designs and ask the children to evaluate which work best. Such an activity could help them learn more about measuring, maths, drawing and design, as well as learning analytical thinking and even report writing skills, if you ask them to document the process and their findings.

Changes that may need help from others

- You could encourage children to bring pieces of cloth or mats to sit on, if they are sitting on the floor. The cloth and mats can easily be brushed, shaken or washed and dried regularly. This may require help from parents, or others in the community who could donate mats/cloths.
- You could provide a bucket of water and soap so that children can wash their hands after they have been sitting on the floor. This may help them keep their books cleaner. You may need help from someone to donate the bucket and soap if the school has no money to buy them.
- You could contact local businesses or NGOs to advocate for donations of more furniture for your school. The children in your class could also get involved.

Optional extension activity

⌚ Half a day, minimum

This activity could be started during the workshop if you have time, or participants could be encouraged to do it after the workshop. You first need to ensure that participants have sufficient access to cameras or phones with cameras. If possible, they need to download the photos to a computer or print them. But if this is not possible, the groups can view the photos on the camera or phone.

Give the following instructions:

- Work in small groups. Make sure there is a digital camera or phone with a camera in each group.
- Take photos of the classrooms and other learning spaces in your school. Remember to ask permission from any teachers and children in the class before you take a photo. You may need to seek permission from parents in advance, if you want to take photos of children, so check what the rules are for your school or education system.
- Each group should review their photos.
- Analyse each photo using the questions that were considered in the previous activity:
 - What challenges can you see in each photo?
 - What are the good things about these classrooms?
 - How might the learning environment be a barrier for some children?
 - Which children might struggle in this learning environment and why?
 - What simple changes could you make in these classrooms to ensure that:
 - Children feel more comfortable
 - Children can see or hear better
 - Children and the teacher can move around more easily
 - What changes might be needed that you could not make by yourself as a teacher?
 - Describe the changes
 - Explain who else needs to be involved and why
- In your groups, make a list of changes:
 - First, changes you can make yourselves as teachers. Write a plan for how and when you will make these changes.
 - Second, changes that need to be made but which need help or resources from other people. Write a plan for how you will engage these other people and encourage them to help.

B

Important theoretical issues to discuss

Activity 5.2 – Reasonable accommodation

🕒 90–120 minutes

Main purpose of this activity

To introduce the international legal concept of reasonable accommodation, to reassure teachers that inclusive education is not only about expensive solutions and equipment.

Present the following:

In 2006, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was created. Your country has signed/ratified this [trainer needs to adjust as appropriate].

The convention is like a set of expectations that governments around the world agree to work towards. One of the expectations in the convention is for governments and other people, like us, to make 'reasonable accommodation' for people with disabilities.

You may want to have a whole-group brainstorm about what reasonable accommodation might mean. Write participants answers on the board/flipchart. Do not worry if participants are not able to explain reasonable accommodation. You can then provide some further information to help explain it:

Reasonable accommodation means that we must make reasonable changes to the environment and to the way we do things, to help people with disabilities to be included. Reasonable means affordable and logistically possible.

Reasonable accommodation does not mean we have to spend lots of money on expensive or high-tech equipment or buildings. It means we must make a big effort to make whatever changes are possible with the money, resources and people we have available.

To help participants think further about what reasonable accommodation means, you could ask each participant to write a very simple definition of reasonable accommodation in their own words, onto a strip of paper. Stick all the strips on the wall. Review their definitions and address any misunderstandings.

Then give participants these instructions. You may want to give them extra or different case studies, but Handout 5d provides one option:

- Work in small groups.
- Read the short case study in Handout 5d.
- Pretend Mohammed is in your school.
- Think about what parts of the learning environment Mohammed is feeling excluded from?

Note for trainer: answers will include, seeing the board, reading books, writing.

- For each of the areas where Mohammed feels excluded, what reasonable accommodations could you make to ensure Mohammed is included in your lessons?
- Think carefully about the resources and people in your school, and come up with adjustments that are feasible right now.

Note for trainer: encourage participants to focus on the changes needed in the learning environment that they can make as teachers, because the next discussion moves on to look at other changes that could help Mohammed that are beyond the teacher's control.

Allow about 20-30 minutes and then ask the groups to discuss and answer the following additional questions:

- What other adaptations might help Mohammed, for which you need additional resources?
- How could you get these resources or who could you talk to, to try to get these resources?

After another 20 minutes, ask the groups to share their discussions with everyone. On a flipchart, list in one column the reasonable accommodations that the teacher could make right now without any extra resources. In another column list any suggested adaptations for which the teacher would need extra support or resources, and who might be able to help.

Use the ideas in the box below to help you add anything that the groups have missed.

Possible answers to expect from participants

What reasonable accommodations could you make right now in your school?

- Make sure Mohammed sits in the place where he can see the board best. Be prepared to rearrange the furniture.
- Allow Mohammed to move to different places in the room whenever he needs to. For instance, he may need to move to a different place in the afternoon to avoid the sun glaring on the board or to get the best light on his desk.

- Write very large letters on the board. Ensure the chalk is bold. If you can manage to get the board repainted so it is very black, try to do that. Maybe the school has a small budget to buy paint or someone in the community has some paint you could use.
- Write very large notes with a bold/thick pen when you mark his exercise book or write instructions in his book.
- Pair Mohammed with a friend who can read aloud from text books or the board for him. A buddy may also be able to help Mohammed with writing tasks.
- Since Mohammed gets tired in the afternoons (because his eyes are strained and get tired), try to plan your lessons so that you do work from the board and books in the morning and do activities in the afternoon that do not require so much reading or writing. You may need to change your lesson timetable a bit. You may find that this helps other children who also get tired in the afternoon.
- Give Mohammed more time for tasks if he needs it. Allow him to complete tasks at another time if his eyes are too tired now.

What other adaptations might help Mohammed, for which you need additional resources?

- Paint to repainted the board so it is very black. This will make the chalk writing clearer.
- Magnifiers.
- Photocopy enlarged pages from text books, or buy large print versions of books if they exist. If large print books don't exist, you could write to the government or publishers to campaign for them to start making large print books.
- Simple voice recorder so that Mohammed can record lessons and listen to them again, rather than taking notes or reading everything.
- Desk lamp to help Mohammed get the best light all the time (if the school has electricity or is able to recharge batteries).
- Tablet or laptop which can use speech recognition and screen reading software.

How could you get these resources or who could you talk to, to try to get these resources?

- Contact local NGOs or DPOs to see if they have useful contacts who could fund or donate equipment.
- Contact a local CBR project to see if they can provide free eye tests and help fund glasses or other magnification devices.
- Contact local businesses to see if anyone could donate or sponsor equipment.

Use these lists to help fill gaps if you think participants have missed important points that are relevant for their school.

Give participants these instructions:

- If Mohammed was in your class, and you wanted to try to make reasonable accommodations for him, what do you think the process would be to make it happen?

Brainstorm this as a whole group and write their answers on a flipchart or board.

Possible answers to expect from participants

Ideally participants will suggest the following. If they do not, you may need to fill the gaps:

- Talk to Mohammed and find out what he thinks of the classroom and lessons, what help he would like, and what changes he thinks would be most useful.
- Talk to Mohammed's parents to find out how he copes at home and whether there are any adaptations they have made for him that could be repeated in the classroom.
- Talk to a local NGO or DPO to see if they have any expert advice on low-cost reasonable accommodations, and/or if they can help you with adaptations that need resources or money.

Optional extension activity

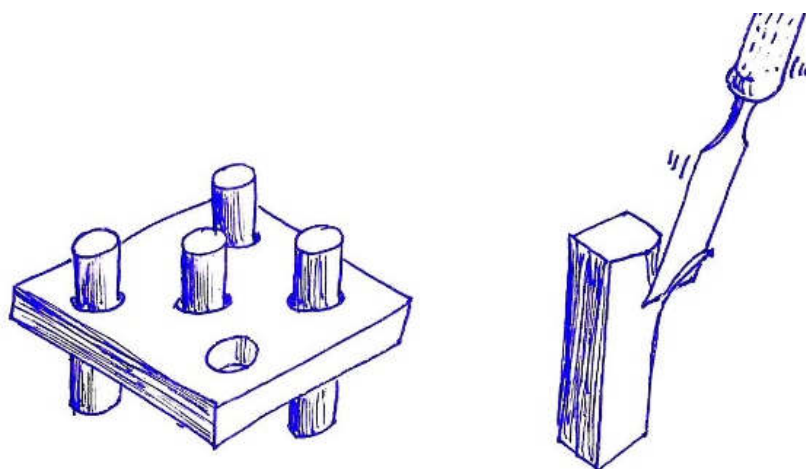
Present the following:

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities covers lots of issues. Article 24 of the convention focuses on education. It clearly tells us that countries should be striving for inclusive education for people with disabilities.

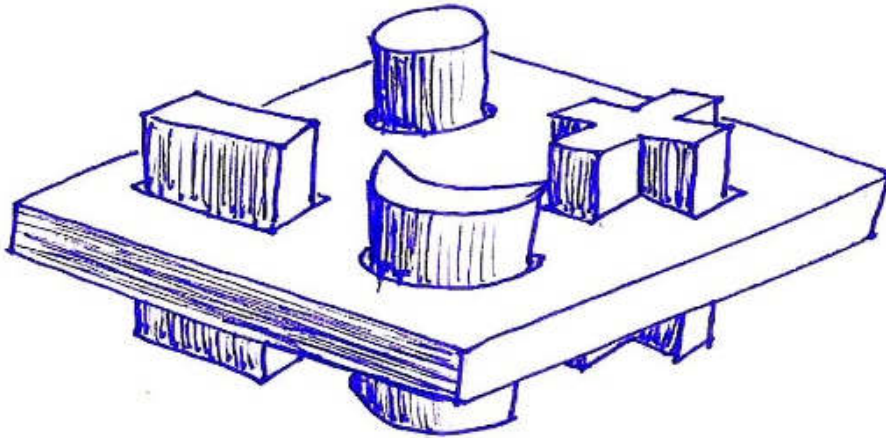
The Convention highlights that inclusive education is not the same as integrated education.

Integrated education involves placing children with disabilities into regular schools, but not changing the schools or the education system at all. The children must adapt to the school, and if they cannot, they are likely to fail or drop out.

Inclusive education involves changing schools and the education system so that they welcome and support learners with disabilities. The school and the system changes, rather than expecting the child to change. As we saw in Programme 2, inclusive education also requires us to balance system-level changes with providing support for individual needs.



Integrated education – children are welcome into regular schools, but the children need to change to fit into the schools.



Inclusive education – regular schools and education system adapt so that every child is welcomed and included. They recognise that every student is different, and all students are equally welcome as they are.

The UNCRPD also explains the difference between exclusion and segregation.

Exclusion is when people are denied access to education. Segregation occurs when people are educated in separate places, such as when children with disabilities are educated in separate special schools.

Give participants these instructions:

- Work in pairs.
- Read the short stories in Handout 5e.
- Decide whether each story is an example of inclusion, integration, segregation or exclusion.

After about 20 minutes, ask pairs to share their answers with the whole group. If they disagree with each other on some stories, encourage them to explain their reasons to each other.

Present the following:

Inclusive education does not appear instantly overnight. It is a slow process of change. Therefore, some of the stories may contain evidence of inclusion but also some evidence of integration or segregation.

The same is true in our schools. There may be some things we do that are inclusive, and some things that are still only integration or that cause segregation or exclusion. Our aim must be to keep increasing the evidence of inclusion in our schools, and reducing the occurrence of integration, segregation and exclusion.

Possible answers to expect from participants

Story 1 – Exclusion – but not necessarily intentional. The head teacher was trying to solve a problem that was causing girls to be excluded from school, but unfortunately the solution was also a cause for exclusion.

Story 2 – Integrated education– the teacher is allowing children who struggle to learn to be in the class, but she is not making adjustments to her teaching practices, so these children attend without participating or learning. She did make some attempts to be more inclusive (e.g. changing seating) but gave up when there were no results, instead of trying to think of some different solutions.

Story 3 – Exclusion and segregation – the boys were excluded from the regular class. The solution was to offer them segregated education, but this did not work and they dropped out, so they are again excluded.

Story 4 – Inclusive education – the teacher is using peer-support to help Joseph, being flexible with assessment/testing approaches, and finding creative ways to give Joseph and other children extra support when needed.

Story 5 – Integrated education – Lyn is allowed in class but the teacher is not making adjustments to support her active participation and learning.

C Digging deeper into specific issues

You may want to focus on some of the specific issues raised in Programme 5. A key issue is:

- The role of toilets in inclusive education

Activity 5.3 – The role of toilets in inclusive education

 **90–120 minutes**

Main purpose of this activity

To encourage teachers to think about toilets as a very important aspect of inclusion, and reflect on how they could improve the situation in their schools.

Present the following information to participants:

As we saw in the video, toilets are a very important part of the learning environment.

Give participants the following instructions:

- As a whole group, brainstorm why you think toilets are so important for children at school.
- How can toilets affect children's education?

Write their answers on the board or flipchart. Use the answers in the box below to fill any gaps.

Possible answers to expect from participants

- Children may be too uncomfortable to concentrate in lessons if they are not able to use a toilet in school.
- They may not want to or be able to use a toilet for various reasons, including:
 - it is too dirty
 - it does not feel safe
 - there is no door or lock on the door, so there is no privacy
 - it is not accessible to someone who cannot move or see very well
 - it is a place where children get bullied or abused
 - the school rules may stop them using the toilet whenever they need to.
- Dirty toilets and a lack of handwashing facilities can cause health problems which interrupt children's education.
- Some children may even stop coming to school if the toilet facilities are really bad.

Give participants these instructions:

- Work in small groups.
- Think about the toilets in your school.
- [If the workshop is happening in the school, suggest that they go and look at the toilets or even take photos on their phones.]
- On a flipchart make 2 columns. In one column write a list of problems with the toilets. In the other column, write a list of positive aspects.

After about 20 minutes, ask participants to stick their flipcharts on the wall.

Give these instructions

- Each group needs to go and stand next to the flipchart of another group.
- Read their answers. Have they listed any problems or positive aspects that you had not considered?
- Look at their list of problems and try to think of at least one solution for each problem. Make sure at least one of the solutions is an achievable, low-cost solution. If you list solutions that need money or resources, try to brainstorm where or how those resources could be found.

After about 20 minutes, ask participants to share their ideas for solutions with the whole group. Write their answers on a flipchart or board.

Possible answers to expect from participants

We cannot predict exactly what answers will be given as each school has a unique environment. However, answers might include, for instance:

Problems with our school toilets

- Not enough toilets
- Girls and boys toilets are not separate
- There are no doors, or damaged doors, on the toilets
- There are no locks on the doors or the doors do not close properly
- The toilets are very dark, it is difficult to see in there
- The toilets are very dirty. It is particularly nasty for children who have mobility or visual problems – they often end up touching the filthy floor
- There is no water to help keep the toilets clean
- There are no or inadequate handwashing facilities
- The toilets are too close to the classrooms – there is a problem with smell and flies
- The toilets are too far from the classrooms – children may feel scared walking to them or may be bullied there because it is so far from the teacher's view
- The toilets are kept locked, to prevent people from the community using them. It is difficult for children to get the key when they need to use the toilet.

How could we solve these problems?

Low-cost or no-cost solutions

- Create a cleaning rota. Encourage children, parents and teachers to all get involved in cleaning the toilets, because they are so important to education.
- Educate children how to keep the toilets clean when they use them.
- Find someone in the community (e.g. a parent or local business) who can volunteer to make some basic repairs.
- Try to keep toilets unlocked. Have an awareness raising meeting with the community to explain why the school toilets should be used by the children and teachers only (for health and safety reasons and to ensure the children get a good education).
- Encourage or allow children with disabilities to be assisted by a trusted friend, sibling or other relative if they need help using the toilet. This may mean changing rules (for instance to allow a sibling to leave their lesson to assist).

Solutions that need resources

- Build more toilets and improve the water supply – the community, local businesses, or NGOs could be asked to help.
- Ensure toilets are built or adapted to be more accessible for children who cannot see or move easily. This may mean building toilets with wider doors, with ramps and handrails, and with seats rather than just holes. Local NGOs or disabled people's organisations may be able to help with advice, useful contacts or direct funding.

You can use the information in this box to help fill gaps if you think participants have missed something that is relevant for their school.

Programme 5 transcript

Improving the learning environment

Arranging the classroom

Classrooms are not always accessible or ideal learning environments.

They are often overcrowded, and may have limited or poor quality furniture.

It can be difficult to learn in this sort of environment, but there are some simple things teachers can do to improve the situation.

What can you do?

You can rearrange the desks and chairs in the room to suit a particular activity, such as group work or project-based activities.

Organising the classroom in different ways can make lessons more interesting and inclusive.

A well-arranged room may be more accessible.

It can become safer and easier for children with mobility and visual impairments to move around.

The way the room is organised can also help children to see or hear better.

A well-organised room helps all children, especially those with learning disabilities, to remember where to find or put things.

Cleaning and decorating the classroom

At the start of the day, teachers and children may spend time preparing the classroom.

There may be cleaning to do, such as sweeping, emptying rubbish bins, or wiping the blackboard.

In some places, the task of cleaning the classroom or fetching water for cleaning is given to girls but not to boys.

This can interrupt girls' learning. Their parents may even decide it is not worth sending girls to school if they spend too much time cleaning instead of learning.

What can you do?

You can make sure that the chore of cleaning and preparing the classroom is shared by boys and girls.

As well as cleaning, other simple improvements can make a classroom feel more welcoming and inclusive.

For example, you can decorate the classroom with colourful flowers, or wall decorations, or mobiles made from free, recycled material.

You can encourage children to find and make materials to decorate their classroom. This helps them to feel included as part of the school community.

Toilets

Toilets are a very important part of the school environment.

They have a big impact on children's attendance and participation in school.

When school toilets are dirty, inaccessible or feel unsafe, children may be unable to use them.

This can affect their health and their concentration in class.

“Often in cases the school toilets are quite a distance away from the classroom, or the journey to a toilet is not always safe or pleasant. But also the toilet itself is not often clean, and they are quite narrow and dark places.”

What can you do?

You can create a plan - with the help of school staff, children and parents - to ensure the toilets are cleaned regularly.

Together you can also identify and address safety concerns around toilets, such as making sure they are not too dark, and that doors can be locked.

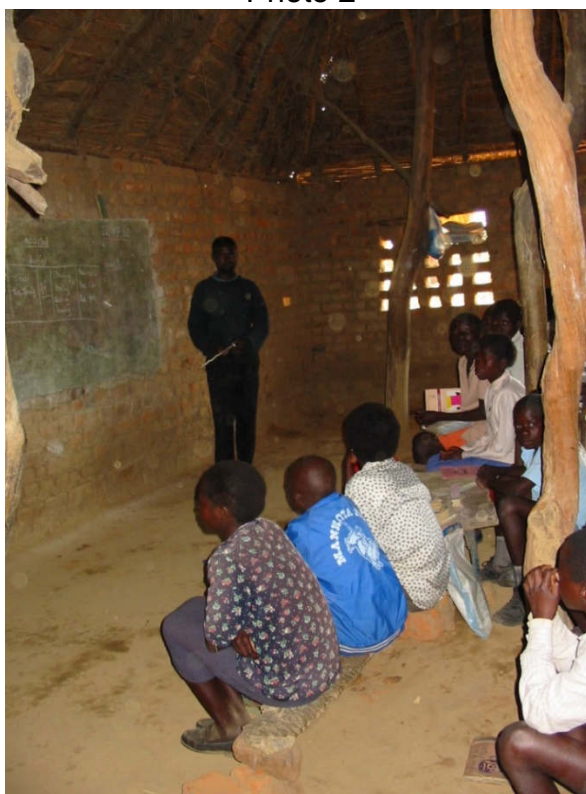
Handout 5a

Photo 1



Zambia, EENET

Photo 2



Zambia, EENET

Photo 3



Cambodia © S. Bouille

Photo 4



Mozambique, E. Schurman

Photo 5



Burkina Faso, S. Imerovic

Photo 6



Brazil, W. Ferreira

Handout 5b

Classroom photos

Look at and discuss the photos of classrooms in Handout 5a.
Think about and make some notes on the following questions:

What challenges or barriers to learning can you see in each photo?

Photo	Challenges / barriers to learning
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	

What are the good things about these classrooms?

Photo	Good things
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	

Which children might struggle in this learning environment and why?

Photo	Who might struggle?
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	

Handout 5c

- Look again at the same photos (your group should start with the same photo as last time).

- Answer these questions:

1) What simple changes could **you** make in these classrooms to ensure that:

- Children feel more comfortable
- Children can see or hear better
- Children and the teacher can move around more easily

2) What changes might be needed that you could not make by yourself as a teacher?

- Describe the changes
- Explain who else needs to be involved and why

Photo	What simple changes could YOU make?	What changes are needed that you could not make yourself as a teacher
1		

Photo	What simple changes could YOU make?	What changes are needed that you could not make yourself as a teacher
2		
3		

Photo	What simple changes could YOU make?	What changes are needed that you could not make yourself as a teacher
4		
5		

Photo	What simple changes could YOU make?	What changes are needed that you could not make yourself as a teacher
6		

Handout 5d

Mohammed's case story

Mohammed is 8 years old. He cannot see very well. His parents are very poor and they cannot afford to take Mohammed to the clinic for an eye test or buy glasses for him.

In class, you notice that Mohammed often does not concentrate. When everyone else is looking at the board, he is staring into space. When the others are reading from the text book, he is usually fiddling with his pencil or doodling in his exercise book. During group work he is quite active, but if any reading or writing is required as part of the task he seems to sit separate from the group while they read and write.

In the afternoon, Mohammed looks very tired. He rubs his eyes a lot and sometimes he sits with his eyes closed while you are talking.

You think Mohammed is a clever boy, but his marks are not very good for written work. If there are spoken activities, however, he is very confident and articulate.

Answer these questions:

- Imagine that Mohammed is in your class.
- Think about what parts of the learning environment Mohammed is feeling excluded from?
- For each of the areas where Mohammed feels excluded, what reasonable accommodations could you make to ensure Mohammed is included in your lessons?
- Think carefully about the resources and people in your school, and come up with adjustments that are feasible **right now**.

Handout 5e

Story 1

Some girls with and without disabilities stopped coming to school because they kept getting sick. After investigation, it was found that when they were in school they never used the latrines/toilets and this was affecting their health. The girls were scared of being bullied or attacked in the latrines, by male pupils or men from the local community. The toilets were also not accessible for some of the girls with disabilities. When the girls complained to the head teacher, he liaised with an NGO that was supporting education in his community, and arranged for proper doors with locks to be fitted to the latrines, and for one toilet to be adapted and made more accessible with handrails. He then started locking the latrines so that these boys/men could not enter them; only girls would be given the key. The head teacher kept the key, so girls had to ask him for the key whenever they needed to use the latrine.

Story 2

A teacher has 50 children in her class. The teaching style she is most familiar with is standing at the front of the classroom and lecturing to the children. She notices that many students do not seem to understand what she is teaching. Despite the challenge of having some rather poor quality furniture, she has tried different seating arrangements, but now she is putting her quickest learners in the front and she mostly asks them questions because the other students do not seem very engaged with the lessons.

Story 3

A teacher was struggling to control a group of boys in his class. They seemed bored, would not sit still and often interrupted the teacher and other students. The teacher sent the boys out of the classroom when they caused trouble. When this happened, the boys ran around the school disturbing other classes. The teacher was frustrated and the boys were not learning much. The head teacher decided to set up a separate class for 'problem children' like these boys, but it was difficult to find a teacher who wanted to teach this class, and so eventually the boys stopped coming to school altogether.

Story 4

Joseph has a learning difficulty; he struggles with maths and literacy. Joseph needs to have someone explain clearly, several times, what is going on in class. This is quite challenging for the teacher as the class has 40 pupils and is operating in a remote location with very limited resources. However, the teacher has paired Joseph with a learner who enjoys 'playing teacher' and with whom he gets along well. The teacher has also allowed Joseph to take the class tests orally. Further, the teacher found an adult in the community who used to be an accountant. This man now comes and works as a voluntary assistant in the class for an hour a week during maths lessons, supporting Joseph and any other children who are struggling.

Story 5

Lyn is 7 years old and has Down's Syndrome. She can say a few words but mainly uses gestures to communicate – she has even learned some basic sign language from her uncle who is deaf. The other children love playing with her because she has a great sense of humour. Because she is very animated, they are able to understand her. Her teacher thinks Lyn is a clown and would prefer it if her parents kept her at home because the teacher thinks Lyn interferes with the other children's education. Because Lyn cannot speak well, the teacher never bothers to ask her any questions and lets her do whatever she wants in class.