

Education NOTES



Education for All: Including Children with Disabilities

An estimated 40 million of the 115 million children out of school have disabilities. The vast majority of these children have moderate impairments that are often not visible or easily diagnosed. Disabled children include those with learning difficulties, speech difficulties, physical, cognitive, sensory and emotional difficulties. Children with disabilities are likely to have never attended school. A 1991 report by the UN Rapporteur on Human Rights and Disabilities found that at least one in ten persons in the majority of countries has a physical, cognitive, or sensory (deaf/blind) impairment. Fewer than 5 % are believed to reach the EFA goal of primary school completion. This number may be growing due to global conditions of increasing poverty, armed conflict, child labor practices, violence and abuse, and HIV/AIDS. **Because these children are part of a family unit, it is estimated that at least 25% of the world population is directly affected by the presence of disability.**

Disability may be the single most important factor excluding children from schooling; this means that the goal of EFA cannot be achieved simply by doing more of what we are already doing. Closing in on EFA will require new strategies to reach these children.

Inclusive Education is one such strategy. It is based on the principle that all children should have the opportunity to learn, and that children learn best when they learn together. Inclusive Education programs equip ordinary schools to recognize and respond to the needs of diverse students, including those who have traditionally been excluded—both from access to school and from equal participation in school.

Inclusive Education focuses on the individual strengths that children bring to school rather than their perceived deficits, looking at whether children have the opportunity to take part in the normal life of the community or school, or whether there are physical and social barriers in the environment. Deaf and blind children will need teachers who can communicate in sign language and materials in Braille...for the vast majority of children with disability, it is the lack of schooling and not their disability that limits their opportunities.

Inclusive Education means that schools and teachers accommodate and respond to individual learners; this inclusiveness itself benefits the school, the teachers, and all students. It recognizes schools as communities of learners, education as a life-long pursuit, and the ultimate goal of healthy, productive citizens who contribute fully to the economic, social, and cultural life of countries, communities, and families.

Financing and Decentralization

Donor support for disability within education programs has been modest, but is growing rapidly. Evidence of this trend can be seen in the fact that of 25 World Bank primary education projects with support for disability issues, all but one are current. The World Bank also currently supports seven projects dealing with disability issues in secondary education.

A new flagship program on disability has been recently started under UNESCO auspices as part of

the post-Dakar EFA follow-up. UNESCO has also developed a broad program of support for children with disability: the Inclusive Schools and Community Support Programs, active in about 30 countries.

The increased attention to disability on the part of the donor community reflects a growing awareness of the high costs of exclusion in terms of lost productivity, lost human potential, and lost health and well-being:

Total Annual Value of GDP Lost Due to Disability (in Billions of US dollars)

Value of GDP Lost	High Estimate	Low Estimate
High Income Countries	1,300	900
Medium Income Countries	480	339
Low Income Countries	192	135
TOTAL	1,936	1,365

Source: R. L. Metts (2000) P. 71

Resources-based formulas can be used to allocate funds at local levels based on estimated program needs, specifying levels of support (e.g., class size, support teachers) and other parameters linked to quality education. Allocations that encourage a unified system of education service delivery and that specify performance standards have proven most effective in developed countries, but have not been widely tested in developing country contexts.

Quality Issues

There are a number of specific measures that help to integrate children with disabilities into general classrooms. These include: 1) pre-service and in-service training strategies for teachers and administrators; 2) centralized resource centers, outreach programs and cooperatives; 3) the mobilizing and training of parents as resources; and 4) multi-sector collaboration and enhancing capacities of community-based rehabilitation programs. It is important to ensure that all school buildings are accessible to children with dis-

ability. Construction norms used by most donors do not yet take this into account, a critical shortcoming to be corrected for EFA goals to be met.

Intensive teacher training focuses on child-centered teaching and learning strategies, and incorporates hands-on practice and feedback sessions. As part of the training, each participating school develops research and evaluation proposals for implementation. Positive effects were documented in terms of changes in teacher and pupil attitudes to teaching and learning, and in pupil achievement. Inclusive Education in classrooms stresses multi-ability grouping for instruction, peer support, cooperative learning, multiple forms of assessment (e.g., standardized, curriculum-based), active student-centered participation in learning, accommodations for diverse learning styles, and critical reflective problem-solving approaches to curriculum and instruction. All of these strategies constitute state-of-the-art best practice in effective teaching for all learners.



Lessons Learned

- 1) Teacher education plays a critical role in effective Inclusive Education.
- 2) Early intervention in small, multi-ability groups is important when children are still in the formative stage of development
- 3) Strategies must promote access and participation—both universal design for physical access to schools, and academic access to curriculum and instruction through appropriate support
- 4) Inclusive Education should be seen as integral to whole-school reform
- 5) Decentralized funding can support innovative practice within a unified system of education service delivery
- 6) Laws and policies that support universal rights of access and participation must be applied equally to all learners, including those with disabilities

Remaining Challenges: A Call to Action

1) Data Collection and Defining the Population

Disability-disaggregated data are needed in order to define and locate all children with disability, and to provide appropriate educational services. These data must encompass school drop-outs and street children, many of whom may be suffering from unrecorded and undiagnosed disabilities.

2) Planning

Planners, both in-country and within the donor community, will need to incorporate disability issues into a wide range of planning activities to increase the accessibility of schools, the availability of appropriate materials, and the provision of adequately trained teachers. The World Bank and other donors have not yet agreed on a disability policy for school construction, the activity that still accounts for the largest amount of World Bank education funds. This should be urgently addressed.

3) Human Rights Approach

Governments are seeking support to develop, implement, and enforce national policies on disability and Inclusive Education. While support for children with disability should be grounded in human rights, it is compatible with what we know about economic development and the eradication of poverty.

4) Awareness and Commitment

There is a need to raise awareness and conscious-

ness of disability issues. People need to see the potential for change from a human rights, as well as an economic standpoint. Further work is needed to build capacity and educate Disabled People's Organizations and parent groups, which will raise the awareness of the general population and improve education at the local level. Practical solutions must be developed that set an example, along with new ways to communicate, among those working to educate children with disabilities in developing countries.

This note series is intended to summarize lessons learned and key policy findings on the World Bank's work in education. The views expressed in these notes are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the World Bank. For additional copies of Education Notes, please contact the Education Advisory Service by email at eservice@worldbank.org or visit the web site: <http://www.worldbank.org/education/>

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