

## Making education inclusive for all

**E**ducational inclusion relates to all children accessing and meaningfully participating in quality education, in ways that are responsive to their individual needs. The terms 'inclusion' and 'inclusive education' are often used in relation to children with disabilities and/or special needs and emerged partly out of debates to reduce their segregation from mainstream schooling.

In recent years, these terms have been used by the Education for All (EFA) movement in relation to all children who are marginalised and excluded from basic education, not just in terms of initial access to schooling, but access to rights within schooling processes. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) identifies inclusion as "...a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education."

Inclusive approaches to schooling are different to other initiatives, because they put the responsibility on the education system or provider at all levels (international, national and local) to adapt and be responsive to the needs of children. Interventions to address exclusion need to work at multiple levels. According to UNESCO, inclusion "...involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children."

Some children are more vulnerable than others to forms of exclusion: for example, those with disabilities, those from very poor households, those living nomadic lifestyles, children from some socio-ethnic/ethnic-linguistic groups, those living in fragile environments and children who are over-age for their grade. The terms 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' highlight the multidimensional and intersecting nature of children's vulnerability.



Both inclusion and exclusion are processes and states of (in)equality, with vulnerability rarely being stable. Inappropriate or unresponsive educational practices can further marginalise vulnerable children within the education system or those excluded from the system altogether.

### EFA and inclusion

In response to EFA targets and the Millennium Development Goals, many countries have recently made great progress in increasing enrolments, with the focus on achieving universal access to primary school. Regardless, many hard-to-reach children remain out of the schooling system and every year, millions of children worldwide drop out of school before completing basic education. Without more emphasis on the quality of provision (including inclusive practices), many vulnerable children will remain both excluded from school and silently excluded within schools, learning little while they are there. Consequently, EFA goals will remain unrealised.

### Approaches to inclusion

Pockets of good practice of inclusive education exist. Many are small-scale and initiated by non-governmental organisations. A few governments, such as South Africa's, have made radical shifts towards inclusive education at a policy level, but practice still lags behind policy intentions. Questions remain about how inclusive approaches to EFA can be adopted and sustained on a larger scale with the support and enthusiasm of educational professionals. Many find themselves in under-resourced and difficult circumstances, and the focus on enrolments over quality continues.

**A blind student reads Braille in the Uhuru Boarding School in Tanzania, which tries to integrate deaf and blind students into classes with children who have no disabilities.**

*Dieter Telemans, Panos Pictures, 2008*

Rights-based approaches provide one way of addressing inclusion in education, whereby rights to access, quality and respect frame policy, programming and schooling relations. Changes, which need not be costly, can be made, such as:

→ p2

### Contents

Editorial	1
Useful weblinks	2
Education needs of pastoralists in South Asia	3
Girls' education in Pakistan	4
Barriers to inclusion in Tanzania	4
Education for children with disabilities in India	5
Educational inclusion in emergencies	6
Language, ethnicity and education in Peru	7
School dropouts in Ghana	7
Understanding inclusive education	8

**Elaine Unterhalter**, Professor of Education and International Development at the Institute of Education, in the UK, provided academic advice for this issue of *insights*. She specialises in gender, race and class inequalities and their bearing on education.

Inclusive education is the responsibility of everyone involved in educational delivery

- 'including' vulnerable parents and children in school decision-making and national policy dialogue
- giving school councils and governance structures a remit around children's rights
- training teachers on issues of inclusion and child-centred teaching methods
- making school opening hours flexible
- abolishing corporal punishment.

One of the biggest challenges is to get educational professionals worldwide to want to address inclusion.

This edition of *insights* features a range of articles showing some of the complexities of inclusion across a range of international, national and local contexts. They highlight a range of exclusions and actions needed to improve inclusive practices in these particular contexts. While each article provides a unique perspective on a particular situation, there are common threads. There is a demand for good quality, relevant education and communities are eager for (all) their children to learn.

Many children remain excluded from education and EFA goals remain unrealised. **Nidhi Singal** highlights the limited educational opportunities for children with disabilities in India. This includes a lack of initial access and access past primary schooling. She highlights the need for teacher training to improve poor quality provision for children in mainstream schools.

Current policies and practices fail

many vulnerable children. **Kwame Akyeampong** and **Eric Ananga** show how schools fail to adapt to the needs of children at risk of dropping out in Ghana. Without additional classroom help, these children become increasingly marginalised, and drop out permanently.

Inclusive education remains marginalised within educational discourses that emphasise improving enrolments. Yet without more inclusive approaches to schooling, access goals remain unrealised. **Helen Pinnock** advocates a pro-active approach to tackling exclusion for education in emergency situations. She argues that without this, marginalised children can become less visible to emergency workers and education providers.

Getting hard-to-reach children into school requires flexible, needs-based and non-discriminatory approaches to education delivery. **Caroline Dyer** demonstrates how educational initiatives working with the mobile lifestyles of pastoralist communities in South Asia can enable access to education without compromising lifestyle choices. **Filiz Polat** describes how participatory action research at the school level in Tanzania can be a way of stimulating discussion and action around inclusion.

Inclusive education is the responsibility of everyone involved in educational delivery and interventions need to occur at multiple levels. At the international level, development agencies must apply pressure and hold national governments to account

for failing the most marginalised, according to **Sheldon Shaeffer**. At the national level, governments need to ensure groups of children are not under-prioritised and/or excluded from educational provision; **Masooda Bano** highlights the necessity of addressing fundamental structural problems in the state education system in order to increase the enrolment and retention of girls. And at the local level, **Patricia Ames** shows that schools can encourage children and communities to shape local educational priorities, thus reducing exclusion.

#### Frances Hunt

Development Education Research Centre  
Institute of Education,  
36 Gordon Square, London,  
WC1H 0PD, UK  
T +44 20 76126000  
f.hunt@ioe.ac.uk  
www.ioe.ac.uk

#### See also

*Inclusive Education: Where There Are Few Resources*, Oslo: Atlas Alliance, by Sue Stubbs, 2008 (PDF)  
[www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/IE%20few%20resources%202008.pdf](http://www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/IE%20few%20resources%202008.pdf)

*Global Monitoring Report 2010: Reaching the Marginalized*, Paris, UNESCO, 2009 (PDF)  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001866/186606E.pdf>

*A Human Rights Approach to Education for All*, New York and Paris, UNICEF and UNESCO, 2007 (PDF)  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001548/154861e.pdf>

## What is *insights*?

*insights* provides a thematic overview of recent policy-relevant research findings on international development.

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*insights*  
Institute of Development Studies  
University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK  
T +44 1273 915816  
F +44 1273 621202  
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## Useful weblinks

Enabling Education Network (EENET)  
[www.eenet.org.uk](http://www.eenet.org.uk)

Inclusive education, UNESCO  
[www.unesco.org/en/inclusive-education](http://www.unesco.org/en/inclusive-education)

Global Monitoring Report on marginalisation  
[www.efareport.unesco.org](http://www.efareport.unesco.org)

Eldis Key Issues Guide: Inclusive Education  
[www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/education/key-issues/inclusive-education](http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/education/key-issues/inclusive-education)

Basic education and gender equality, UNICEF  
[www.unicef.org/girlseducation](http://www.unicef.org/girlseducation)

Languages in education, UNESCO  
[www.unesco.org/en/languages-in-education](http://www.unesco.org/en/languages-in-education)

Source  
[www.asksource.info](http://www.asksource.info)

# Addressing the education needs of pastoralist groups in South Asia

**P**astoralist groups are widely distributed across South Asia but their lifestyles and educational needs are far less recognised than their counterparts in Africa.

Exact numbers are difficult to come by and the visibility of pastoralist and nomadic populations in regional education and livelihood policies is highly inconsistent. Nomads, for example, are recognised in the Afghan constitution but they are omitted from government and donor-supported development programming in practice.

Current patterns of regional development are designed for sedentary groups and often have negative impacts on pastoralists' livelihoods. In India, for example, shrinking natural resources increasingly damage eco-systems on which pastoralists depend. Globalisation and urbanisation marginalise them socio-economically and make them vulnerable.

Policymakers tend to see pastoralism as an outmoded, rather than a rational, contemporary livelihood strategy. They believe pastoralists can benefit from development opportunities, including accessing educational provision, if they are settled. This approach has led to poor enrolment and retention of pastoralists in schools. Pastoralists are not resistant to the idea of education, but to becoming sedentary. Problems lie with the nature of state provision, rather than with pastoralists' demands.

Pastoralist groups, however, are now looking at formal education with a new interest. They realise it can help them diversify their occupations and access new income-generating opportunities. Pastoralists are now aware that they have a right to education, which is linked to their right to vote and to participate in decision-making about policies that may affect them.

However, educational provision needs to change to match pastoralists' needs. It must value their mobility and social identities, and respond flexibly to their future needs and hopes.

Experiments on various ways of providing formal education to pastoralists are fewer in South Asia

than Africa. But, the region has some examples of innovative non-government practices that have tried to address pastoralists' needs. These include mobile schools based on participatory needs identification, for instance:

- legal literacy education on migration for Van Gujjar families in northern India
- a community-run boarding school for Rabaris in western India.

This work, however, is not enough. Most non-government or community-based organisations face budget constraints and the sustainability of such projects becomes difficult as success generates increased demand.

Pastoralists' educational inclusion is possible with effective strategies.

- Policymakers need to take a positive and holistic view of the social and economic value of pastoralism – and other mobile livelihood strategies (example for, river gypsies in Bangladesh or nomadic iron-smiths throughout South Asia).
- Education has to be seen within and delivered to suit a mobile lifestyle, instead of forcing people to leave such lifestyles.
- Education needs to be viewed as lifelong learning and has to include adult and legal literacies rather

than focus narrowly on schooling.

- States have to recognise their accountability to pastoralists' human right to an education, and ensure that it is available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable.
- Participatory and other research is needed to understand the educational needs of nomadic and migrant groups.
- The needs of pastoralist women and girls who are 'doubly' invisible require extra attention.

## Caroline Dyer

School of Politics and International Studies (POLIS), University of Leeds, Leeds, LS2 9JT, UK  
T +44 113 3434402  
c.dyer@leeds.ac.uk  
www.polis.leeds.ac.uk

Educational provision needs to change to match pastoralists' needs

## See also

*The Education of Nomadic Peoples: Current Issues, Future Prospects*, Berghahn Books: Oxford, edited by Caroline Dyer, 2006

*Mobile Pastoralists and Education: Strategic Options*, Education For Nomads Paper 1, IIED: London, by Saverio Krätli and Caroline Dyer, 2009 (PDF)  
[www.iied.org/pubs/pdfs/10021IIED.pdf](http://www.iied.org/pubs/pdfs/10021IIED.pdf)



Children in the Safe Play Area organised by Save the Children in Thuri Park Relief Camp in Pakistan. Tom Pietrasik, *Save the Children*, 2006

# Girls' education in Pakistan

## Progress, but in measured terms

**G**irls' access to education in Pakistan has been restricted. Despite improvements in the last 20 years, underlying factors still make the state education system inefficient and must be addressed if girls' access to education is to be ensured. The current male to female literacy ratio is still at 65:40.

Lower enrolment and retention rates among girls in Pakistan are usually wrongly assumed to be a result of religious and cultural practices that restrict demand for female education. Widespread acceptance of schools established by non-state actors, such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or religious groups in remote areas, prove that even conservative communities are willing to send girls to school if their needs are met. Having schools close to homes, timings that accommodate other demands on girls' time, child-centered teaching methods and vocational education appeal to these communities.

However, even all this does not guarantee girls' post-primary education, in either rural or urban areas. Recent research from the

University of Oxford, in the UK, found that in a government primary school supported by an NGO in Sheikurpura, mothers said, "Our girls cry all the time because they want to continue their education but there is no secondary school in the area, and it is not safe to travel long distances."

For some of these girls, *madrasas* – Islamic schools which provide residential facilities – become a more accessible option. Most female *madrasa* students join this system after completing secondary or higher secondary education in the secular education system. However, this is not the only reason for the rapidly expanding female *madrasas*, which are over 3,000 in number. Many students join *madrasas* due to conscious preference for Islamic education.

Girls' education features in all government education policy documents. However, actually including girls in the state educational system cannot be ensured in a context where the state education system suffers from fundamental structural problems, such as inadequate funding, a project based instead of sector wide approach to educational policy planning, the political rather than merit-based appointment of teachers, and a lack of political will. Addressing these challenges requires:

- prioritising education sector reforms, and increasing budgetary allocations to the sector

- making state schools geographically accessible
- exploring options to extend community-based primary education models to secondary level
- considering giving incentives for private schools to open in areas where the state cannot expand
- understanding the popularity of *madrasas* and why some quit the secular system in their favour.

### Masooda Bano

Department of International Development and Wolfson College, University of Oxford, 3 Mansfield Road, Oxford OX1 3TB, UK  
T +44 1865 271924  
[masooda.bano@wolfson.ox.ac.uk](mailto:masooda.bano@wolfson.ox.ac.uk)  
[www.qeh.ox.ac.uk](http://www.qeh.ox.ac.uk)  
[www.wolfson.ox.ac.uk](http://www.wolfson.ox.ac.uk)



**Girl studying at a madrasa religious school attached to the mosque in Mirpur District of Azad Kashmir, Pakistan.** Tim Smith, Panos Pictures, 2008

# Tackling barriers to education caused by attitudes towards inclusion in Tanzania

**T**here are numerous barriers to inclusive education in Tanzania, at the national, community and school levels. While the lack of basic resources is a problem, attitudes are also barriers to participation and learning.

Researchers from the University of Dar es Salaam and the Tanzanian Education Network, with help from University of Bristol, in the UK, are developing an index for educational inclusion in the country. Through a participatory action research (PAR) project, they are investigating how schools can be supported in developing more inclusive school cultures and practices.

Eight primary schools in two districts in Dar es Salaam are part of this research. They are working on ways to include all learners in the community and improve the quality of education.

Often, the term 'inclusion' is limited to the inclusion of disabled pupils, as is the case with the participating schools. The project, however, sees inclusion as including all peoples regardless of race, ethnicity,

disability, gender, language, socio-economic status and any aspect of an individual's identity that might be seen as 'different'.

The first four steps of the PAR have been completed:

- identifying barriers to participation and learning
- the participating schools grouping these barriers into five categories: infrastructure, classroom learning environment, health, water and sanitation, and negative community or cultural practices
- prioritising which barriers have to be tackled first: infrastructure was highest on the list of priorities, followed by books supply, identifying children with special needs and those living with HIV and AIDS
- developing school plans to develop more inclusive cultures.

The forthcoming steps of the PAR include: an evaluation of the effectiveness of school development plans, and drafting a local index of inclusive schooling to be used in the following phase of the project, which will be disseminated to other schools in Tanzania later.

### Filiz Polat

Faculty of Education, Room 421, Runme Shaw Building, University of Hong Kong Pokfulam, Hong Kong SAR, China  
[filiz.polat@hku.hk](mailto:filiz.polat@hku.hk)  
<http://web.edu.hku.hk>

*The first two years of this project is funded by the Research Programme Consortium on Implementing Education Quality in Low Income Countries (EdQual), UK Department for International Development.*

### See also

*The Inclusive Classroom in Tanzania: Dream or Reality?*, Stockholm: Institute of International Education, University of Stockholm: Stockholm, by Dinah Richard Mmbaga, 2002

*Responding to Marginalization and Exclusion in Tanzania*, Chapter prepared for the Research Forum, Institute for Inclusive Education, Arizona State University: USA, by Joseph Kisanji and Charles B Sannen, forthcoming

*The Challenge of Enhancing Inclusive Education in Developing Countries*, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 6(2): 113-126, by C. Jonah Eleweke and Michael Rodda, 2002

# From enrolment to participation

## Education for children with disabilities in India

**In recent years the Government of India has changed various policies and laws to enable young people with disabilities to receive education. However, conflicting goals and a lack of clarity still affect disabled young people's experiences and outcomes of education.**

According to the India office of the World Bank, Indian children with disabilities are five and a half times more likely to be out of school than non-disabled children. Those who do attend school rarely progress beyond the primary school level. Currently, 52 percent of adults with disabilities are illiterate, compared to 35 percent amongst the general Indian population.

People with disabilities face many barriers within and outside the Indian school system. The Disability, Education and Poverty Project, a part of the Research Consortium on Educational Outcomes and Poverty (RECOUP), interviewed young people with disabilities and their parents from poor households in Madhya Pradesh. They were identified using a range of methods, including a household census, referrals and tracer studies. These interviews give insights into the experiences of schooling and its perceived benefits.

The young people interviewed were first generation learners with different levels of education, selected across three impairment types: visual, hearing and physical. Among them, a majority of those who attended mainstream schools said they were unable to cope due to inadequate resources, the inability and unwillingness of teachers to teach them, and the irrelevance of the curriculum. These inadequacies of mainstream education have also been highlighted in other school-based research in India.

Although only four of them had steady employment, young people who had attended school placed great faith in the merits of being educated. Parents hoped education would help their children to get jobs and reduce their dependency on families. While young people valued the prospect of employment, they also focused strongly on the 'softer

outcomes' of education:

- Young people with at least eight years of schooling spoke about increased self-confidence in managing the world around them.
- They had wider and stronger social networks and friends.
- They were articulate in challenging negative views of disability and questioned issues, such as the lack of employment opportunities and medical assistance which would help them as adults.
- They all valued the respect and dignity that being educated brought them in social interactions.

The voices of these young people highlight the important role education plays in their lives. Contrary to common belief, parents also were keen on sending their children with disabilities to school. Parents did not incur any loss of income as these children were not seen as viable workers and through education they hoped for long-term gains.

More children with disabilities can enter and participate in the Indian education system.

- Schools need simultaneous reforms in professional development, alongside a change in the attitudes and beliefs of teachers.
- The curriculum delivered in schools should be more relevant and not focus merely on developing skills for the labour market. For a more holistic educational experience it should also foster positive self regard and social worth.
- Better opportunities will help people with disabilities enter employment. For example, government provisions, such as job reservations can be made more transparent and enabling.
- General public awareness about the rights and entitlements of people with disabilities has to increase. The state and the non-government organisations will need to work together on this.
- Different stakeholders in schools, such as teachers, need to be more aware and involved. For example, in this research many teachers were the catalysts helping young people access various benefits.

**Nidhi Singal**

University of Cambridge,  
184 Hills Road, Cambridge,  
CB1 8PQ, UK  
T +44 1 223 767608  
sn241@cam.ac.uk  
www.cam.ac.uk

*RECOUP is a partnership of seven institutions from Ghana, India and Pakistan, Kenya and the UK, coordinated by the University of Cambridge. Established with DFID funding in 2005, it is a five-year research programme which examines the impact of education on the lives and livelihoods of people in developing countries, particularly those living in poorer areas and from poorer households.*  
<http://recoup.educ.cam.ac.uk>

### See also

*"With Education You Can Do Anything: Without Education There's Nothing You Can Do". Outcomes of Schooling for Young People with Disabilities, RECOUP Working Paper 24, by Nidhi Singal, Roger Jeffery, Aanchal Jain, and Neeru Sood, 2009 (PDF)*  
<http://recoup.educ.cam.ac.uk/publications/WP24IndiaNSRJAJNS1.pdf>

*People with Disabilities in India: From Commitments to Outcomes, World Bank Working Paper, Human Development Unit, South Asian Region, The World Bank: New Delhi, Phillip O'Keefe, 2007 (PDF)*  
<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INDIAEXTN/Resources/295583-1171456325808/DISABILITYREPORTFINALNOV2007.pdf>

**A boy, who is blind in his left eye, doing his homework in Surumunda Village, Orissa, India.** *Mikkel Ostergaard, Panos Pictures, 2006*



## Ensuring educational inclusion in emergencies

**W**hen a crisis such as conflict or natural disaster strikes, it is vital to put education back in place so that children do not miss out on months or years of learning. However, efforts to improve education for marginalised children can be disrupted in emergencies. Children facing the biggest barriers to education can be invisible to emergency teams facing tight time pressures, particularly when parents of disabled children or girls consider it too unsafe to go to school.

Key points arising from the review include:

- NGOs were more likely to report on inclusion if they focused on one excluded group, such as girls.
- Most NGOs tried to improve the quality and inclusiveness of teaching; however, they tended to give insufficient thought to helping children get to class.
- Flexible funding would have helped include marginalised people, whose needs often emerged after budgets had been fixed.

Experience was collected to produce a guidance booklet. It revealed that communication is vital. For example, one emergency manager in the Democratic Republic of Congo found that a school for blind students had lost its Braille materials in the fighting. An agency in Kinshasa had materials but did not know the school was open. The emergency manager's team got in contact and transported the materials.

In Kenya, after election violence in 2008, an education adviser helping schools to re-open asked head teachers why disabled children were not in school. When the adviser explained that disabled children had the same rights to education as other children, there was a genuine shift – several heads worked to welcome disabled children into their schools.

In 2008, members of the Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE) raised concern that excluded groups were not being reached, despite strong inclusion standards. Sometimes teachers or managers felt they could not tackle traditional attitudes. However, others found that the fresh attention and resources brought into an emergency galvanised people into improving education for everyone. Practical barriers were relatively easy to overcome, once leaders had encouraged thinking about inclusion.

INEE set up a task team of emergency practitioners to advise on inclusion in education in emergencies. The task team asked researchers at the University of Manchester, in the UK, to review leading humanitarian non-governmental organisation (NGO) reports for evidence of inclusive practice and thinking.

Other learning includes:

- Donors should require emergency evaluations to describe whether marginalised people were reached.
- Managers should regularly ask who is not included and what can be done to make progress.
- Teachers exhausted by a crisis may need very clear, practical instructions on supporting children with disabilities.
- Teachers' confidence can be boosted by encouraging them to think about what they already do to help children take part in school.

### Helen Pinnock

Save the Children, 1 St John's Lane, London EC1M 4AR, UK  
T +44 20 70126746  
[h.pinnock@savethechildren.org.uk](mailto:h.pinnock@savethechildren.org.uk)  
[www.savethechildren.org.uk](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk)

*The INEE Task Team on Inclusive Education and Disability is developing a Strategic Research Agenda. Practitioners and researchers are invited to help identify further areas for research, and build evidence into new work. [www.ineesite.org/research](http://www.ineesite.org/research)*

**Children play at the playground in a Child Friendly Space run by Save the Children in a Dadaab Refugee Camp, Kenya. A Child Friendly Space is an area set aside for all children, regardless of age, sex, religion, ethnicity, nationality or disability, where they can go for recreation and learning activities outside of school.**

*Save the Children, 2009*

### See also

*Education in Emergencies: Including Everyone - INEE Pocket Guide to Inclusive Education, Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE): Geneva, 2009*  
[www.ineesite.org/index.php/post/inclusive\\_ed\\_pocket\\_guide](http://www.ineesite.org/index.php/post/inclusive_ed_pocket_guide)

**INEE Inclusive Education & Disability Task Team**  
[www.ineesite.org/index.php/post/disability/](http://www.ineesite.org/index.php/post/disability/)



# Language, ethnicity and education in Peru

**Peru is a multicultural, multilingual country with near universal access to primary schooling. However, equity, inclusion and quality are still to be achieved. Among Peruvian children, those who speak an indigenous language show lower levels of enrolment, higher repetition and drop out, lower school achievement and are often overage for their grade. Bilingual education is not available for most of these children, although research shows that using the mother tongue has better learning outcomes, especially at a young age.**

Schools often do not recognise the identity, language and rights of indigenous children, and indigenous girls become even more marginalised. This situation reproduces ethnic, gender and racial inequalities and stigma.

A representative case study can provide an example of this marginalisation from Quechua children in the Andean highlands.

This comes from Young Lives, a long-term research project that gathers information through surveys, interviews, in-depth case studies and participatory methods over time:

When five-year-old Ana – a Quechua-speaking girl from the Andean highlands – attended pre-school in 2007, her mother was concerned: “Children are made to learn in Spanish, and children know, but only in Quechua”. The following year, in primary school, Ana was taught again in Spanish. Her teacher use to hit children with a whip when they made mistakes. Ana was not permitted to wear indigenous clothing and had to leave her shoes at the door of the classroom. The many valuable things Ana knows and does outside school are completely ignored by her teachers and the school as an institution.

Meaningful inclusive education in the context of Peru requires challenging the cultural orientation of schooling, school policies and ways of working, which can reinforce inequalities and discriminate against certain children. These, including gender dimensions that affect children’s experience, have to be recognised and

changed. Learners and their communities need to be active participants in shaping and determining their own educational priorities.

## Patricia Ames

Institute of Peruvian Studies, Horacio Urteaga 694, Jesús María, Lima 11, Perú  
T +51 1 3326194 Extension 238  
pames@iep.org.pe  
www.iep.org.pe

*Young Lives is a long-term international research project investigating the changing nature of childhood poverty.*  
www.younglives.org.uk

## See also

*Starting School: Who is Prepared? Young Lives’ Research on Children’s Transition to First Grade in Peru*, Young Lives Working Paper 47, by Patricia Ames, Vanessa Rojas and Tamia Portugal, 2009 (PDF)  
www.younglives.org.uk/pdf/publication-section-pdfs/working-paperpdfs/YL\_WP47\_Ames.pdf

# Reducing school dropouts through inclusive approaches to education in Ghana

**Well-implemented inclusive education should address the learning needs of all children vulnerable to being marginalised and excluded from education. Inclusive approaches often do not take account of children who once had access to education, but have since dropped out of school. Research on the causes of dropout suggest that school-level factors – for example, poor teaching methods, persistent learning difficulties, poor attendance and corporal punishment – act singularly or in combination to produce dropout.**

This article looks at inclusion in Ghana from the point of view of dropouts. To date, policy on inclusive education in Ghana has focused mainly on girls and/or children with physical disabilities. Yet, drop-out rates can be up to 15 percent at primary level, and 35 percent at junior high school level.

Researchers from the Consortium for Research on Education Access, Equity and Transitions (CREATE) tracked children in two communities in the Mfantseman municipality in southern Ghana for two years to understand issues around attendance, progression and dropout. They found that:

- Many irregular attendees temporarily withdraw from school and ultimately drop out.
- Schools have no strategies to address the learning needs of irregular attendees and to reduce their vulnerability to dropping out. They are often silently excluded because teachers fail to respond to gaps in their learning.
- Irregular attendees often come from very low-income households and miss school for economic reasons, for instance frequently working in the fishing industry.
- Over-aged children are particularly vulnerable to dropping out. Many attend school only occasionally, and are given little attention when they attend. Often they have knowledge and skills from out-of-school economic activities, but these are not used as a meaningful part of classroom learning.

These findings have important implications for inclusive education policy in Ghana, including:

- Strategies and policies which focus greater attention on the learning needs of irregular attendees are required. This includes identifying those at risk of dropping out and providing them with additional support.

- Schools must work more closely with local communities to adopt strategies that directly address factors which increase the risk of students dropping out.

## Kwame Akyeampong and Eric Ananga

Centre for International Education,  
University of Sussex, Brighton,  
BN1 9RE, UK  
T +44 1273 877051  
a.akyeampong@sussex.ac.uk  
www.sussex.ac.uk/education/1-4-21.html

*The Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE) is a five-year DFID-funded Research Programme Consortia around educational access to basic education, based at the Centre for International Education (CIE) at the University of Sussex.*

## See also

*Access to Education in Ghana: Growth, Overage Attendance and Promising Pathways*, Paper presented at 10th UKFIET International Conference on Education and Development: Politics, Policies and Progress, 15-17 September, Oxford, UK, by Kwame Akyeampong and Ricardo Sabates, 2009

*Mapping the Incidence of School Dropouts: A Case Study of Communities in Northern Ghana*, *Comparative Education*, 45(2): 219-232, by Joseph Ghartey Ampiah and Christine Adu-Yeboah, 2009  
www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a911135344

# Understanding inclusive education

## What is it and why do it?

**A**ccording to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), inclusive education “involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children.” Put simply, inclusive education is Education for All (EFA). Without the specific focus of inclusive education on removing barriers to participation and learning for those now excluded, EFA will not be achieved.

Who are the excluded? There is a relatively small group of children with severe disabilities who may need additional support beyond mainstream school. However, excluded children are also those who have never enrolled in school, or were enrolled but then dropped out, but who could participate if schools were more flexible and welcoming; and those who are enrolled in school but are excluded from learning.

Ministries of Education should be as embarrassed by their system's net non-enrolment rate as they are proud of its net enrolment rate (NER). In some countries, children with disabilities are not even counted in the school-age cohort; in many more, the last 5 percent of the non-enrolled are considered too difficult to identify and too expensive to educate.

This willingness to accept less than universal education goes against the Millennium Development Goals and

the EFA targets. International development agencies should hold governments responsible for achieving them – and help them to do so. But this is not always easy; once primary enrolment rates reach an acceptable level (not taking into account the EFA quality goal), there are pressures to move what is seen as surplus funding up the system (to secondary education) or down (to early childhood programmes).

Another problem has been debate over the evolving definition of ‘inclusive education’. Once focused on the ‘special needs’ of learners with disabilities, the term now refers to a process which addresses and responds to the diversity of all learners. The evolution of this definition has not come without tension and the concern that the very real needs of people with disabilities will be overlooked in the rush towards mainstreaming; ‘integration’ in the classroom, in other words, does not necessarily lead to ‘inclusion’ in learning.

Practically, inclusive education can work through the development of schools which are child-friendly – meaning child-centred and child-seeking. Such a school actively identifies excluded children and gets them enrolled in school and included in learning. It does this by:

- not excluding or discriminating against children because of difference
- providing free, compulsory, affordable and accessible education
- respecting and welcoming diversity and viewing it as an opportunity, not a problem
- meeting the differing needs of children.

The lessons from the global experience with inclusive education were visible at the International Conference on Education in Geneva, 2008. The general conclusion was clear: pressure to reach the EFA goals has intensified

interest in, and enriched approaches to, inclusive education. One particular lesson was that it is insufficient to consider how to integrate one particular group of children. While we need to understand and respond to the needs of each category of exclusion, the overall need is to develop strategies to remove barriers to learning and participation for all children.

**Sheldon Shaeffer**

*s.shaeffer@unesco.org*

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### See also

*Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education*, UNESCO, Paris, 2009 (PDF)  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0017/001778/177849e.pdf>

*Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools*, CSIE, by Tony Booth and Mel Ainscow, 2003  
[www.csie.org.uk/publications/inclusion-index-explained.shtml](http://www.csie.org.uk/publications/inclusion-index-explained.shtml)

*Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive Learning-Friendly Environments*, UNESCO Bangkok, updated 2009  
[www2.unescobkk.org/elib/publications/032revised/index.htm](http://www2.unescobkk.org/elib/publications/032revised/index.htm)

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Editor: Leah Murphy

Editorial and technical support: *insights* team

Design: [eve.passingham@synergygroup.uk.com](mailto:eve.passingham@synergygroup.uk.com)

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*insights*

Institute of Development Studies  
University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK

T +44 1273 915777 F +44 1273 877335

[insights@ids.ac.uk](mailto:insights@ids.ac.uk)

[www.eldis.org/insights](http://www.eldis.org/insights)

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