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# CBR Guidelines

## **Education component**

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# Preamble

Education is about all people being able to learn what they need and want throughout their lives, according to their potential. It includes “learning to know, to do, to live together and to be” (1). Education takes place in the family, the community, schools and institutions, and in society as a whole. The universal right to education is firmly established in international instruments that have global endorsement: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26 (2), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 28 (3).

While international instruments state that primary education should be free and compulsory for all children without discrimination, it is widely accepted that in practice this is not happening, hence recent agreements have emphasized the need to:

- expand and improve early childhood care and education;
- achieve free, compulsory and quality primary education for all;
- ensure equal access to appropriate learning, life skills programmes and basic and continuing education for all adults;
- promote gender equality;
- facilitate inclusion of marginalized, vulnerable and discriminated groups at all levels.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (4) reaffirms the rights discussed above and is the first legally binding instrument to state specifically the right to inclusive education: States Parties shall ensure an “inclusive education system at all levels” (Article 24, para. 1), and States Parties should also ensure that “effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion” (Article 24, para. 2(e)). This includes the learning of Braille, sign language, various modes, means and formats of communication, and orientation and mobility skills.

Poverty, marginalization and discrimination are the main barriers to inclusive education (5). It is estimated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) that over 90% of children with disabilities in low-income countries do not attend school; and an estimated 30% of the world’s street children live with disabilities. For adults with disabilities, the literacy rate is as low as 3%, even as low as 1% for women with disabilities in some countries (6).

From these figures, it is evident that steps must be taken to ensure access to education for all children with disabilities. The Millennium Development Goals (7) rightly identify in Goal 2, the achievement of universal primary education. The target is for children everywhere, boys and girls alike, to be able to complete a full course of primary schooling by 2015. This applies equally to children with disabilities, and hence community-based rehabilitation (CBR) needs to contribute to achieving this target.

## Prioritizing inclusive education for children

In Mongolia, a national inclusive education programme is developing through collaboration between the Government, a parents' association, international nongovernmental organizations and European Union donors. Prior to 1989, Mongolia provided special schools and residential care for children and adults with disabilities. This system addressed basic needs, but deprived people with disabilities of other rights such as inclusion in society. After political and economic changes forced the closure of these special schools and institutions, the ground was cleared for a new approach. In 1998, with support from an international nongovernmental organization, the Association of Parents with Disabled Children (APDC) was founded to protect the rights of children with disabilities. APDC has carried out the following activities: policy review, training workshops on inclusive education in order to learn from other countries, working with the Ministry of Education to reform its policy and practice, and identifying the various support services needed to enable children with disabilities to be included in education. Community-based rehabilitation was seen to be integral to the overall strategy of promoting and protecting the rights of children with disabilities. In 2003, an Inclusive Education Unit was established within the Ministry of Education and a programme implementing committee was established in collaboration with the Ministries of Health and Social Welfare and Labour. Services for early identification, medical treatment and rehabilitation were established in local community-based centres. Initially priority was given to inclusive education at preschool level, and this has now been extended to primary schools. Over 1000 children with disabilities are included in kindergartens and teachers are trained to work inclusively. APDC continues to grow and network with other groups nationally and internationally to promote the rights of children.



## Goal

People with disabilities access education and lifelong learning, leading to fulfilment of potential, a sense of dignity and self-worth, and effective participation in society.

## The role of CBR

The role of CBR is to work with the education sector to help make education inclusive at all levels, and to facilitate access to education and lifelong learning for people with disabilities.

## Desirable outcomes

- All persons with disabilities have access to learning and resources that meet their needs and respect their rights.
- Local schools take in all children, including children with disabilities, so they can learn and play alongside their peers.
- Local schools are accessible and welcoming; they have a flexible curriculum, teachers who are trained and supported, good links with families and the community, and adequate water and sanitation facilities.
- People with disabilities are involved in education as role-models, decision-makers and contributors.
- Home environments encourage and support learning.
- Communities are aware that people with disabilities can learn, and provide support and encouragement.
- There is good collaboration between the health, education, social and other sectors.
- There is systematic advocacy at all levels to make national policies comprehensive to facilitate inclusive education.

### BOX 2

#### Facilitating access to inclusive education

A school may have an accessible building and teachers who are trained to work with all types of children, but children with disabilities may still be excluded. They may be hidden in back rooms at home, the family may lack support, and they may need assistive devices and medical rehabilitation. CBR can address all these issues and liaise between the education, health and social sectors and with disabled people's organizations. CBR personnel may need to have several rounds of discussions to convince parents about the need for and benefit of educating their disabled child, especially if the child is a girl or the parents are not educated themselves.



## Key concepts

### Education

Education is much broader than schooling. Schooling is important, but needs to be seen in the context of a lifelong learning process. Education starts at birth in the home, and continues throughout adult life; it includes formal, informal, non-formal, home-based, community and government initiatives. These terms can be confusing and tend to mean different things in different cultures and contexts. In general: “formal education” refers to education that takes place in recognized institutions, e.g. schools, colleges and universities, often leading to recognized qualifications and certifications; “non-formal education” refers to organized educational activity outside the formal system; “informal education” refers to all the learning that happens throughout life as a whole – from family, friends and communities – which is often not organized, unlike both formal and non-formal education.

### Human rights

Although everyone has the right to education, sometimes it is wrongly assumed that people with disabilities are an exception. Family members, communities and even people with disabilities themselves are often unaware that they have an equal right to education. CBR programmes, working with disabled people’s organizations, can support the empowerment of people with disabilities by ensuring access to information on the different rights that relate to education. This can help in lobbying authorities who have a legal obligation to provide education for all. The right to education needs to be understood in the context of a rights-based approach to development. Rights are also meant to be addressed as a whole, not in isolation (see Introduction: Human rights).

### Poverty and education

The links between poverty, disability and education mean that a community development approach is essential. “Lack of adequate education remains the key risk factor for poverty and exclusion for all children, both with and without disabilities. For children with disabilities, however, the risk of poverty due to lack of education may be even higher than for children without disabilities. Children with disabilities who are excluded from education are virtually certain to be long-term, lifelong poor” (8). Poor people may also face difficulties in educating their children with disabilities when fees are required to access education. Even where education is promoted as free, additional payments may be needed for school books, uniforms, transport and assistive devices. So children with disabilities from poor families continue not to be educated, and the cycle of poverty goes on.

## Inclusive education

The social model of disability moves away from an individual-impairment-based view of disability and focuses on removing barriers in society to ensure people with disabilities are given the same opportunity to exercise their rights on an equal basis with all others. Similarly, inclusive education focuses on changing the system to fit the student rather than changing the student to fit the system. This shift in understanding towards inclusive education is required of CBR programmes, which in the past have tended to work at a more individual level (see Introduction: Evolution of the concept).

### BOX 3

#### Removing barriers to a young girl's participation

A CBR programme has worked hard to make a young girl ready for the local school. Once at school, she struggles to move around an inaccessible school building and is constantly teased by other children. Eventually her teachers encourage her family to stop sending her to school because she is not coping. An inclusive approach would focus on the school and on removing barriers to this young girl's participation, e.g. helping it to become more accessible, preparing teachers, creating a welcoming environment and educating all children to be inclusive and supportive. If children with disabilities experience problems at school, then schools, families and CBR programmes need to start by discovering the obstacles to participation.

Inclusive education is "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" (9). Inclusive education:

- is broader than formal schooling – it includes the home, the community, non-formal and informal systems;
- is based on the acknowledgement that all children can learn;
- enables education structures, systems and methodologies to meet the needs of all children;
- is based on acknowledgment of and respect for the differences between children, e.g. in age, gender, ethnicity, faith/religion, language, disability, health status;
- promotes participatory, accessible and inclusive monitoring and assessment procedures;
- is a dynamic process which is constantly evolving according to culture and context;
- is part of a wider strategy to promote an inclusive society.

CBR programmes should consider:

- including home-based education and sign language groups for deaf children and/or adults, as inclusive education is broader than schooling;

- that inclusive education is about including everyone, not just including people with disabilities. It is about making particular efforts to identify anyone who is excluded or marginalized.

## **Integrated education**

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Although the term “integrated education” is sometimes used in the same way as “inclusive education”, the two terms have different meanings. Integrated education refers to the process of bringing children with disabilities into the mainstream school, and placing most of the focus on the individual rather than on the school system. The disadvantage of this approach is that, if there is a problem, it is seen as the fault of the child. The impact and sustainability of the approach are also limited, with success dependent on the goodwill of one teacher or the efforts of CBR personnel, rather than on school policy or community support.

## **Special education**

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“Special education” is a broad term which can refer to the provision of extra assistance, adapted programmes, learning environments or specialized equipment, materials or methods (e.g. Braille, audio devices, assistive devices, sign language) to support children in accessing education. The term “special educational needs” is used to refer to the learning needs of any child who might have difficulties with learning – therefore special education is not only for a person with a disability.

There are a variety of ways in which special education can be delivered to children with special educational needs. Very often, children with a lot of support needs attend special schools that are segregated from mainstream schools. Although the CBR guidelines emphasize inclusive education, “special schools” are a reality for many children and families – in certain situations, they may be the only education option available for children who are deaf, blind, or deafblind, or who have an intellectual impairment. In low-income countries, these special schools are often residential, and children usually live away from their families and communities.

Unfortunately, over time, the term “special” has been used in ways that are not helpful for the promotion of inclusive education. For example, the term “special-needs child” is vague and is often used to refer to any child with a disability, regardless of whether they have learning difficulties. Care must be taken when using the term “special”, as it separates children with disabilities from others. It is important to remember that all children learn in different ways, and may find learning easy or difficult at different times in their lives. To say that children with disabilities have “special” learning needs is not helpful, because it is not specific, and labels them. Children without a disability can also experience difficulties in learning, and can be excluded and marginalized within educational settings. With good teaching techniques, essential resources and an inclusive environment, all children can learn.

## Gender and education

CBR personnel need to be aware of gender issues in relation to education. Some examples are given below.

- Girls may miss out on educational opportunities in situations where they are required to care for a family member with a disability.
- In some situations, boys may miss out on schooling because of the pressure to earn money to support their family.

### BOX 4

## India

### Rupa's determination to have an education

In Hazaribagh, northern India, Rupa Kumari cares for a whole family because her mother has mental illness, her father is dead, and she has a younger brother and sister. To avoid missing out on her education, Rupa takes her very young sister to school with her, and even though class sizes are very big and the teachers complained, Rupa managed to convince them that, for her to continue to study, she must bring her younger sibling with her.

- In conflict situations, boys may be recruited as child soldiers and therefore miss out on schooling opportunities. At least 5% of these boys become disabled (10), and on return from conflict are often too old to attend primary school.
- CBR personnel may expect the mother and/or other female relatives of a person with disability to take on a teaching role, often increasing an already heavy workload.
- Families and communities often do not prioritize education for girls and women with disabilities, who therefore experience double discrimination.
- Girls, particularly girls with disabilities, are more likely to drop out of school owing to a lack of suitable toilet facilities and a safe environment.
- The role of fathers is important and often ignored; a father can be a good role-model and support education if encouraged by the CBR programme.

### BOX 5

## Lesotho

### Gender gap

In Lesotho, fewer boys are enrolled in primary schools, and boys drop out sooner than girls, because boys are required for herding and traditional initiation rites.

## Elements in this component

In each element considered below, there are concepts and areas of suggested activities that are common to all aspects of education. Different aspects are emphasized and different examples given in each element, so it may be useful for you to read the whole component, even if you are focusing on one particular element.

### Early childhood care and education

This term refers to education from birth until the start of formal primary education. It takes place in formal, non-formal and informal settings, and focuses on child survival, development and learning – including health, nutrition and hygiene. This period is often further divided into the following age ranges: birth to three years, and three years to six, seven or eight years, when formal schooling starts. In this element, the focus is mainly on children aged three years and older.

### Primary education

This is the first stage of schooling, intended to be free and compulsory for all children. It is the focus of the Education for All initiative proposed by UNESCO (11), and the target of most educational funding. Children with disabilities, like other children, need to be included in local primary schools so that they learn and play alongside their peers.



## Secondary and higher education

This is formal education beyond the “compulsory” level. For young people with disabilities, further education can be a gateway to a productive and fulfilled life, yet they are often excluded.

## Non-formal education

This includes a wide range of educational initiatives in the community: home-based learning, government schemes and community initiatives. It tends to be targeted at specific disadvantaged groups and has specific objectives. For some learners, non-formal education can be more flexible and effective than the formal education system, which may be too rigid and seen as failing to provide quality education for all. But non-formal education should be complementary, not seen as a substitute for an inclusive formal system. Sometimes non-formal education is inappropriately offered as a “second best” option for children with disabilities, denying them their legal right to formal education. In this element, the focus is on non-formal education for children rather than adults.

## Lifelong learning

This includes all the learning that takes place throughout life, in particular those learning opportunities for adults not covered in the other elements. It refers to the knowledge and skills needed for employment, adult literacy, and all types of learning that promotes personal development and participation in society. In this element, the focus is on adults, rather than children.

### BOX 6

#### Right to education for persons with disabilities

“States are to ensure equal access to primary and secondary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning. Education is to employ the appropriate materials, techniques and forms of communication. Pupils with support needs are to receive support measures, and pupils who are blind, deaf and deafblind are to receive their education in the most appropriate modes of communication from teachers who are fluent in sign language and Braille. Education of persons with disabilities must foster their participation in society, their sense of dignity and self worth and the development of their personality, abilities and creativity.” (12)



# Early childhood care and education

## Introduction

Early childhood covers the period from birth to the age of eight years (13). Expanding early childhood care and education is one of the six Education for All goals (11). Early childhood care and education includes a broad range of activities and provisions. Because many aspects of childhood care are covered in the Health component, this element mainly focuses on early childhood education, and incorporates early intervention and preschool/kindergarten provision.

Education in early childhood is important because of its influence on development. The human brain grows particularly rapidly during the first three years of life (13), and if adequate stimulation is not received during this period, development will be delayed, sometimes permanently. The early years provide a “window of opportunity” to lay the foundations for the healthy development of language, social ability, thinking and physical skills.

Early childhood education sows the seeds for an inclusive society, because it is where children with and without disabilities can learn, play and grow together. Early childhood education also increases a child’s chances of completing basic education and finding a way out of poverty and disadvantage (13).

As early childhood education is generally non-compulsory, it is more flexible than primary education and offers an excellent chance for working with a variety of stakeholders: government, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector and faith-based organizations.

### BOX 7

## Nepal

### Doing well with early education

In a disadvantaged district of Nepal, more than 95% of children attending an Early Childhood Care and Education programme went on to primary school, compared with 75% of nonparticipants; the Grade 1 repetition rate of participants was one-seventh that of nonparticipants, and they had significantly higher marks on Grade 1 examinations (14).



## Chetna's new life

In Gujarat, India, CBR programmes focused on primary school-age children were first initiated on a small scale in the 1980s. Children with disabilities often have less access to learning and life experience in their early years, but it was realized these years are crucial in helping a child acquire an understanding of the world, form social relationships, develop concepts and get the necessary foundation training for the whole of his/her life. Today early childhood care and education are integral to many CBR programmes in Gujarat.

Chetna is a girl from a rural area of Gujarat who was identified by CBR personnel when she was three years old because her development was delayed; for example, she lacked head control. The CBR programme arranged for Chetna to visit a screening and assessment centre away from her village. She was found to have a profound hearing loss, visual impairment and, linked to these, difficulties in understanding, so was issued with a disability certificate. Chetna was always within the four walls of her house or on her mother's lap, so the CBR programme and family faced the following challenges. What are Chetna's needs? Where can these needs best be met? Who will work with her? How will they work with her?

The CBR programme arranged for a special chair to be made by the local carpenter, and Chetna started sitting on this chair on the verandah of her house, so she became visible in the community and her interaction with the family and neighbours improved. She was trained in daily living skills, and was given a hearing device, and special glasses to overcome her poor vision. She was also trained to communicate. Chetna now helps her mother at mealtimes, and with washing and cleaning vessels, and goes to the local shop. Her parents can communicate with her and they have a positive and loving relationship. Chetna now attends the local *anganwadi* (kindergarten) and has become part of a larger group. The children accept her like any other child and communicate with her in their own way. She uses the same facilities the other children use and also gets some support services from the CBR programme, which assisted the family to obtain social security benefits and enrol Chetna in the State education system like any other child.



## Goal

All children with disabilities have the best possible start in life and are supported throughout their development in inclusive learning environments.

## The role of CBR

The role of CBR is to identify families with disabled children, interact and work closely with them, and assist in laying the foundations for all activities in the child's life.

## Desirable outcomes

- All children have an increased chance of survival and good health.
- The physical, social, language and cognitive skills of all children are developed to their maximum potential.
- Formal and non-formal early childhood education is welcoming and inclusive of all children.
- Children with disabilities and the people who assist them are part of the family and community and have appropriate support.
- Children learn to play together, accept the differences between them and help each other.
- The impact of impairments is reduced and compensated for.
- Children with disabilities make a smooth transition to primary schooling together with their peers.

### BOX 9

## El Salvador

### Making an early start

In Santo Tomas, El Salvador, the director of an inclusive primary school that participated in the local CBR programme had a baby who was born three months prematurely and who suffered a lack of oxygen. The doctor told the mother that the child might develop an intellectual impairment or other disability. Through her experience with the CBR programme in her community, the mother knew about the importance of early education, so she took her baby to the governmental rehabilitation institution for initial assessment and early intervention for two years. Both the mother and her baby learned a lot, and the child entered the local preschool when she was four years old, along with the other children of her neighbourhood.

## Key concepts

### Early childhood

Early childhood sets the foundations for life (5). CBR personnel need to be aware that there are different understandings about a child's early years, depending on local traditions, faith/religion, cultures, family structures and the way primary schooling is organized. It is important to acknowledge and value this diversity.

### Child development

Child development is a learning process that every child goes through to enable him/her to master important skills (developmental milestones) for life. Major areas of child development include:

- social and emotional development, e.g. smiling or making eye contact;
- cognitive (learning) development, e.g. using hands and eyes to explore the environment and do simple tasks;
- speech and language development, e.g. communicating with words or signs;
- physical development, e.g. sitting, standing, walking, running and being able to use hands and fingers to pick things up or to draw.

Developmental milestones are skills that a child will acquire within a specific order and time frame, e.g. learning to walk is a milestone that most children learn between nine and 15 months. Developmental delay is a term used when a child does not reach milestones appropriate for his/her age. It can occur in one or more of the development areas listed above. If developmental delay is identified early in a child's life, measures can be taken to provide learning opportunities and an environment which will help overcome the delay.

CBR personnel need to make sure they focus on the strengths of the child with a disability. It is important that they do not place too much emphasis on developmental milestones for children with disabilities, as problems may arise if these concepts are used too rigidly.

- The concept of developmental delay is based on what is normal. Therefore this label can lead to labelling and stigmatization.
- Children with disabilities do not necessarily follow a "normal" pattern of development. However, this will not stop them from leading full and happy lives, as long as they are included and supported.
- The milestones are general principles and, in reality, there is a lot of variation depending on culture, gender, ethnicity and social and economic circumstances.

A child's development is influenced by many factors including health, nutrition, care and education. Therefore, approaches to child development need to be multisectoral.

For example, programmes that combine nutrition and education have been shown to be more effective than programmes focusing on one or the other (15).

## **Play, activity-based learning and stimulation**

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Young children learn naturally and effectively through play and by taking part in everyday activities. Play is not understood in all cultures and contexts, particularly where there is extreme poverty and where communities are focused on survival activities. In these situations, play may be seen as a pointless or useless activity. Activity-based learning can be an effective alternative approach in situations where resources and time are limited. It refers to how children learn when they are physically involved in activities that are useful or productive. These include self-care activities, such as washing, dressing, eating and helping with domestic or other work. Stimulation is about providing an environment and activities that stimulate the child's development.

It is important that CBR personnel understand the following points.

- Play and/or activity-based learning are important for young children, and particularly children with disabilities. It helps them to develop daily living skills and can reduce the impact of their impairment.
- Many people believe that children with disabilities cannot play, particularly if they are unable to initiate play for themselves. Parents in particular may not understand the benefits of play, or may feel overprotective, or ashamed of exposing their child.
- Play can be structured or unstructured (free play), and can be initiated by the child or with adult support.
- For children with severe or multiple impairments, play and stimulation activities are particularly important. While signs of learning may be difficult to see, it does not mean that the children are not receiving any benefit.
- Parents may carry out too many stimulation activities with their children, particularly when there are excessive social pressures to achieve "normal development" and academic success. This restricts children's opportunities for play and can be harmful to their social and emotional development.

## **Age-appropriate activities**

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It is not uncommon to find older children with disabilities participating in early childhood education. This may be due to a variety of reasons: they may have an intellectual impairment or developmental delay which means that they develop skills at slower rates; they may have been hidden away and/or overprotected by their families and may therefore have missed out on early learning opportunities; and/or primary schools may be inaccessible or unwelcoming.

In general, it is advisable to respect the actual age of the child and to find ways to provide age-appropriate learning within peer group environments. However, sometimes a

compromise has to be made. The guiding principle should be whether the best interests of the child are being met.

## **Choice and flexibility**

Each child, family, community and culture is different. Formal settings such as preschools will suit some children and not others. CBR programmes can help families to make informed choices about support and environments, and to respond flexibly. Working towards making existing early childhood education provisions inclusive and accessible should be a priority.

CBR programmes can also work with families to ensure that their choices are not based on shame or overprotection, but reflect the best interests of the child. These choices also need to respect the various rights of the child, such as the right to stay within their own family and community.

### **BOX 10**

## Mexico

### **Early education centres**

In a region of Mexico near Culiacan, indigenous families move down from their mountain villages for four months of the year and stay in barracks provided by the agricultural factories. The CBR programme negotiated with the factory owners to set up Early Education Centres in each building, and obtained permission for mothers to take part along with their disabled children in early intervention sessions twice a month. Older children (four years and older) were included in the day care centres in the factories, with support from CBR personnel. Families of children with disabilities are now returning every year to the same area, in order to get good care for their children and learn how to help them to develop in their early years. They take the knowledge back to their villages, where they can teach other families.

## **Suggested activities**

### **Identify early childhood needs**

A twin-track approach is generally the best way to promote inclusion, and this can be applied to early childhood care and education. The “two tracks” are as follows.

1. Focus on the system: determine the existing situation regarding early childhood care and education in the community, and find out who is included or excluded, and what the strengths and weaknesses are. This needs to be done in collaboration

with families, community leaders, health workers and teachers, plus anyone else who is involved.

2. Focus on the child: develop a system to identify and support children who are at risk of being marginalized or excluded, or who might need additional support. This is usually referred to as early identification.

Too often, the focus has been “single track”, whereby only individuals are targeted. This results in only a few children getting the benefit, and the system remaining exclusive. CBR programmes can focus on both the system and the child by:

- liaising and working with health workers to ensure that children with disabilities receive proper health care (see Health component);
- ensuring that early identification programmes support children with disabilities and their families;
- working closely with families to ensure that children who are born with impairments, or who develop them in early childhood, are identified as early as possible;
- supporting parents to respond quickly when impairments have been identified, referring children to health-care facilities and accompanying the parents to appointments;
- helping to create a positive approach towards children with disabilities, focusing on their abilities and capacity to learn – in this approach, early intervention consists of identifying barriers to children’s learning and development, and working with families, different sectors and the community to overcome them;
- influencing local government policies to make existing educational facilities accessible and inclusive for children with disabilities.

Care must be taken not to impose rigid standards of what is “normal” on a young child who is developing differently. CBR personnel should avoid creating anxiety in parents and children when developmental milestones are not reached on time. Sometimes, health checks can increase exclusion rather than provide a means of finding out how children can be supported. Including health workers in CBR training will help raise awareness, improve knowledge of disability and avoid potential exclusion.

#### BOX 11

### South-East Asia

#### Barriers to preschool education

In one south-east Asian country, there were regular health checks for children under five years old, yet children identified as disabled received no additional support. Preschool teachers were reluctant to accept them in their classes for three reasons: they had a strict curriculum and the child would require extra time; they could lose a salary bonus point if the child did not progress or gain weight; and finally, only “healthy” children were meant to be enrolled, and children with disabilities were seen as being sick.

## Support early learning in the home

### *Involve families*

Early childhood care and learning begins in the home, therefore family involvement is essential. Parents play a crucial role in the early years, particularly mothers, who can influence their child's development through their attitudes and behaviour, e.g. breastfeeding and spending time stimulating and playing with their child. Fathers should not be ignored – their involvement is important and should also be encouraged. Suggested activities include the following.

- Support families in communicating knowledge about their children, gained from their roles as parents/siblings/grandparents, to teachers and health workers. Families can provide a great resource from which CBR personnel can learn.
- Provide support, education and training for families to enable them to care for and provide positive learning opportunities for their disabled children.
- Assist families to access specialized training if needed (e.g. sign language training to facilitate communication with deaf children), or specialized services (e.g. occupational therapy, physiotherapy or speech therapy) to assist with skill development.
- Develop individual learning plans for children with disabilities in cooperation with families, utilizing their personal and detailed knowledge as well as the CBR personnel's knowledge of child development and assessment. These plans can be shared with teachers where appropriate.
- Form self-help groups for parents of children with disabilities, or encourage parents to join existing groups or associations. Sometimes parents are members of disabled people's organizations.
- Create support networks and linkages between family members, the community and local resource people.
- Respond to gender issues that may be present in families, e.g. encourage families to allow girls with disabilities to access learning opportunities.



## A father's involvement with his son's learning

In El Alto, Bolivia, the CBR programme facilitated the inclusion of children with disabilities in local schools. One boy of six with Down's syndrome recently began to attend kindergarten at a local school. The boy's father was, from the start, anxious to have his son in school. He drops his son off and picks him up at school daily, and visits the classroom teacher and the school principal. The school principal was so impressed with the father's involvement in his son's learning that he invited the father to speak to the parents' association to motivate other parents to involve themselves in their children's education and to raise awareness among them about inclusion.

### *Promote home-based activities*

Creating a supportive learning environment for children in the home is a key activity for CBR programmes. Inclusion in the family is promoted through building confidence and skills, and facilitating early stimulation for the child. Suggested activities for CBR personnel include the following:

- encourage parents to involve their children in activity-based learning in creative and lively ways;
- show how everyday objects found in the home and local environment can be used for play, and how play equipment can be made at home; even children with severe impairments do not always require "specialist-made" equipment;
- show how assistive devices, such as seating and mobility aids, can be made by family members using local materials;
- take care not to focus exclusively on the child's impairment and physical needs; for example, a child with physical impairment may be given a lot of input, training and education related to mobility, but social skills (e.g. potential to play and learn alongside his/her nondisabled peers), also need to be developed.

Many practical resources are available that can be used with family members to assist them in creating a supportive learning environment. Some examples include the following.

- *Disabled village children* (16);
- WHO manual: *Training in the community for people with disabilities* (17);
- *Let's communicate: a handbook for people working with children with communication difficulties* (18);
- the Portage system, which involves training the family to break down simple tasks such as dressing, eating, toileting and washing, into small steps. This helps children, even with the most complex impairments, to experience progress and success (19).

## Providing education at home

At a preschool, a teacher who had been trained to include children with disabilities found that three children with multiple impairments were not attending. The teacher went to their homes to work with the families. She developed a distance-learning package for home education, and now the parents come for training and support so they can teach their children at home. The children come to the centre occasionally.

## Support learning in the community

Different types of early childhood education opportunities are available in the community, e.g. playgroups, daycentres, mother and child groups and women's self-help groups with crèches (childcare). The inclusion of children with disabilities in their communities can be promoted through simple activities, such as:

- encouraging families to take their children on outings into the community, e.g. religious/faith-based and social activities, shopping;
- encouraging families to allow children to play outside the house, with support from special seating or assistive devices if needed, which the community can help to develop;
- encouraging children with and without disabilities to play together – mutual learning between siblings and between neighbourhood children is important and helpful;
- involving the local community in making the environment more accessible and welcoming, including the preschool and local playground (through providing ramps, toilets, increased lighting, improved safety, cleanliness).

## Help develop inclusive preschools

CBR programmes need to create partnerships within the education sector to support a move towards child-centred, flexible learning. The focus should be on enabling all children to learn effectively. CBR programmes can help train preschool/kindergarten staff to create learning environments which respond to the diversity of ways and speeds with which children learn. Activities to encourage are:

- learning through play, both structured and informal;
- small-group work;
- creation of play and learning equipment from local materials;
- making the environment accessible for all, e.g. providing ramps, and ensuring that toilets are accessible, that colours are used to highlight different areas for visually impaired children, and that government guidelines on accessibility are respected;

- utilizing assistance from family members and volunteers as support in the classroom, taking care to ensure that their support is for the whole class and not just for the child with a disability;
- observing children and seeing how they participate and learn, then discussing together how to build on the children's strengths and set learning targets that can be achieved and are relevant to their lives.

## BOX 14

# Zanzibar

## A boy's song of hope

In a Zanzibar preschool, the teachers use basic sign language with a boy who is deaf. He uses his fingers for counting Arabic numbers, and communicates by pointing to pictures. The teachers devised a song with actions that enabled him to sing along with the class using sign language. He currently has no contact with deaf adults and sign language in Zanzibar is not well developed, but this is a start. The headteacher believes the boy's sign language is improving and that he has learnt many social skills.

In some cultures and contexts, existing preschool facilities are formal and modelled on primary education rather than on the real needs of young children. They are characterized by teacher-centred methodology, lack of play opportunities, formal classroom layout, rote learning (memorizing by repetition but not really understanding the subject), academic skills, and lengthy sessions. This is inappropriate for the majority of children, not just for children with disabilities.

Lasting change in the education system is obviously the responsibility of government education departments. However, CBR personnel can work towards transforming the preschool environment, teaching methods and curriculum such that all children can learn more effectively. To ensure inclusion of children with disabilities in preschools, CBR is essential – it helps to ensure that the child has access to essential assistive devices and appropriate rehabilitation services. CBR can also provide specialist input to preschools to address any particular concerns, and can demonstrate that simple strategies, using local resources and local people, will be of benefit to all. Preschool teachers themselves are then empowered to become advocates for a child-centred and inclusive approach.



## Exploring different options for success

Anhui is a poor province in China with a population of 56 million people. Not long ago, learning at preschool involved children sitting in rows, with teachers directing lengthy lessons that required children to sit still. Success or failure was perceived as the child's responsibility. The system was impressive in that it enabled large numbers of young children to access education – many kindergartens had over 1000 children and teachers were extremely committed and hard-working.

A pilot programme encouraged the following changes to ensure that children were able to learn actively: regular small-group work; learning-through-play activities; the use of teaching aids made from local materials; regular teacher training; a whole-school approach that required closer cooperation between families, teachers, administrators and the community through the establishment of local committees; and the inclusion of two children with learning disabilities in each class.

The results were impressive: the education authority acknowledged that this improved education for all children; there was a change of attitude by the educational authorities – seeing it not as a “cheap option” but as a “better option” than segregation; the children with disabilities moved to primary schools and continued to succeed.

## Ensure specialist services are available and accessible

Many children with disabilities can be included immediately in flexible, child-centred early childhood education settings. Sometimes, specialist provision is required to prepare children with disabilities for inclusion in these mainstream settings. For example, deaf children will need to learn sign language, blind children will need to learn mobility skills and Braille, and deafblind children will need to learn touch, mobility skills and Braille. CBR personnel can ensure that children with disabilities have access to specialist resources and ensure close linkages are maintained between specialist providers and mainstream education settings.

## Involve adults and children with disabilities

It is important to encourage the direct involvement of people with disabilities in early childhood care and education activities as role-models, advisors, trainers, managers and decision-makers. Remember the principle of “nothing about us without us” applies equally to working with children in the early years. All suggested activities will be more relevant and effective if people with disabilities are involved. Older children with disabilities can offer support, encouragement and creative ideas to respond to the needs of younger children with disabilities.

## Bringing together the deaf community

In Coimbatore, India, an early intervention centre and preschool was opened for the deaf. A specialist working for the centre carried out a survey but found very few deaf children in the local area. However, two months after opening, two deaf CBR staff members attached to the project had used their own networks and circles of friends and found six severely or profoundly deaf students, all under five years of age. People who are deaf know the location of even the newest members of their deaf community: in the next six months, the programme grew to 13 students, and the following year even more deaf children enrolled. Most of these children were referred by deaf adults, who now enjoy stopping by the preschool school and volunteering.



## Carry out training and awareness-raising

Training and awareness-raising is needed for many different groups; it needs to be flexible in form and content, and should involve people with disabilities and disabled people's organizations in its development and implementation. Awareness-raising in the community, focusing on disability from a social-model perspective and in early childhood initiatives, is essential. CBR personnel also need training on early childhood intervention approaches and activities. Early childhood personnel (teachers, support staff and administrators in daycentres, preschools, play groups, etc.) need to learn about disability and inclusion. Linkages should be made with those who can offer support, be it financial or technical. Local and international nongovernmental organizations are often a good source of support.

## Sponsoring teachers to train in inclusive education

In Hambantota province in Sri Lanka, a number of preschool children with learning disabilities were identified. During the process of mapping the available services within the district, an international nongovernmental organization implementing preschool programmes was identified. The nongovernmental organization showed interest in including children with disabilities in its preschools, but said its teachers were not skilled to do this. The CBR programme identified resources within Sri Lanka for providing training on inclusive education and sponsored preschool teachers from the nongovernmental organization to attend. After the training, the teachers and CBR staff met with the parents and children, and together they developed a plan for inclusion. Much effort was made to ensure parents were part of the inclusion process, giving them responsibilities to make it a success. Children already attending the preschools and their parents were also made aware of disability issues and were involved in the inclusion process.

## Address poverty

In poverty situations, when families and communities are struggling to meet their basic needs, children are perceived either as a help towards survival or as a burden because of scarce resources. Children who are hungry and sick due to poverty find it difficult to learn and play. CBR personnel therefore need to address poverty alongside promoting early childhood education (see Livelihood component). Some suggested activities follow.

- Help families to understand that the earlier children with disabilities are supported in learning self-care and basic skills, the more independent they will become and the less they will be perceived as a burden.
- Focus on activities that fit into the daily family routine, and demonstrate how children learn through these activities, so they become an integral part of family life. In situations of extreme poverty, families and particularly mothers need additional support, not additional responsibility, so the attitude of CBR personnel is very important.
- Facilitate the development of self-help groups for women and parents of children with disabilities, and disabled people's organizations (see Empowerment component).
- Help families to access government grants, support from nongovernmental organizations, donors and local businesses, and any other sources of support and funding.
- Help ensure that early childhood programmes are flexible and respond to the different situations of poor families, including families who have children with severe or multiple impairments.



## Mobile schools providing education

In Mongolia, “Ger” kindergartens provide early childhood education for migrant or herder’s children. They are mobile and operate all year round according to the demands of these remote communities. The kindergartens reach families who cannot afford clothing, meals or full-time participation for their children. The curriculum and approach is flexible and responsive to part-time attendance. Parents and the community help with repairs and transportation of these mobile preschools because they value them. There has been an increase in preschool attendance and better attendance by marginalized children at local primary schools.

## Lobby and advocate for inclusion

For inclusion to take place, the system needs to change, yet CBR programmes cannot transform the education system by themselves. CBR personnel need to identify partners and allies. In partnership with other stakeholders (national and local), CBR programmes can advocate for the provision of preschool facilities. Often service providers are aware that inclusive policies or even laws exist, but are not given the help and budgetary support to implement these. CBR programmes should, wherever possible, lobby for existing facilities to become inclusive rather than for the creation of separate facilities.

## Prepare for emergency, conflict and refugee situations

The well-being of the young child is crucial in any emergency, conflict or natural disaster. Because it is so flexible, early childhood education is one of the few types of education that can survive in these situations. Play can help sustain and promote well-being. CBR programmes can help to ensure that there are inclusive child-friendly spaces and opportunities for play activities; this often means interacting with United Nations organizations as well as nongovernmental organizations and government services (see Supplementary booklet: CBR and humanitarian crises).



# Primary education

## Introduction

Primary education usually begins around the age of six or seven years and continues into the early teens. Primary education is the gateway to higher levels of education and is a high priority in the context of development.

Achieving universal primary education is the second of the Millennium Development Goals. The target is that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, are able to complete a full course of primary schooling (7). To achieve this goal, it is necessary for school systems to train teachers, build classrooms, improve the quality of education, remove barriers to attendance, e.g. fees and lack of transportation, and address parents' concern for the safety of their children (20).

It is often overlooked that this goal will be impossible to achieve without the inclusion of children with disabilities. UNESCO currently estimates that over 90% of children with disabilities in low-income countries are not attending school (6). Of those who are, many drop out before completing their primary education and others often do not really learn or participate.

Primary education must be inclusive and accessible to all. No provider of public education can discriminate on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, language, religion, opinion, disability, or social and economic status (5). Primary education is a fundamental right, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 24, states that "... children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory education..." (4). Primary education should be inclusive, provide quality education and equal access, and be available in the local community for children with disabilities.



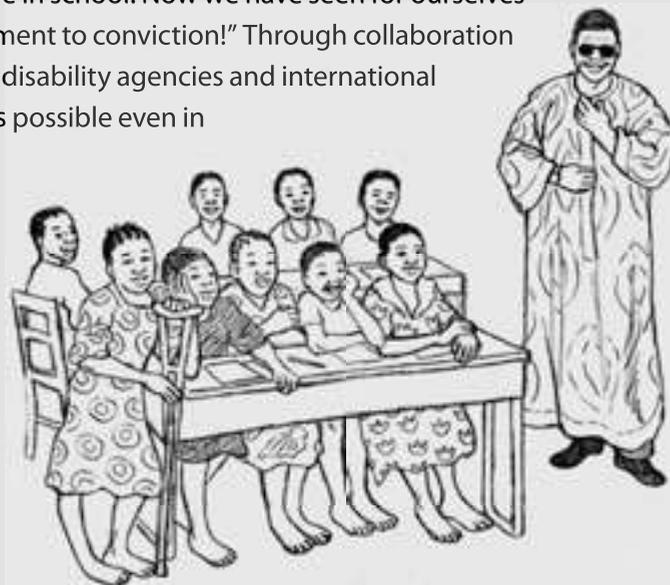
## Primary education for all children

In the Douentza district of Mali, one of the poorest areas in the world, a local community prioritized education for their children. They wanted a school for their village with a curriculum relevant to local village life, which would prepare children for work and life in the community.

The donor agencies involved offered training and support and stipulated that the School Committee should include a woman who would be responsible for the enrolment of children with disabilities and girls. The community itself built the school with financial contributions from parents, promoting ownership and responsibility. The specialist disability nongovernmental organization carried out awareness-raising on disability issues and helped the school committee identify children who could be enrolled. Some children needed tricycles, which were provided by the nongovernmental organization. Local theatre and musicians' groups also helped to raise awareness about girls' and disabled children's right to education.

The community leaders were surprised to find that there were quite a number of children with disabilities in their village and that the community itself could work with family members to help these children develop and be included. Previously disability was not considered a problem because the community did not know there could be solutions.

Initially the community members and teachers were sceptical about including children with disabilities. "To begin with we had the commitment to include disabled children, but we did not really believe that they could be in school. Now we have seen for ourselves and we have moved from commitment to conviction!" Through collaboration between families, the community, disability agencies and international development agencies, inclusion is possible even in situations of extreme poverty. The local programme manager said that a strong commitment has to be maintained over time to promote inclusion.



## Goal

A welcoming, inclusive primary education system, with local schools at the heart of educational activities, exists within the community.

## The role of CBR

The role of CBR is to collaborate with primary education systems to create inclusive local schools, to support families and children with disabilities to access primary education in their local community, and to develop and maintain links between the home, community and schools.

## Desirable outcomes

- The whole community is mobilized to develop inclusive primary education.
- Families are positive, supportive and involved in inclusive primary education.
- All children with disabilities complete quality primary education.
- Appropriate assistive devices, therapies and other necessary assistance are accessible and available to support inclusion.
- Access issues within school environments are identified and addressed.
- Teachers feel supported and are confident in their abilities to educate children with disabilities.
- Curricula, examination and assessment systems, teaching approaches and extracurricular activities (e.g. sports, music, clubs) are child-focused and inclusive.
- Local and specialist resources for education are fully and appropriately utilized.
- Disabled children from poor families attend primary school.
- Partnerships are created with relevant stakeholders, with advocacy at all levels, to ensure national policies promote inclusive primary education.

## Key concepts

### Whole community approach

It is the responsibility of the whole community to promote and support inclusion, and local primary schools provide a key opportunity and environment in which to demonstrate this. CBR personnel have many responsibilities and are not specialists in education, therefore they need to work in collaboration with the community (schools, families, people with disabilities, community leaders), focusing on raising awareness about rights, inclusion and the social model, and mobilizing and supporting all those involved. Parents know their own child and can provide very helpful information to teachers. Teachers can help parents support learning at home. The district education office needs to be supportive of inclusion if it is to be sustainable. The health and social sectors need to be involved

and communicate with each other. Itinerant (travelling) teachers can fill many different roles, create linkages and offer different types of support. These teachers have specific skills, e.g. teaching Braille or sign language, and travel to schools to provide advice, resources and support to students with disabilities, their teachers, and their parents.

## BOX 20

## Peru

### Yuri's new path to education

Yuri lives with his mother and sisters in the Andes Mountains, Peru. Yuri has cerebral palsy and is unable to walk. He wanted to go to primary school like his sisters, but he faced a number of barriers. There was no accessible path from his house to the main road, there was no accessible transport, and the teachers at the local primary school did not have any disability awareness or training. CBR personnel focused on empowering Yuri's mother, who then mobilized the community to build a path from her house to the road. The CBR programme provided a hand tricycle and prepared the teachers. Yuri began attending the primary school, beginning with a welcome party from the other students.

### Whole-school approach

A whole-school approach ensures that managers, headteachers, class teachers, administrators, caretakers, parents, children with and without disabilities, and any others who have a connection with the school will work together to raise awareness about disability and identify and remove barriers to facilitate the inclusion of disabled children in the local school.

## BOX 21

## Syria

### Making changes to promote inclusive education

CBR personnel from the *Japan International Cooperation Agency* on the outskirts of Damascus, Syria, worked together with school authorities, local leaders and administrative authorities, teachers and schoolchildren to make local primary schools inclusive and accessible, ensuring that children with disabilities could attend. They have altered the blackboards, seating arrangements, entrances to classrooms, toilet and playground facilities. Local volunteers and teachers have been trained in Damascus to teach sign language. Children, their parents and teachers, and local authorities all understand the need for and benefit of educating children with disabilities in the local schools.

## **Social inclusion**

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Learning to live together with others, to relate to those people who are different, and to be open, helpful and respectful of others is just as important as learning academic skills. Children who experience difficulty in learning academic skills may still benefit from being included socially in the local school environment. This also prepares *all* children to become members of an inclusive society.

## **Responding to diversity**

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Children are all different and learn in different ways. Schools need to respond to this diversity by ensuring that curricula, teaching methods and environments are flexible and accommodating to all. A flexible system requires adjustments to be made for everyone, not just one particular group. Advocacy for inclusion can become stronger if alliances are built with other marginalized groups. A school that is good for children with disabilities will be one that is good for all children, and will include children from other marginalized and excluded groups.

Responding to diversity also means recognizing that children with disabilities are very different from each other, even if they have similar impairments. For example, people with visual impairment may access the curriculum in different ways: one person may find tape recordings useful, another may find Braille more helpful. Some children with a hearing impairment may learn well through lip-reading, whilst others may need sign language support.

## **Welcoming and accessible environment**

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Research suggests that accessibility reduces the cost of inclusion overall (21). The school environment needs to be physically accessible for all children, with specific attention given to ensuring toilets are accessible for children with disabilities. Attention to the appearance and atmosphere of the school ensures that the environment is welcoming for all. A clean school (e.g. appropriate sanitation and clean water facilities), colourful displays on walls, and positive attitudes and behaviour of children, teachers and other staff contribute to a welcoming environment.

## **Learner-centred approach**

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The quality of what happens in schools is as important as access. A learner-centred or child-centred approach means that all processes and structures in a school are centred on supporting each child to learn and participate. Too often, the teacher, rigid curriculum or fixed timetable becomes the centre of attention, regardless of whether the child is actually learning. Learner-centred also means “age-appropriate”. Sometimes a child with a disability may not be identified early enough to begin basic education at the same time

as his/her peers. A child with intellectual impairment may be older but have a relatively young mental age. It is important to respect the child's actual age.

## **Flexible primary education**

Primary education usually takes place within a designated building, but this is not essential. It is important not to have a fixed idea about the role of schools. Some children, e.g. those with severe or multiple impairments, can still be included in primary education, even when they are receiving their education at home (see Non-formal education). Inclusive education does not literally mean putting every single child with a disability into a school building. But this should not be used as a reason for schools to not change, and it is important that schools work towards becoming inclusive. A school does not have the right to exclude any child on the basis of disability (4).

### **BOX 22**

## **India**

### **Sensitizing communities to promote inclusive education**

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is a comprehensive and integrated flagship programme of the Government of India, set up to attain universal elementary education (UEE) in the country. Several camps at the subdistrict level have been organized to sensitize parents, teachers and the community about inclusive education. Systematic efforts have been made to network with local nongovernmental organizations and hospitals for rehabilitation and assistive devices. Construction of ramps forms an integral feature of all school buildings under the programme. Other activities include the organization of workshops on classroom behaviour management, use of special teaching/learning materials and development of a handbook on inclusive education.

The authorities have made special provision under the programme to ensure education of children with complex or severe impairments in their own homes through home-based tutors. For every three to five children with severe disabilities who cannot usually come to school, there is one home-based tutor who, besides teaching, also trains the child and parents in basic therapy and daily living skills where needed.

## **Resources and specialist support**

Two false ideas that are frequently used to discredit inclusion are: 1) that it will only work if expensive specialist resources are available; and 2) that no additional resources are required. Both are untrue. Inclusive primary education can be cost-effective. However people with disabilities and their families are rightly concerned that governments will see inclusion as a cheap option to special schools, and will place children with disabilities in schools without any additional support or resources. The two important concepts in relation to resources and support are as follows.

- Use of local resources: most resources and support needed to help children learn are not “special”. Local resources (material, financial or personnel) need to be used.
- Provision of access to specialist support: for some children with disabilities, specialist input may be needed to facilitate their inclusion. Specialist skills, support and/or equipment may be needed for learning Braille, or for learning to use augmentative and alternative forms of communication to speech (AAC), e.g. signboards, charts, gestures, electronic devices, pictures (see Health component: Assistive devices).

### BOX 23

## Promoting flexible attitudes

“... you have a fixed idea about inclusion, which gives you a fixed idea about resources. If you have a flexible idea about inclusion, you can have a more flexible attitude to resources”.

Participant at: Overcoming Resources Barriers, Enabling Education Network (EENET) Symposium, 2000 (22).

## Suggested activities

### Mobilize the community

The situation regarding primary education is different in each community. Some local primary schools may be supportive of inclusive education, while others may not be. Sometimes there may be no primary school at all. Some communities may have a tradition of sending children with disabilities away to special schools or special units. Whatever the situation, an important starting point is to raise awareness about inclusive education in the communities and gain their support. Suggested activities include the following.

- Use radio, public meetings, posters, street theatre, TV, the Internet and special events, such as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities to raise awareness about the importance of inclusion and the right to education for all.
- Involve disabled people’s organizations and parents’ associations in leading discussions about the barriers preventing children with disabilities from attending school.
- Use child-to-child activities in schools to raise awareness among children.
- Find out about existing policies and resources that could support efforts towards inclusive primary education.



## Raising awareness by involving children

In Swaziland, child-to-child activities are encouraged within the Ministry of Health's CBR programme to empower and educate children about disability issues. Children compose songs and perform plays, raising awareness in the school and community. They cover issues such as road safety, HIV/AIDS and disability. They help to build ramps, make toilets accessible and design playground equipment.

## Support and involve families

CBR personnel can have a major role in supporting and involving families in the process of enabling the local school to be inclusive. Teachers often need to learn that parents are partners in education.

## Working together for the children

"Before this we thought parents were the enemy. Now we see that they are on the same side, we all want what's best for our children." Teacher, Morocco, inclusion project (23).

Examples of suggested activities are listed below.

- Listen and talk to family members. Find out what they know about their disabled child, e.g. what the child's strengths and challenges are, and the support the family needs.
- Liaise between home and school, helping teachers and family members to listen to one another.
- Observe the child with a disability in the home and explore ways in which learning in school can be continued and supported at home.
- Help ensure that all decisions are in the best interests of the child, and that his/her rights are protected and realized, e.g. sometimes parents are overprotective, or have a limited belief in their child's capabilities, or want to prioritize the needs of their other children.
- Promote inclusion with the support of parents. Parents can play a major role – there are many examples where parents have joined together and changed a local school's attitudes and practices so that their children are included.

- Work with parents of children without disabilities to encourage their support for inclusion. These parents will have different opinions about inclusive education – some will support the decision to include children with disabilities in the classroom as it helps their children to develop social responsibility, while others may feel that their children will be disadvantaged.

## BOX 26

# Lesotho

## Equal partners in education

In Lesotho, parents have collaborated closely to promote inclusive education. They have found they are “equal partners” with the teachers. Contributions include: assisting and advising teachers on how to manage their children, giving talks and sharing experiences during teachers’ in-service training. Parent trainers and parent resource persons work with schools and with key groups such as the National Federation of People with Disabilities. Parents also feel they have gained from the programme and become more aware of their children’s needs; they feel their confidence is increased and they are more empowered.

## Support the child with disability

Many children with disabilities are prevented from accessing primary education because of poor health status and environmental barriers, e.g. large distances between home and school and inaccessible public transport facilities. Improvements in health and physical access can be achieved with appropriate medical care, rehabilitation and assistive devices (see Health component).

CBR personnel need to ensure that children can access these services – it is often the first step to enabling children with disabilities to get out of their house, reach school and access primary education.



## Blaise receives the support he needs

Blaise lives in a slum in Nairobi, Kenya. He was born with spina bifida, which resulted in paralysis of both legs and loss of bladder and bowel control. Blaise remained at home until the CBR programme of the Association for the Physically Disabled of Kenya made contact with him. They helped him access much-needed surgery, provided rehabilitation and enrolled him in a local primary school which had over 1000 students.

In his early days at school, Blaise's playmates would carry Blaise to school and back home every morning and evening on their backs, and even change his diapers while at school. The environmental conditions did not deter Blaise from going to school. His neighbours were supportive after learning that his condition was not infectious and would not cause them any harm. Currently, Blaise is in class seven and now goes to school using a tricycle provided by the CBR programme. He has also been trained in self-catheterization. There are always friends around to give him a helping hand when he needs one. He is performing well academically, and dreams of becoming a doctor when he grows up.

## Help make the school welcoming and accessible

CBR personnel can involve teachers, students and families in identifying and addressing accessibility issues within school environments. It is important to recognize that accessible environments include more than just ramps for children using wheelchairs. The following questions need to be considered.

- How accessible and welcoming is the environment? Is it accessible for all children who have mobility impairments? Can visually impaired students move around easily?
- Are parents and visitors welcome?
- What is the general condition of the buildings and equipment? Is the school clean and well cared for? Are repairs needed?
- What are the sanitation facilities like? Are the toilets private, clean and accessible to meet the needs of all, including students with disabilities and young women?
- Is there clean water available for washing and drinking?
- Is there sufficient light in the rooms? Are there clear notices and signboards around the school?

The school can be made welcoming by putting up posters and drawings showing positive images of students with and without disabilities from different backgrounds and ethnicities. Policies promoting tolerance and condemning bullying can be developed; if there are issues with teasing or name-calling, CBR programmes can organize discussions and help find ways to address the problem.

## Help create a learning environment

This refers to all the activities and approaches that need to be in place so that all children have the opportunity and support to achieve their highest potential. Practical manuals and more detailed guidelines on creating a learning environment can be found in the recommended reading resources listed at the end of this component.

### *Start with the school*

Find out about the current situation in the local primary school by organizing a workshop for teachers, school staff, parents, community leaders and students. Examples of questions to discuss are given below.

- What is the attitude of the headteacher, class teachers and other children towards children with disabilities?
- Are there children with disabilities already in school?
- What proportion of children in school are girls?
- What are the dropout, repeater and completion rates?
- What is the quality of teaching and learning?
- Are there any teachers with disabilities?

By focusing on the whole school system, CBR programmes can help teachers understand what a social model approach to inclusion means in practice.

#### BOX 28

## Egypt

### Changing a point of view

“Previously we always said ‘this child is badly behaved’ and thought all the problems came from the children. We didn’t notice that the problem could be with us, the adults, or with the activity.” Teacher, Egypt (23).

### *Focus on quality*

Working to ensure equal access for children with disabilities is only one part of the inclusion process. What happens inside the classroom (quality of education) is very important. Poor teaching quality is very common, and often large numbers of children may not be learning or participating. Working together to help children with disabilities learn can also improve the teaching and learning environment for all children. CBR programmes can encourage teachers to be creative, solve problems together, use existing resources flexibly, observe what is happening, listen to children and build on the strengths of the students (24). A whole-school approach is more effective than focusing on one particular class teacher. The headteacher’s support is crucial.

### *Provide training and support for teachers*

Often teachers have limited knowledge about children with disabilities. Ongoing training in the school environment is the most effective way to train teachers, rather than sending them to training centres/colleges away from the practical situation. CBR programmes can develop and provide training and resources for:

- different impairments and their implications for learning;
- different modes, means and forms of communication;
- daily living skills, orientation and mobility skills;
- assistive devices, teaching aids and equipment;
- monitoring and evaluation of inclusive primary education with the active involvement of children.

## **BOX 29** El Salvador

### **Teaching by example**

In El Salvador, a CBR programme prioritized the issue of school dropouts, repeaters, and children who were labelled as “bad performers”. CBR personnel and volunteer students from secondary schools started working with these children in the afternoons, using learner-centred methods, including games. After a year, teachers became aware of the positive results and became convinced that inclusion worked when teaching was more appropriate. The CBR programme then offered training to the teachers, and paid an itinerant teacher to offer support. The school established the first inclusive system in the country, and attracted the attention of the Ministry of Education through a publication about its work. The Ministry eventually paid the salary of three itinerant teachers to support inclusion throughout primary schools in the district.

### *Encourage change in curricula and teaching methods*

CBR programmes can liaise between local primary schools, the community, nongovernmental organizations and the district education department to assist teachers to make curricula flexible and teaching methods learner-centred. This will benefit all children.

## **BOX 30** Lesotho

### **Looking beyond books for answers**

Teachers trying to promote inclusion in Lesotho felt that they had become “slaves of the syllabus”; the syllabus was rigid, not really relevant, and not learner-centred. They acknowledged that no-one benefited from this. “Who is the syllabus for? We cannot sell our children short just in order to finish this book called the syllabus!” Teacher interview (25).

Usually local primary schools and CBR programmes will have limited freedom to adapt the curriculum and teaching methods – in many countries, there are strict government controls. But small, simple changes are possible at the local level, and it may be possible to lobby for change at the district and national levels. Examples of how curricula and teaching methods can become more flexible include:

- getting children to work in small groups;
- starting a “buddy” system – putting children in pairs to support each other, e.g. pairing one child who has difficulty in learning with another child who learns more easily;
- team teaching – this can free up one adult to move around the class to help those who are having difficulty;
- creating learning aids and equipment out of local materials, e.g. sticks, stones, bottle-tops, seeds – this can help students with learning difficulties;
- seeking the active participation of students, particularly children with disabilities, girls and those who seem to be less involved;
- building on the strengths of students and praising and rewarding them for success, even when small;
- involving families, students and community leaders in studying the content of the curriculum and seeing if it is relevant to the lives of the students; making changes and additions to ensure that it is linked to their real lives;
- using song, drama, games and pictures to reinforce learning;
- using clear language and encouraging use of the mother tongue;
- encouraging teachers to make sure their face is well lit and that they face the children, not the blackboard, when speaking.

### ***Encourage flexibility in examinations and assessment***

This is one of the most challenging issues when promoting inclusion. Schools may not want children with learning difficulties to take exams, because it may reduce the school’s average marks. Examination and assessment systems are often very rigid and inaccessible. There are, however, many examples of how children with disabilities and learning difficulties have managed to take part successfully in examinations and assessment. Some approaches are:

- using a “scribe”, tapes or other audio facilities
- being given more time
- being assessed on strengths
- using information and communication technology
- using sign language interpreters, Braille or large print.

Often very bright children who have a disability are excluded from assessment and examinations. CBR programmes can help create lobbying and advocacy groups to influence teachers and staff at different levels of the education system, emphasizing the rights of children with disabilities to participate without discrimination. The ultimate aim is to develop flexible, appropriate and accessible methods of assessment and examination. This, again, will help all children.

### ***Promote collaboration and support***

CBR programmes can encourage peer collaboration and support by linking schools and teachers who are developing or implementing inclusive education. Other suggested activities include:

- encouraging the recruitment of volunteers, e.g. retired teachers or relatives, to help produce flexible curricula and teaching and learning aids to facilitate inclusive primary education;
- encouraging headteachers or teachers' associations to share experiences and support inclusion;
- encouraging the development of extracurricular activities and clubs to provide peer support and develop activities to raise awareness about disability;
- identifying role-models from disabled people's organizations to work with schoolchildren.

### **Use available resources and develop support**

This involves 1) creating an effective learning environment for all children by using locally available resources, and 2) ensuring the accessibility of specialist resources that some children with disabilities need in order to participate and learn.

### ***Draw on local resources and support***

- Find out about and use the knowledge, skills and experience of children, teachers, people with disabilities, families, community members.
- Encourage the creation of teaching aids and equipment from local materials, as suggested above.
- Encourage the recruitment of itinerant teachers – these may be volunteers, such as retired teachers, or they may be funded by CBR programmes or education ministries; they can play a very useful role in providing links between families, schools and communities, focusing on particular aspects, such as improving the quality of teaching (e.g. encouraging team teaching), and helping *all* children to learn, rather than individual children with disabilities.
- Suggest that local artists, musicians and storytellers become involved in making the learning environment more lively and interesting for children.



### ***Facilitate access to specialist resources and support***

CBR programmes need to ensure that children with disabilities are able to access specialist resources and support when needed. Some children may need:

- customized seating to help them maintain functional positions for classroom activities;
- enlarged letters, magnifying glasses, flexible seating arrangements and good lighting if they have poor vision;
- communication aids, e.g. pictures, symbols, boards;
- mobility devices, e.g. wheelchairs, callipers, prosthetics, white canes;
- therapy, e.g. physiotherapy, speech therapy.

CBR programmes can assist by:

- locating resources – these can be easily identified by working with local disabled people’s organizations, staff from special schools and children with disabilities;
- liaising between home and school to support children using assistive devices and ensuring their equipment is well-maintained, updated, appropriate and used;
- ensuring communication methods used in the home, school and community are consistent, e.g. if sign language or Braille is used, parents, siblings, other schoolchildren, teachers and neighbours may need to learn basic signs and basic Braille;
- encouraging the formation of peer support groups to enable children with disabilities to share skills with others, e.g. a deaf child will need to meet up with other deaf children and adults to develop his/her sign language skills.

### ***Encourage best use of small units***

Small units (also called resource rooms) are rooms that are usually attached to mainstream primary schools, and have been purpose-built or allocated to promote the integration of children with disabilities. Unfortunately, they have often promoted segregation when they used to separate off children with disabilities or children who are experiencing difficulty in learning from mainstream classrooms.

Small units can be valuable resources when they are used in the right way. They can be used to keep child-focused teaching materials and equipment, for temporary support for small groups or individuals who need some support, for training on how to make the curriculum accessible, for parent support, and for any other activities that promote inclusion. But they should not be used as permanent and separate classrooms for children with disabilities and learning difficulties – this is just another form of segregation.

## A resource for all children and teachers

Small units in Zambia created a segregated environment, where the teachers in the units were called “teachers of the fools”. When the school really started to address dropout and repeater rates, child rights, democracy in the classroom and inclusion, the small unit was transformed into a resource room for all children and teachers (26).

### *Help guide special schools towards inclusion*

Where special schools exist, CBR programmes can encourage them to be used as resources for inclusion. For example, staff from special schools can help regular schools to make curricula more flexible. Special schools may have knowledge, skills, aids and equipment that could benefit a wide group of children.

If children with disabilities attend special schools, the role of CBR programmes is to help ensure that links with families and communities are maintained, and that children’s rights are respected, as well as continuing to work to make the local school more inclusive. Itinerant teachers and community volunteers can provide essential linkages between regular and special schools, families and communities. Children without disabilities can also be included in special schools.

### Address poverty

Children from extremely poor families are among the most excluded from primary education, and children with disabilities are usually members of these families. However, while poverty is a significant barrier to primary education, experience shows that negative attitudes are a much bigger barrier to inclusion than poverty. Sometimes inclusion is more successful in poor communities because people are accustomed to overcoming difficulties, working together and looking after one another.

CBR programmes can help address poverty issues by:

- ensuring that families are supported in feeding their children, or that schools or the community as a whole provides a meal a day for schoolchildren;
- developing contacts with local authorities, charities, businesses or nongovernmental organizations to encourage donation of food, uniforms and educational materials;



- working closely with families to find out what their real concerns are, and then mobilizing the community to offer support;
- facilitating the family's involvement in income-generating activities, so that children can be free to access education instead of helping the family to make a living (see Livelihood component);
- emphasizing the importance of inclusion even when resources are limited – even when there is no school building and students meet under a tree, children with disabilities can join in;
- helping to find creative solutions for transporting children with disabilities who are not able to go to school alone and whose parents have no time to accompany them; other students (peer support), grandparents, neighbours or other community members can be encouraged to take the children to school and home again, and local businesses or nongovernmental organizations may be able to offer assistance by providing transport.

### BOX 32

## India

### Understanding societal issues

A CBR worker in India asked a mother of an eight-year-old child with a hearing impairment: “why don’t you send your child to the primary school at the self-help centre? It’s very near your house”. The mother replied: “My son has a lot to do. I need him to take the goats out to graze. I can only send him when he has no work to do at home” (27).

### Network, advocate and share information

To promote inclusive education, the education sector needs to be transformed at community, district and national levels. Inclusion will not be sustainable without supportive policies, budgets, structures and managers. CBR programmes can help by networking and creating alliances, lobbying groups and partnerships with headteachers’ associations, disabled people’s organizations and parents’ organizations, groups representing other marginalized groups (women’s groups, ethnic minority groups), special education personnel, religious groups, local businesses, media, health workers, therapists and local and international nongovernmental organizations.

There are many different target groups for lobbying, because education is a central issue for donors, governments and development agencies. Target audiences for advocacy include: national offices of donor agencies, such as the World Bank and the European Union, international nongovernmental organizations involved in education, district and national governments and ministries of education.

The importance of information cannot be overemphasized. CBR programmes can play a key role in disseminating information and resources on inclusive education.

### Coping well in regular classes

A teacher in Zambia read a copy of an EENET newsletter and realized that children in a special unit were wrongly placed. "I placed them in regular classes and they did extremely well ... the newsletter opened my mind. We had regarded these pupils as children who cannot cope". The teacher uses the newsletter to convince other teachers who say that children with disabilities cannot cope (28).

# Secondary and higher education

## Introduction

In many poor communities, only a few children have access to secondary and higher education, i.e. education beyond the compulsory level, and students with disabilities are either totally excluded or face constant battles to prove their abilities.

The right to secondary and tertiary education for students with disabilities is highlighted in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 24, paragraphs 2(a), 2(b) and 5) (4). Secondary and higher education includes academic programmes and technical/vocational education. Despite difficulties and prejudice, there are now examples of students with disabilities, including intellectual impairments, engaging in higher education according to their interests and abilities.

The more disadvantaged a person is, the more they may actually need access to education beyond the basic level in order to find employment and full inclusion in society. This is because the most excluded and marginalized often need to demonstrate more skills, knowledge and qualifications than others in order to attain the same level of survival, employment and inclusion. For students with disabilities, secondary and higher education may be the most important gateway to a full and productive life.

In several countries, it is now a legal requirement for institutions to become accessible, to make “reasonable accommodations”, to offer support for learning, and to adapt the curriculum and assessment procedures to ensure that people with disabilities can access secondary and higher education.



## Lobbying for the right to higher education

Over a million people were murdered in the genocide in Rwanda in the 1990s. This left many orphans and huge economic and social challenges. In 1997, strenuous negotiations between the Rwanda Blind Union, Evariste Karangwa (the headteacher of Gahini secondary school) and the Ministry of Education resulted in the first visually impaired students being admitted to secondary school in Rwanda. Within the next five years, a total of 33 blind students were enrolled. A parents' fundraising committee was established to support the education of these students. This committee became an income-generation initiative, involving parliamentarians, religious leaders, local leaders, parents, teachers and students, which conducted charity walks, plays and dances and sold farm produce. Eventually funds enabled the creation of a resource room, housing for volunteer staff and a reading room.

Several years later, the students started lobbying for university admission. The pioneering headteacher, Evariste Karangwa, was now working at the Institute of Education and he was asked to lead a team of 12 educationalists and activists to promote the inclusion of these students. Local newspapers had already reported that it was now law that universities should include students with disabilities. The National Federation of the Disabled had compiled a list of over 250 students with disabilities who had qualifications but could not gain access to university.

A phased plan was produced, and over the following year, students with visual, hearing and mobility impairments were enrolled in university courses on law, languages, journalism, medical studies and education. Compulsory information and awareness-raising days were arranged for staff. A seminar was held on Braille. The Association of Disabled Students staged a play on "denial of our educational rights and its impact on our contributions to society". The previous Minister of Education who had lobbied for inclusion attended. The whole audience was astounded at the depiction of students with disabilities working as lawyers, secretaries, computer operators and other professionals. People with disabilities in Rwanda continue to assert their permanent right to higher education.



## Goal

Students with disabilities have opportunities to learn with others and gain qualifications, skills and experiences, facilitating their livelihood opportunities, empowerment, and inclusion.

## The role of CBR

The role of CBR programmes in secondary and higher education is to facilitate inclusion with increased access, participation and achievement for students with disabilities, and to work with school authorities to make the environment accessible and the curriculum flexible.

## Desirable outcomes

- Increased enrolment, retention and completion in secondary and higher education by students with disabilities.
- Students with disabilities access government grants, scholarships and other sources of funding, and parents and communities have knowledge and skills on how to access this support.
- Communities support lobbying groups and campaigns for equal access to education.
- Families and communities encourage their children, including children with disabilities, to pursue secondary and higher education.
- Secondary and higher education programmes are accessible and inclusive in terms of environment, teaching methods, curricula, extracurricular activities (e.g. sports, recreation, music) and assessment and examination systems.
- Secondary schools learn about diversity and inclusion from the experiences of people with disabilities, and develop skills needed for an inclusive society.
- Specialist resources and support are used correctly to enhance the inclusion of students with disabilities.
- Transitions between secondary/higher education programmes and into adult life are well supported and career guidance is accessible and inclusive.

## Key concepts

### Changing the system

As in the other education elements, the concept of working to change the system to fit the student is very important. However, secondary and higher education systems can be very rigid and controlled at the national government level, making it challenging for communities and CBR programmes to have any influence. The big and lasting changes that are needed cannot be achieved by CBR personnel alone, who instead need to build

alliances, network and participate in lobbying to ensure benefits for individual students with disabilities. Increasingly, secondary and higher education is becoming privatized, creating an additional challenge for CBR programmes to ensure that education is accessible for students with disabilities who are poor.

## **The barrier of low expectations**

A major barrier in further education for students with disabilities is the low and limited expectations of others in relation to their interests, abilities and ambitions. For example, CBR personnel often associate particular skills or employment activities with people with disabilities. This has been referred to by some in the CBR field as the “three Bs” – brushes, brooms and baskets – a perception that people with disabilities are only capable of making these items. So perceptions and expectations about people with disabilities need to change. Around the world, people with disabilities are today reaching the top of a very wide range of professions and gaining the highest qualifications.

### **BOX 35**

## Chile

### **David’s classmates**

In Santiago, Chile, students without disabilities in some classes were overprotective of their classmates with disabilities, watching out for them and helping them with everything. Too much help for these students prevented them from developing their potential. In another class, David, a student with Down’s syndrome, had classmates who were aware of his disability but did not overprotect him. When David started making progress in reading aloud, in spite of difficulties, his classmates began to demand more of him. So David loves attending school, and almost never misses a day. Three times a week, after completing the regular school day, he goes to a centre where he receives psychological support and participates in a workshop on social skills and vocational development (29).

## **Achievement and assessment**

Achievement will have different meanings for each student, depending on his/her capabilities and potential. For example, for a student with an intellectual impairment, achievement may mean successfully developing skills for independent living, social skills and practical numeracy and literacy skills, while for others achievement may be related to academic tasks. Technical, vocational, artistic and creative skills should be valued as much as academic ability.

The rigidity and narrow focus of examination and assessment systems is often a significant barrier to the inclusion of people with disabilities in secondary and higher education. The real value of assessment is to help the student to identify their strengths and measure their own progress. A creative and flexible approach can help them to be motivated to reach their maximum potential and develop their talents and skills. CBR personnel can help keep the focus on the best interests and real capabilities of students with disabilities.

## Learning at different ages

Secondary education corresponds with adolescence, a stage which is characterized by dramatic physical and emotional changes. Experiences of adolescence vary between cultures and contexts. For students with disabilities, there can be additional or different challenges during adolescence which can have a big effect on learning. CBR personnel need to be sensitive and aware of these challenges, and put students in contact with role-models and peers who also have disabilities. Higher education corresponds with a transition to adulthood. Students with disabilities may have support needs during this stage, but it is important to respect them as young adults and to encourage them to make decisions about their own learning.

## Suggested activities

### Involvement of the community

This can be challenging because often secondary and higher education facilities are a long distance from the community. CBR programmes can contribute by:

- encouraging the community and school authorities to organize transport facilities – this may require requesting financial assistance from credit groups (see Livelihood component) and practical support from self-help/self-advocacy groups;
- mobilizing the community to raise finances for fees, uniforms, assistive devices and additional support, and encouraging them to recognize students with disabilities as a resource for the community;
- gaining access to grants and government loans, and funding from donor agencies – often government resources remain untapped through lack of awareness and ability to access them;
- facilitating lobbying and formation of advocacy groups together with the local disabled people's organizations to promote the rights of students with disabilities in secondary and higher education.



## Funding for inclusive education

To establish inclusive education in Nepal, funds were obtained to establish a resource class; buy resource materials, furniture and lodging; provide food expenses for students with disabilities; support one teacher with special education training; and support two other aides. The Special Education Council provides funds for five staff in the field. A private funding group and nongovernmental organizations sponsor the students with disabilities.

### Support the family

Some families may be quite resistant to the idea of students with disabilities having access to secondary or higher education, owing to overprotection or lack of belief in their abilities, resentful siblings, and for females, lack of value placed on their education. There can be many doubts, difficulties and adjustments that families need to address. CBR personnel can educate and support families so that they offer support to students with disabilities, both during their education and in transitional periods.



## Involving parents

In Ukraine, parents are very involved in an inclusive secondary school for 1000 students. Their activities include clubs for parents of students with disabilities, which provide peer support for parents and produce booklets about the need for and benefit of education; a parents' day every month, which includes a drama programme; parents' meetings based in the inclusive classrooms; and team meetings, where parents meet rehabilitation professionals, school administrators and teachers to discuss the students' progress.

### Help to create an inclusive learning environment

Many of the activities listed in the Primary education element are also common to secondary and higher education. There are also some specific things to consider in secondary and higher education.

### ***The environment and location***

Secondary and higher educational establishments are often bigger than primary schools and spread over large areas. Travel between classrooms can be an issue, as can accessibility within classrooms, e.g. laboratories or computer rooms. Therefore the following activities are suggested:

- negotiate with school authorities to change the locations of classes, e.g. to the ground floor;
- support students with disabilities in finding creative solutions to accessibility issues;
- ensure girls and young women are able to access private and hygienic water and sanitation facilities.

### ***Curriculum and teaching methods***

Teachers need training and support, and an environment where they can discuss their successes and challenges about educating students with disabilities. CBR programmes need to work together with teachers and others in the education sector to provide advice and resource materials where possible. Some suggested activities are listed below.

- Help to adapt and develop curricula to make them relevant and accessible.
- Advise on classroom organization, including seating, lighting and positioning of students, and encourage group-work and team-teaching.
- Help to create accessible formats and communication systems, and make sure that large-print, Braille, signboards, sign interpretation, tapes, audio facilities, scribes, and translation are available (see Health component: Assistive devices).
- Encourage flexible schedules e.g. allowing more time to complete activities, providing opportunities for learning at different times, and learning in modules, so that curricula can be completed over a longer duration.
- Ensure students with disabilities are involved in discussions about their learning, support requirements and progress, including seeking and responding to their opinions about how and what they learn, and embracing the highest potential of each student through provision of counselling and careers advice.

### ***Examination and assessment***

Examination and assessment systems can be made more flexible and adapted to meet the needs of all students.

#### **BOX 38**

## Nepal

### **Ensuring flexible examination systems**

A secondary school in Nepal includes students with visual impairments. These students take their examinations along with the other students. Exam papers are available in Braille, scribes are provided, and an extra half-hour is granted for completing the exams.

### **Information and communications technology**

At the higher education level in particular, computer technology can offer a creative and effective means of learning and accessing the curriculum. CBR programmes can explore the possibility of grants or funding from local communities, businesses, government and international agencies, for providing computers, preferably with an Internet connection, for students with disabilities.



### **Peer support and role-models**

Many students may not have studied alongside students with disabilities before. As a result, attitudes and reactions can vary – classmates can be helpful and mature, or they can behave in ways that exclude students with disabilities. The CBR programme can:

- encourage schools to sensitize students, preferably with leadership from an adult with a disability;
- encourage the development of policies and procedures to prevent discrimination, bullying and teasing by teachers and classmates;
- encourage peer support and “buddy” systems;
- encourage schools/colleges to recruit staff and teachers with disabilities – positive role-models are very important for young adults with disabilities.

## **BOX 39** South Africa

### **Being a role model to students**

A woman with a disability ran a disability support unit at a university in Cape Town. As she had a disability, she was easily able to understand the needs of students with disabilities, play an important advocacy role and become a role-model.

### **Encourage best use of specialist resources and support**

CBR programmes can encourage schools and colleges to use specialist resources correctly, so increasing the inclusion of students with disabilities rather than increasing their stigmatization or segregation. They can encourage the use of:

- personal assistants, e.g. guides, readers, writers, interpreters;
- itinerant teachers, who make regular visits to schools to provide advice and support;
- additional support outside the mainstream school, e.g. for acquiring computer skills or other vocational skills, or medical or rehabilitation support.

## Preparing students for regular classes

When students with disabilities start at the Nepalese secondary school, they are first placed in a resource class. Here they receive training in mobility, and in the social and basic educational skills required to attend regular classes. They normally stay in this class for one year, depending on their speed of learning, after which they join their peers in mainstream classes with regular teachers. A specially trained teacher continues to help the students with disabilities to obtain the correct books, including translation into Braille, and, if applicable, logistical support, and assists in coaching them in their formal education. These teachers also coordinate with the regular classroom teachers to solve any problems faced by the students with disabilities.

### *Special schools*

Special schools, e.g. schools for the visually impaired or deaf, need to be considered very carefully by students and their families. The education provided by these schools is not necessarily more appropriate or of higher quality. How special schools prepare students with disabilities for adult life, and for participation and employment in the community, needs to be considered. As special schools require high levels of resources, training and supportive infrastructure, they are often lacking in poorer countries. Where they do exist, however, the views of the students should be taken into account. CBR programmes can make use of these schools as a transitory or preparatory step until local schools are ready to offer quality education to students with disabilities; it is important to remember that the earlier the inclusion, the easier and better for a person in the long run.

### Help to ease transitions

This is a key issue and often overlooked. Transitional periods during education include: primary to secondary, secondary to tertiary, and tertiary to a sustainable livelihood. Often, students with disabilities need to move away from their communities to complete higher education. This can make transitional periods more difficult, and many find it very challenging without the support of their families and communities.

## Easing transitions to avoid dropouts

Due to poor transitions, research highlights that twice as many students with disabilities fail to pursue college as their peers (30).

CBR programmes can work with students, families, community members and educational institutions to ensure supportive links are created and maintained throughout transitional periods. The Rwanda case-study at the beginning of this element illustrates how collaboration and lobbying helped achieve successful transitions.

## BOX 42 Philippines

### Cherry's resolve earns respect

Cherry was born with clubfoot deformities into a very poor farmer's family in the Philippines. With the help of a local philanthropist and CBR programme, she underwent surgery and received customized footwear. When she went to primary school, she was teased and excluded from participating in activities with the other students. With the help of her family, CBR personnel and her own determination, Cherry continued her studies despite the discrimination.

In high school, she was treated better, and a local nongovernmental organization – Simon of Cyrene – supported her higher education costs, including transportation, school supplies and even medical and health services. Following high school, she was given a scholarship to complete a two-year college course on computer applications. Like her peers, Cherry is now working on the open job market.

Cherry says: "Now I am very proud of reaping the fruits of my labour. I am helping my family financially and I can provide for my personal necessities. The people in our community who used to stare and laugh at me have changed their perception of me. Now I can see admiration in their eyes that even with disability I was able to attain the status where I am in now. My self-esteem and confidence have been enhanced, enough to give me strength to face the challenges that may come along."



# Non-formal education

## Introduction

Non-formal education refers to education that occurs outside the formal school system. Non-formal education is often used interchangeably with terms such as community education, adult education, lifelong education and second-chance education. It refers to a wide range of educational initiatives in the community, ranging from home-based learning to government schemes and community initiatives. It includes accredited courses run by well-established institutions as well as locally based operations with little funding.

As non-formal education is diverse, this element has many aspects in common with other elements, particularly Lifelong learning. For the purposes of these guidelines, this element focuses on non-formal education for children and young people outside the regular school system. However, CBR personnel need to be aware that non-formal education reinforces marginalization and stigmatization, so if possible it should not be offered as the only educational option for children with disabilities. Inclusion in a regular school should be prioritized as every child's right.

While non-formal education is often considered a second-best option to formal education, it should be noted that it can provide higher-quality education than that available in formal schools. Non-formal education can be preparatory, supplementary or an excellent alternative (where necessary) to formal schooling for all children.



## Facilitating fun and flexible learning environments

The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) operates over 50 000 pre-primary and primary schools throughout Bangladesh, serving more than 1.5 million children. The schools are usually one-roomed bamboo or mud houses and are located within a one-kilometre radius of the students' homes. They are usually run at a time convenient for the students; some schools start as early as 6 a.m. and operate in two shifts.

Since 2003, BRAC schools have been run with an underlying inclusive philosophy: "Inclusion is an approach which addresses the needs of all learners in ordinary classroom situations, including learners with special needs, indigenous children, children with disabilities, girl children and poor children". BRAC schools have flexible schedules that ensure compatibility with rural life. Teachers are recruited locally and the community is involved in developing timetables, choosing the site for the school and providing labour and materials to build the classrooms. Teaching methods are learner-centred and participatory, using music, dance, art, games and storytelling. Some of the schools are for children who have never attended formal schooling, and others focus on children who have dropped out.

Children return to formal schooling once they have completed courses in BRAC schools. Specialist disability nongovernmental organizations and the Government are assisting BRAC to remove barriers to inclusion by making schools accessible by adding ramps, wider doors, additional/bigger windows; providing training for teachers and other staff; providing assistive, low-cost devices such as hearing aids, glasses, wheelchairs; and creating learner-centred teaching materials and methods including posters and story books that raise awareness – so making the whole environment "disability friendly".



## Goal

People with disabilities develop knowledge and skills, which help to improve their quality of life.

## The role of CBR

The role of CBR is to work with non-formal education programmes to ensure that people with disabilities are able to access educational opportunities suited to their own needs and interests in inclusive settings.

## Desirable outcomes

- People with disabilities participate in non-formal education programmes and learn literacy, numeracy and other skills which contribute to better living conditions.
- Non-formal education programmes include people with disabilities and consider their needs during programme planning.
- People with disabilities, family members, disabled people's organizations and parents' associations are involved in decision-making and implementing non-formal education programmes.
- Home-based learning is available either as a supplement to formal schooling, or in preparation for formal schooling, or as an alternative to formal schooling.
- Social cohesion is strengthened as students with disabilities and non-disabled students interact together and develop friendships.

## Key concepts

Non-formal education expresses the core principles that should be at the heart of all good education. Non-formal education is all of the following.

**Relevant** to the learner's life and the needs of society, and will be so in the future. Mechanisms for involving children, parents and local communities as well as educators in deciding the content of what is taught will ensure that non-formal education is relevant to the needs of communities and draws on local resources and personnel.

**Appropriate** to the level of the learner's development, with new content and experiences being introduced when the learner is ready. Teaching is learner-centred and student-directed.

**Flexible** in what is taught and how it is taught, and to the needs of the different learners, e.g. adults and children who work, who live on the street, who are sick, who are in prison, who have a disability or who are victims of conflict or emergency, and flexible to traditional/indigenous learning styles.

**Participatory** in that learners are active participants in their learning, and that they and their families and communities are involved in running the non-formal education programme.

**Protective** of children from harm, and protective of their rights to survival and development. Places of non-formal education should be healthy and safe, and provide proper nutrition, sanitation and protection from harm.

**Inclusive** of all children regardless of background or ability, respecting and utilizing the differences between them as a resource for teaching and learning. Non-formal education often targets marginalized groups, e.g. nomadic communities, girls, people with disabilities, school dropouts and working children. For students with disabilities and other marginalized groups, non-formal education is very helpful, responding to and fitting their needs.

**Quality:** non-formal education programmes have the potential to be of exceptionally high quality, because they can respond more easily to the needs of individuals and specific groups in the community.



## Suggested activities

### Help make existing non-formal education programmes inclusive

A wide range of non-formal education programmes may already be operating in the community. These programmes may be oriented towards literacy and basic education, health promotion (reproductive health issues, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS), environmental issues, agriculture, fishing, rural development and/or community development. Non-formal education programmes offer excellent opportunities for people with disabilities to be educated alongside their non-disabled peers.

CBR programmes can identify existing non-formal education programmes and encourage them to become inclusive rather than establish parallel programmes for people with disabilities. Making non-formal education programmes inclusive will involve encouraging the enrolment of people with disabilities in all types of programmes, and ensuring that teaching is conducted in accessible places and that teaching formats are accessible.

#### **Government programmes**

Government ministries, e.g. ministries of social welfare, education or youth, are often responsible for managing non-formal education programmes. These programmes are usually focused on literacy, adult learning and vocational training. CBR programmes need to find out about existing non-formal education policies, who is responsible for implementing these policies, the current focus of non-formal education, whether people

with disabilities are included and whether grants or loans are available to enable them to participate. This will help CBR programmes to shape a strategy to include people with disabilities in existing non-formal education programmes.

#### BOX 44

## Nepal

### Access through policy actions

The Policy on Non Formal Education in Nepal (31) states: “NFEC (Non-formal Education Centre) has made efforts to pay special attention to the people who have problems caused by their ethnicity, language, gender and physical disabilities and make non-formal education programs inclusive”.

Policy 8: Inclusive education policy will be adopted to ensure access, quality and co-existence.

The following policy actions will be adopted for the implementation of the above policy:

- Special educational and pedagogical measures will be adopted to eliminate caste, ethnicity, gender, language, and disability related discriminations.
- Special arrangements will be made to ensure access to quality non-formal education for the children with various disabilities, conflict affected children and adults, and child labourers.



### *Community-based non-formal education initiatives*

These may include nongovernmental organizations carrying out various development or awareness activities, faith-based schools, crèches or day care centres, schools to promote girls' education and schools for older children with disabilities (who were not identified early or included in primary education), formal school dropouts and working children. CBR programmes can identify the different forms of community-based non-formal education initiatives available and facilitate the inclusion of people with disabilities, including children.

CBR personnel can work together with non-formal education facilitators to ensure teaching materials are accessible (e.g. large print, Braille, tape, audio facilities), that the environment is accessible and welcoming, and that students are supported in their learning.

## Ensure the curriculum is practical and relevant

Lacking the rigid constraints of formal schools, non-formal education curricula often have greater flexibility and can be easily adapted to suit the needs of individuals. CBR programmes can help ensure that non-formal education:

- prioritizes basic literacy and numeracy;
- is oriented to practical skills, life skills and personal development;
- is effective in teaching decision-making skills;
- focuses on vocational skills, income-generating activities and job creation;
- empowers students, instilling confidence and a sense of ownership in programmes and projects – CBR programmes can ensure that disabled people’s organizations are involved in promoting the empowerment of students with disabilities;
- promotes effective communication between students with disabilities and their families, peers and the community, e.g. through basic sign language, Braille, speaking clearly.

### BOX 45

## Bangladesh

### A second chance for an education

One non-formal education programme in Bangladesh works in urban communities in large cities such as Dhaka, Chittagong and Rajshahi. The programme especially focuses on children working in the informal sector (often hazardous work) or living and working on the streets, and includes children with different impairments. The programme consists of a condensed primary education programme taught in half the time normally required in the formal system and which is more relevant to the older age-group, as children are older when they enter this programme – it is second-chance education for most of the students. Boys and girls of 10 years and older are invited to the programme. The classes are in three daily shifts to keep classes small and to allow children to continue to work and contribute to their family’s income. After the primary education programme, children can choose either to learn vocational skills at the programme’s para-trade centres, on courses that take around six months of part-time training, or to apply for a technical training that takes one to two years. The non-formal education programme also has job placement officers who help students – with and without disabilities – to find employment after graduating from the programme.

## Support home-based learning

Home-based learning can be supplementary, preparatory or an alternative to formal education. It can be relevant for students with extensive needs, for whom the priority is to learn basic daily living skills, basic communication and basic functioning. These skills are best learned in environments where they will be used rather than in artificial environments. CBR personnel liaise closely with family members, teachers and students, carry

out home visits on a regular basis and work with the entire family to ensure successful home-based learning. Home-based learning, as part of a comprehensive strategy, is effective. However, when it operates in isolation, home-based learning can contribute to exclusion and isolation of children with disabilities, despite working closely with family members and sometimes with teachers, as the example below illustrates (27).

| <b>Example of inclusion of a child with severe or multiple impairments, even when the child is based at home</b>   | <b>Example of exclusion from society of a child with severe or multiple impairments who is based at home</b>   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBR programme supports family and child from birth</li> <li>• Volunteers and other children help teach the child activities of daily living in his/her own home</li> <li>• Child is taken out and involved in local activities, religious and social events</li> <li>• Teacher visits family and develops appropriate learning goals together with CBR personnel and family</li> <li>• Child attends playgroup at appropriate age</li> <li>• District education team includes this child in its planning, provision and resource allocation</li> <li>• Parent is active member of local parent/disabled people's group, and is able to plan/lobby for the child's future</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family is stigmatized when the child is born</li> <li>• Older sister drops out of school to care for the child</li> <li>• Neighbours and other children avoid visiting and fear the child</li> <li>• Child is kept indoors lying down and gradually becomes more and more dependent and atrophied</li> <li>• Family spends money on seeking cures that do not work</li> <li>• Father is ashamed, blames mother and leaves</li> <li>• Mother becomes increasingly overworked and does not know how to help the child</li> <li>• Mother begins to neglect/abuse the child who is now an additional burden</li> <li>• Siblings cannot get married or get jobs due to stigma</li> </ul> |

## Sustain specific learning groups

Sometimes there is a specific learning need (such as learning sign language or Braille) that requires students to come together in their own groups to study. CBR personnel can provide assistance in developing and sustaining these groups, and can link students with disabilities with disabled people's organizations, which can be a useful resource to facilitate their learning.

Sign language users find the instructional language in formal learning environments difficult. Many deaf people identify themselves as a linguistic minority rather than as people with disabilities. In low-income countries, the experiences of international nongovernmental organizations have revealed that deaf learners are rarely taught sign language in their native tongue, but are often taught in a foreign (oral) language. Non-formal education programmes that teach sign language can be an important support for deaf people and their families, particularly when deaf adults are recruited as teachers. CBR programmes can ensure that:

- the rights and views of deaf learners are respected;
- these special provisions do not increase social exclusion and isolation from the family and community, but rather enable children to participate in family and community life.

## BOX 46

## Viet Nam

### Dung passes on his skills to others

Dung (pronounced Zoong) is a bright young man from a village outside Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam. He is deaf and from an early age learned sign language and also learned how to read and write English. At the age of 25, he was working full-time and had a good life. Members from the Ho Chi Minh City Deaf Club and the leaders of a CBR project asked Dung to teach them English to open to them a world of literature and an alternative to writing phonetic Vietnamese. With the help of the CBR project, a local charity and the municipal government, 30 deaf young adults enrolled in the evening classes twice a week. Dung followed a regular English-as-a-second-language curriculum and materials. Each of the 20 regularly attending participants paid Dung the equivalent of about US\$1 per lesson. They mastered basic English over the next two years, and then began working to develop and record their native sign language.

### Ensure community-based daycentres are appropriate

Community-based daycentres are often established to provide respite for parents who have children with disabilities needing 24-hour care. While these centres may be a great support for parents, often the quality of activities and learning for children is very poor. CBR programmes can help ensure that the centres provide age-appropriate play and activity-based learning, and that the “best interests of the child” are the priority. The centres should also be as inclusive as possible, and involve local children without disabilities and their parents.

### Facilitate links with formal schooling

In many countries, national education systems do not value non-formal education the same way as they value formal education. Non-formal education programmes tend to use different and more flexible curricula and teaching methods, which may enable learners to benefit, but can also jeopardize a student’s transition into the formal system. Without systematic links between the formal and non-formal education systems, non-formal education may contribute to the segregation of people with disabilities.

## Government outreach schemes

Home-based education for children with disabilities has been recognized by the Indian Government as an alternative form of education for those who have difficulty accessing schools or who are left out of the education system for some reason. The Government programme also provides counselling support for parents and creates awareness regarding the importance of sending their children to school. The education department is responsible for identifying volunteers from the local community with the help and coordination of local nongovernmental organizations. Each volunteer works with three children. An honorarium is paid to them by the school authorities. Once brought into home-based education, the child is enrolled in the neighbourhood school and the school authorities become responsible for him/her. Through this scheme, the Government is reaching those who can't reach school, and works with the child at home until he or she is ready for inclusion or is provided with skills for life. This initiative of the Government creates an effective link between non-formal and formal education programmes, facilitates inclusion, and provides new opportunities for learning.

Although the non-formal and formal education sectors exist separately and have somewhat differing ideologies, they can complement each other and can actively assist each other in many ways. CBR programmes can help to facilitate links by:

- inviting leaders from both the formal and non-formal education sectors to join the CBR programme in developing inclusive strategies;
- strengthening formal schooling by providing training for parents and teachers in making schools inclusive, and maintaining strong home-school links;
- assisting with transitions from non-formal education programmes to formal education;
- developing complementary non-formal education programmes to help students with disabilities succeed in formal schooling;
- facilitating transitions to further education, sustainable livelihood and courses offered by the non-formal sector;
- encouraging the sharing of buildings and facilities, e.g. non-formal education programmes can use school buildings out of hours;
- encouraging staff from both non-formal education and formal programmes to share their services and experiences.

## After-school tutoring provides an incentive

CBR personnel in El Porvenir, Honduras, provided after-school tutoring for children with and without disabilities who were in danger of failing 1st grade. At the end of the school year, the children passed their exams. The District reported that the school's repetition rate for the year had dropped by 75%. This drop in repetition provided an incentive for the district to work with the CBR programme and include children with disabilities in primary schools.



# Lifelong learning

## Introduction

The right to lifelong learning is included in Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (4). Lifelong learning refers to all purposeful learning activities undertaken on an ongoing basis throughout a person's life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies. Learning is no longer understood to be divided into a time and place for gathering knowledge (i.e. school) and a time and place to apply the knowledge (i.e. work). Without lifelong learning, the capacity of individuals and communities to renew their knowledge and skills and adapt to political, economic, environmental, technological or social changes is considerably reduced (32).

Lifelong learning can take place in a variety of settings, both formal and non-formal. It is complementary to other forms of education, and continues even when formal education or training opportunities are available. As lifelong learning is comprehensive, this element has many aspects in common with other elements, particularly non-formal education. For the purposes of these guidelines, this element focuses on lifelong learning opportunities for youth and adults with disabilities which exist outside the regular school system.

### BOX 49

#### Learning is a never-ending process

Shirley is a highly intelligent and gifted young woman with cerebral palsy who dropped out of a regular school despite having gained top marks in most subjects. She did her master's degree in business administration through an open university and is now a professional manager. She continues to acquire different skills and qualifications as she needs them, including continuously upgrading her computer skills. Shirley sees learning as a never-ending process. In a world of discrimination and exclusion, the opportunities that lifelong learning presents enable her to continue to advance in her career and overcome barriers in society.

## Empowering adults to be independent and self-reliant

ENABLE is a programme run jointly by a disabled people's organization and nongovernmental organization in a township near Durban, South Africa. Fundelwa is a teacher, also a person with a disability, who teaches literacy and numeracy to adults with disabilities. Her classroom is a reconditioned container which has been renovated by the youth of the township. The aim of ENABLE is to empower adults with disabilities to become independent and self-reliant. ENABLE classes teach disability rights and provide information and advice on obtaining grants and generating income. There is also an inclusive sewing project where people learn to measure, count and cost material and to make items to sell. Adult learners come to the classes for many reasons: to help draw up a budget and make a shopping list, or to learn English so that they can communicate more easily at visits to the doctor or read instructions on medicine bottles. As a person with a disability herself, Fundelwa finds that she is a role-model for the students who attend her classes. The ENABLE project is run on a participatory basis, reflecting the international slogan of the disability movement: "Nothing about us without us". The programme is set up in such a way that people with disabilities are involved at all levels of decision-making and implementation.



## Goal

Youth and adults with disabilities have access to quality lifelong learning opportunities and to a variety of learning experiences.

## The role of CBR

The role of CBR is to provide people with disabilities with continuous learning opportunities to prevent their social exclusion, marginalization and unemployment.

## Desirable outcomes

- Youth with disabilities in formal schooling are assisted in their transition to the world of work or skills-training opportunities through access to vocational and careers guidance and peer counselling services.
- Adults with disabilities have access to appropriate, flexible and effective learning opportunities throughout life, for example adult literacy through open schools and higher education through distance learning.
- Individuals and groups with particular needs, such as youth and adults with significant and multiple impairments as well as their caregivers and family members, have access to ongoing learning opportunities.
- Youth and adults with disabilities have access to ongoing education concerning life skills and survival needs, including information on reproductive health, sexuality and HIV/AIDS.
- Community educators from public and private schools and from other educational institutions actively promote the social inclusion of youth and adults with disabilities by providing lifelong learning opportunities.

## Key concepts

Lifelong or continuous learning is based on the common understanding that we learn throughout our lives; it is particularly important in today's rapidly changing and increasingly complex world. However, learning opportunities are often restricted to particular age groups, institutions or people who can financially or physically access the institution, and adults with disabilities are often excluded from or disadvantaged within the more formal learning environments. Lifelong learning embraces all the principles outlined in the Non-formal education element. In addition, the concepts outlined below are important.

## **Adult learning**

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Adult learning is a vital component of lifelong learning and is essential for employability, social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development. Adults learn differently from children, and their specific needs and ways of learning need to be taken into consideration in the design of teaching methods and materials. Lifelong learning opportunities need to be learner-centred, with a focus on personal goals, past life experiences and promotion of positive self-esteem.

Adults have the potential and desire to direct their own learning, take initiatives and make decisions about learning, including what they want to learn, how and when to learn, and what additional support they require. They need to be encouraged to take a lead role in all aspects of the planning and delivery of learning opportunities.

Learning formats for adults need to be flexible and creative – they need to be varied and responsive, involve a variety of media, including assistive technology where appropriate, and available in a variety of locations and at different times.

## **Types of lifelong learning opportunity**

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Common types of lifelong learning opportunities include:

- adult education – involves the acquisition of skills or formal qualifications for work;
- continuing education – involves credit or noncredit courses offered by formal educational institutions, often for personal development;
- professional development – involves learning work competencies, often through employer-provided on-the-job training;
- self-directed learning – the personal learning environment may comprise a variety of learning resources and tools including library and Internet resources.

Lifelong learning opportunities also include adult literacy classes, flexible arrangements for learning other basic skills often through “open schools”, technical and vocational education and training, personal development through life and survival skills training, and training in communication skills. They also include learning opportunities for self-help groups and parents’ organizations, and ongoing learning for minority groups, including people with disabilities, who are unable to work to generate income.

## **Open learning**

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Open learning often occurs in “open schools” and delivers learning opportunities where, when and how the learner needs them, and provides a more relevant curriculum for older learners who have never had the chance to attend or complete formal education at school. Teaching methods are usually unconventional and creative, and include the use of information and communication technology. Students will often study specially designed teaching materials in their own homes or workplaces, or wherever is conven-

ient for them, at a pace that suits them. Youth and adults are often able to follow skills training coupled with academic subjects while self-employed or working.

## BOX 51

## India

### Encouraging open schooling

Under the National Institute of Open Schooling programme in India, “The learners are free to choose subject combinations as per their needs and goals. The learners study at their own pace from specially designed self-instructional materials. This learning is supplemented by audio–video and face-to-face contact classes which are held at the study centres on holidays and weekends. The learners have freedom to appear in examination in their subjects one by one as per their preparation. There is a provision of credit accumulation. The registration of the learners is valid for the period of five years”. (33)

### Life and survival skills

Life and survival skills refer to the knowledge and skills that everyone needs in order to function and participate effectively at home, in the community and in wider society. Because of exclusion and discrimination, people with disabilities especially need these skills, and support for developing them is an essential part of lifelong learning at any stage of life. People with mental health problems, intellectual impairments and sensory impairments in particular may need access to life and survival skills training opportunities.

### Suggested activities

#### Facilitate support for transitions

CBR personnel are ideally placed to liaise between students with disabilities and families, employers, trainers and self-advocacy groups. The transition from school to work or to further skills training and increased independence can be very challenging if unsupported. CBR personnel can help identify and advise on available careers and peer counselling opportunities and ensure that these are accessible, relevant and effective. It is often useful to involve organizations of people with disabilities in advising and assisting young people to develop confidence and skills to make their own choices and to direct their own learning.



## Identify opportunities for adult literacy and adult education

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Many adults with disabilities do not go to school or are unable to access formal or continuing education because of a variety of barriers, including inability to meet entry qualifications, inaccessibility of buildings, inability to pay fees, unwillingness of the institution to accept a learner with a disability, or having to work during school hours. CBR programmes can identify and create opportunities for adult literacy and adult education through open schooling, within the wider community. CBR programmes can encourage existing open schools and adult literacy programmes to include adults with disabilities, and can help ensure that teaching materials and communication methods are appropriate and accessible.

### BOX 52

#### Maya's successful journey

Maya successfully completed the first three grades in school because there were no written examinations. When the school authorities forced her to leave school at the age of 10 years because of her disability (Maya has visual, intellectual and physical impairments), she went to an association of blind people for advice. The association helped her enrol in an open school. Maya completed her higher secondary examination over a period of 13 years. Afterwards she took part in vocational training, a computer course and classes that taught social skills. Today Maya is trained in flower arrangement and artificial flower making. She still takes part in classes at the open school according to her needs and interests.

## Identify opportunities for continuing education

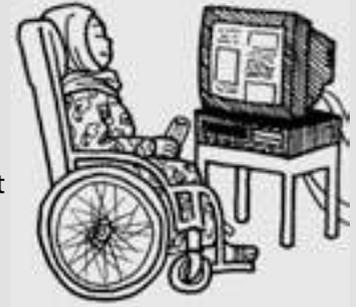
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Continuing education opportunities are increasingly becoming available through local educational institutions, as well as through distance education and Web-based educational programmes. Distance education can often eliminate barriers such as distance, lack of accessible transport and a hostile environment, as well as enabling people with disabilities to benefit from higher education.

CBR personnel need to be aware of these developments and be equipped to help people with disabilities to take advantage of the benefits they offer. CBR programmes can identify opportunities for continuing education, especially through distance learning, and can work with institutions to help them enrol students with disabilities. CBR programmes can also assist adults with disabilities to obtain the necessary support (e.g. access to the Internet or computer screen reading software) and develop the confidence and skills to take advantage of distance learning opportunities.

## Virtual education

Yusof is a 27-year-old woman living in Georgetown, Malaysia. She became paralysed 14 years ago. She has enrolled in a distance learning programme at university and is studying literature. She says she has always wanted to get a degree and set an example for her seven siblings. She studies online, through video and self-learning modules.



## Facilitate learning for individuals and groups with particular needs

CBR programmes can help individuals or groups with particular needs to access appropriate learning opportunities and acquire the skills they want and need. CBR can identify or create opportunities for individuals with significant disabilities to attend school, undergo training or access distance learning opportunities. They can also assist people from ethnic minorities to access language and cultural orientation.

## Ensure opportunities for learning life and survival skills

CBR programmes can liaise with organizations and community groups to provide opportunities for youth and adults with disabilities to develop the skills required for daily life and participation in society, such as those related to self-care, transport, shopping, appropriate social behaviour, assertiveness and self-esteem, sexuality, marriage and parenting, HIV/AIDS awareness, maintaining health and well-being, financial management, citizenship and political participation. Again, the key principle is to identify existing education programmes and work to make them inclusive rather than set up parallel programmes. Some people who are particularly vulnerable, e.g. young girls with disabilities and people with intellectual impairments or long-term mental health conditions, may need to be assisted to develop skills for self-protection from physical and sexual abuse.

## Work with educators in the community to promote social inclusion

Exclusion is more often the result of external factors than personal factors. Community educators – in government, nongovernmental organization and other community schools, and educational institutions including private and commercial schools – can bring about the inclusion and active participation of people with disabilities in lifelong learning activities once they become aware of the need. CBR programmes can work with community organizations, especially disabled people's organizations and parents' associations, to share their experiences and knowledge to create disability awareness

and promote inclusion in available lifelong learning opportunities. A positive impact on attitudes can be made through community awareness-raising activities, promoting the education of all marginalized groups including people with disabilities. Exclusion and discrimination can be tackled positively by emphasizing the large variety of knowledge and skills available for sharing within the community and helping community members to meet and interact with people with disabilities, particularly in educational settings.

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# Notes

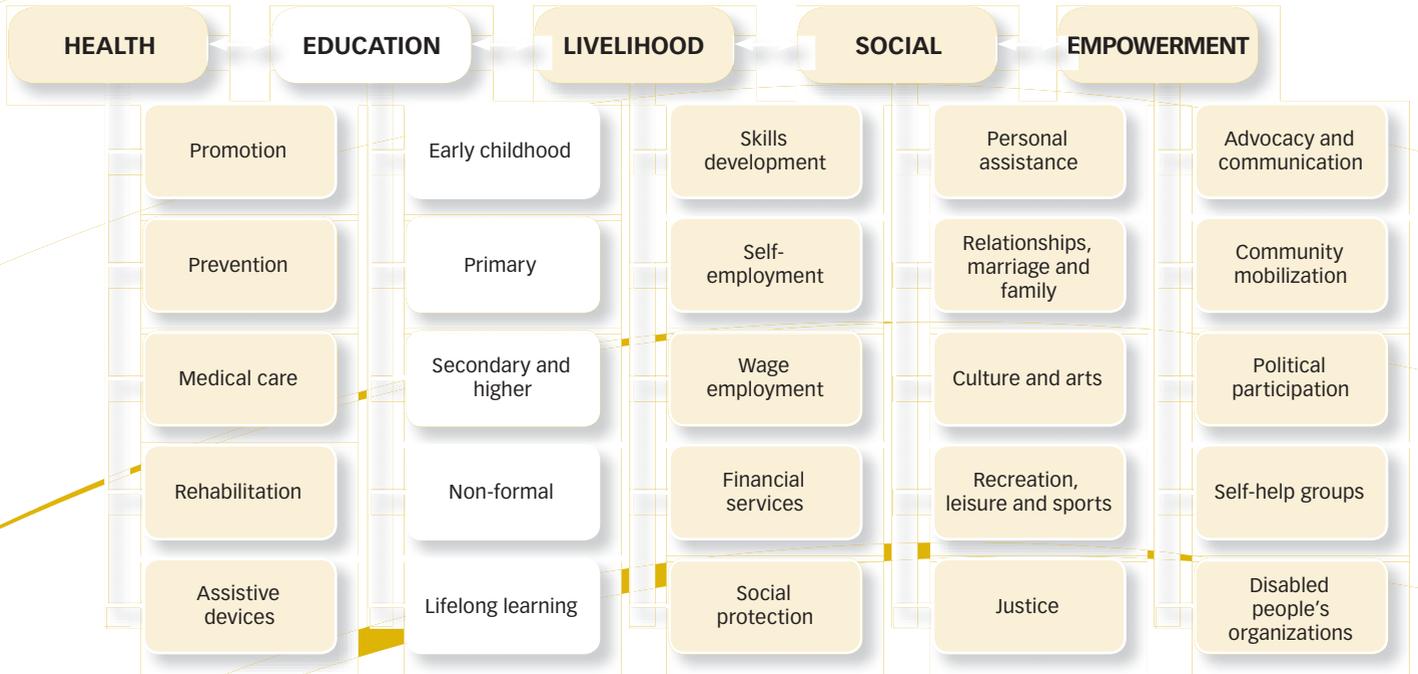


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