

Executive Summary

Situational Analysis and Assessment of Education for Children with Disabilities in Bangladesh, South Asia, East Asia and South Africa

CENTRE FOR SERVICES AND INFORMATION ON DISABILITY
(CSID)

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This Research had been commissioned to Centre for Services and Information on Disability (CSID) by the Overseas Development Group (ODG), University of East Anglia under its Disability KaR programme jointly managed by Healthlink Worldwide and the Overseas Development Group at the University of East Anglia, UK.

Objectives of the Research:

The broad objectives of the Research were: Assessing and analysing the major shortfalls in existing design and implementation process of education programmes for disabled children; Assessing the effectiveness and impact of existing Inclusive Education programmes in terms of Enrollment, Repetition, Dropout and Attitude; Assessing the impact of Special versus Integrated and Inclusive Education; Identifying successful Case studies and Identifying areas/issues and possible interventions for strengthening and promoting Inclusive Education.

Methodology and Approaches:

A combination of methodology was used to collect information/data for the research: Focus Group Discussion; Group interaction; Visiting Special, Integrated and Inclusive Schools; observation; In-depth interviews; E-mail questionnaires; Collecting Case Studies from all four countries; Review of available Policy documents/ literature and web search. A total of 8 set questionnaires used, which were a combination of closed and open-ended questions. The research used a participatory approach in the whole process. A children's consultative group was directly involved in the consultation process and the data collectors were disabled. The Team Leader and one member of the research team were also disabled.

Area Coverage:

The research covered 4 countries in South Asia, East Asia, and Southern Africa. The countries were Bangladesh, Nepal, Vietnam and the Republic of South Africa. Local coordinating organizations involved were:

Nepal - National Federation of the Disabled-Nepal;
Vietnam - National Coordinating Council on Disability;
Republic of South Africa - Secretariat of African Decade of Disabled Persons;

These organizations arranged visits to Special, Integrated and Inclusive Schools and made appointments with key stakeholders/respondents ie: Government / policy level Officials of Disability and Education Ministries, Education Departments in Universities, Disabled Children's' groups, Parent's groups, DPOs etc. As the researchers were based in Bangladesh, and in order to have as wide a range of information given the time frame and available resources, the Research Team decided to cover 12 districts (2 districts from each 6 administrative divisions) in Bangladesh. The districts selected are those where some form of educational services exist for children with disabilities.

Time frame:

The stipulated time frame: 17 January 2005 to 31 June 2005.

The major limitations were: Time constraint; No option to visit outside City area in Nepal, Vietnam and South Africa to collect wide range of data; Lengthy and complicated process of visa for Vietnam and South Africa; Language problem in Vietnam and Nepal,

Major findings:

The findings of the research reflect that the conceptual aspects, design and implementation processes of different systems in the education of disabled children vary among the four countries. The concept of Inclusive Education is not unanimous among the four countries. The common major shortfalls in different educational systems are as follows:

In Special Education system: The special education system is costly and the number of institutions is inadequate in all four countries given the level of need. Insufficient government resource allocation; Resource Teachers are losing interest due to low salary and benefits and no opportunity to develop further skills. Inadequate Teachers training facilities; Inaccessible infrastructure; No uniformed curriculum; Inadequate supply of Braille books and equipment; lack of sign language trained teachers; Lack of relevant support systems; Emphasis on vocational skill training rather than the pedagogical aspect; No follow up system after schooling.

In Integrated Education system: Information on the Integrated education system has been collected from Bangladesh only (only blind children were integrated) as there was not scope for this in other 3 countries. The major shortfalls are: supply of Braille books and equipment; Low remuneration and benefits for resource teachers which reduces the interest of teachers; Resource teachers have no opportunity to develop further skills; Insufficient resource allocation to the schools.

In Inclusive Education system: Inclusive education systems are not being widely practiced. The Research team has been able to visit Inclusive schools in Bangladesh and Vietnam. In the other two countries Inclusive education pilot projects are running but there were no scope to visit them. In Bangladesh Inclusive schools are being operated by NGOs in a non-formal system so only marginalised children, and children with mild degrees of disabilities, are enrolled in the inclusive schools. Teachers are not adequately qualified and trained; Classrooms and premises are not accessible and sitting arrangements are not comfortable for disabled children; the Classroom environment is not suitable for accommodating different types of disabled children and the supply of teaching/learning materials/equipment is insufficient. In Vietnam all the Government Special Schools have been transformed into Inclusive Schools. In inclusive schools in Vietnam the shortfalls are: Insufficient resource allocation; Inadequately trained Teachers; Inadequate supply of Braille books, equipment and other teaching/learning materials; Physical Inaccessibility; Inappropriate curriculum and improper planning.

The Immediate and Root Causes of the shortfalls identified by the different respondents are more or less common in four countries. *The immediate causes are:* Lack of Government interest and support to implement existing policy, Lack of resources; Lack of technical skills; negative attitudes towards disability issues; Lack

of proper planning through actual situational analysis; Lack of coordination and mutual cooperation among concern departments of different Ministries and professionals; Lack of communication and coordination between professionals and implementers; Lack of appropriate information; Inadequate regional and international coordination and cooperation.

The common root causes identified by the respondents of four countries are: Lack of Political commitment; Poverty; Socially ingrained prejudice towards disability; No reliable data is available on the prevalence of disability and the situation of Children with Disabilities, which is a prerequisite to developing an appropriate policy and plan; Inadequate legislative support in favour of implementing the policies; the Education of Children with Disabilities is considered a welfare issue rather than a development issue; Lack of awareness of parents of the needs of education for Children with Disabilities. In addition of those common causes South Africa has racial sensitivities, Bangladesh has the barrier of Governmental rules of business (ie: the education issue of disabled children is under the Ministry of Social Welfare) and Nepal has the barrier of the Geo-topographic feature of mountains in Nepal.

On the issue effectiveness of Inclusive Education system in terms of enrolment, repetition, dropout and attitude the findings are as follows: In Bangladesh the Research Team visited 10 inclusive schools and found the disabled children's enrolment rate is 8.04% among a total of 2300 pupils. In the formal schools it is 0.84% and in non-formal schools 22.61%. It is because in formal schools some self-motivated parents are enrolling their disabled children and facing the challenges. The non-formal schools are being operated by NGOs. They are identifying the disabled children in the working area, motivating the families and enrolling the children in to their non-formal pre-schools and providing all services including education materials free of cost. But the formal or mainstream schools do not have programmes or activities addressing identification and motivation. So, the enrolment rate in the areas where some NGO programmes are present is higher than the areas where no disability programme is being implemented.

Among the other 3 countries the research team have been able to visit and observe one Government Secondary Inclusive School in Vietnam. The school was inclusive of only Visually Impaired (VI) children. The percentage ratio between pupils with and without disability is 9.82%: 90.18%. In comparison to the enrollment rate of Bangladesh in inclusive schools it is nearly same.

Repetition & Dropout rate:

In Bangladesh the percentage of repetition and dropout is only 2% and 1.20% respectively. In Vietnam the Inclusive School reported they do not have any repetition and drop out among disabled pupil. The reason for 0.00% repetition and dropout rate is that they add extra marks to promote the VI pupil if any one secures low mark. In Nepal and South Africa there was no opportunity for the research team to visit any Inclusive School.

Attitude and awareness: In Bangladesh it has been found that on average 35% of peer learners and 13% of teacher's attitude towards disabled learners is unfriendly. At an Inclusive school in Vietnam disabled children reported some classmates, and the trained teachers are really very supportive and friendly but others are not.

In all four countries It has been found that most of the teachers who received some form of training on 'teaching disabled children' are a little aware of some of the International conventions and National policies as they have heard about those while participating in training courses. In all four countries the School Management Committee or Governing Body and the parents are not adequately informed of any policy, legislation and or convention.

In Nepal the attitude of most of the parent's of disabled children who are enrolled in the education system is, the disabled children should learn in Special Schools. In South Africa parents strongly opined that they want their children to participate in mainstream schools. In Vietnam and Bangladesh it is average. Some parents opined disabled children should learn in special schools, some want them in mainstream schools and some responded whatever is the system it doesn't matter, they want to make their children educated.

In all four countries the evolution of an Education system for Disabled Children started in the form of Special Education a while back. Over time the concept of the education system changed into an Integrated system and recently an Inclusive system. All 3 systems are being practiced together in Bangladesh, Nepal and Vietnam, and South Africa followed a Special Education system but recently undertook a pilot project on Inclusive Education. The Impacts of the Special Education as identified by the research team are: Special Education systems isolate disabled children from society; Existing Special Education systems are confined to the primary and, to some extent, secondary level; Emphasis is being given on vocational training rather than academic teaching in special education settings; Due to inadequate special education centres and high cost involvement very few children have the opportunity to participate in the special education system in all four countries.

Impact of Integrated education system: According to the response of different stakeholders from all the countries- an Integrated Education system facilitates socialisation from the school level. The Disabled children can participate in a mainstream curriculum, which can be helpful in participating in higher mainstream education. It is less costly than the Special Education.

Impact of Inclusive Education (IE): Inclusive education is not practiced widely. In Bangladesh NGOs are operating some non-formal inclusive schools primarily in rural areas and most of them are pre-school level. In Vietnam the research team visited one Government inclusive school (inclusive of only visual impaired children). In Republic of South Africa inclusive education is not being practiced; a comprehensive plan has been developed to implement IE and a pilot project has been undertaken for field-testing. The SNES (Special Need Education Section) in collaboration with County of Copenhagen and the Danish University of Education initiated a pilot project on Inclusive Education including a 10 month teacher-training course in Nepal. So, it is observed that Inclusive Education in a limited scale is in practice in all four countries. However it is too early to predict to what degree and to what extent inclusive education will turn out as the most pragmatic approach considering the political, socio-economic and cultural conditions.

Policy issues:

Bangladesh has a National Education Policy 2000. The Education For All (EFA) plan aims at a 100% literacy rate by 2015. Disabled children are left out of this programme as their programme of education considered a welfare and charity issue. Under PEDP-II (Primary Education Development programme-II) it has been specified that in Primary schools mildly disabled children would be enrolled. But unfortunately it is not in practice. There is no specific comprehensive policy and action plan regarding the education of disabled children.

Nepal has declared Education For All (EFA), which aims at all disabled children being enrolled in the education system by 2015. But in reality there is no comprehensive education policy and / or action plan to include disabled children into mainstream schools. Nepal has Special Needs Education Section (SNES) under its Basic Primary Education Project-II. The SNES in collaboration with DANIDA initiated a pilot project on Inclusive Education including a 10 months teacher-training course. So, Nepal is moving towards its goal with limited initiatives.

Vietnam has its Disability Regulations and National EFA Action Plan. The education policy aims to cover 70% disabled children by 2015, but there is no comprehensive action plan to ensure the education rights of disabled children. Under the Ministry of Education and Training a Steering Committee on Inclusive Education (IE) has been formed and the Committee is in the process of developing IE policy and strategy.

Following a long process the Republic of South Africa prepared a comprehensive plan- "Education White Paper 6, Special Need Education, Building an Inclusive Education and Training System". In this White Paper it has been clearly outlined What an Inclusive Education and Training system is, and how they intend to build it. It also provides the framework of establishing such an education and training system, details of funding strategy, and lists the key steps to be taken. In addition South Africa has undertaken a pilot project on IE.

The research team observed that within the Special, Integrated and Inclusive education systems being practiced in all four countries there are some shortfalls, which need to be overcome. As the shortfalls are based on the local socio-cultural and economic situation the measures to be undertaken overcoming the shortfalls would be different and based on the local conditions of each country. The team also considered that inclusive education for children with disabilities is no doubt a new dimension and has a valid logic for introduction in different societies. At the same time Special Education is also important to meet the education needs of some percentage of disabled children as well as the possibility of using the Special Education Centres as Support and Resource Centres to strengthen the Inclusive Education system. Implementing IE depends upon the values, attitude, socio-cultural condition and availability of resources of individual countries, however there is no example of successful implementation of IE in front of us as yet. So, there is a definite need for further comprehensive and intensive investigations/research to be conducted into how best the existing systems can be improved, or how to optimize the benefits in each country.