

Early Intervention in Inclusive
Education in Mumbai

The 'Why' and the 'How'

Manual 2

Policy Implementers at Local
and Community Level



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Foreword

The '*How to Series of Inclusive Education*' is a set of manuals that have emerged from a study undertaken by The Spastics Society Of India, Mumbai in collaboration with UNICEF and supported by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

The title of the project is *Inclusive Education Practice in Early Childhood*. It is an action research project involving both intervention and research on a large scale covering 6000 families based in the impoverished areas of the Mumbai slums. Six hundred children, both disabled and non disabled, were placed in Demonstration Learning Centres within the community where an enrichment programme and a need based intervention was given over a two year period. The intervention strategies were carefully documented and the progress of the children tracked by external researchers not connected with the intervention team. The aim was to study the mechanism or *intervention* strategies needed to put *children with disabilities* into existing programmes being run by Government and non-Governmental agencies and the barriers that came in the way to accessibility and participation.

From this evidence based research emerged a series of instructional resource material: the '*How to Series of Inclusive Education*.' These manuals are relevant for any organisation, or agency, working to address the crucial need of bringing *children with any disability* into inclusive settings. They recommend a *whole community approach to inclusive education*, and although the research was carried out in India it can be used anywhere in the world.

Who is this manual for ?

This manual is for those who implement the policies at the state and district level. Governments all over the world have passed legislation so that it is now mandated that wherever possible children with disability must be included in available schools within the neighborhood. The objective of this manual is to create awareness on issues related to implementing these policies and to provide guidelines and suggestions to make inclusion possible. The primary objective of this manual is including children with disability.

What is this manual about ?

This manual has two sections

Section I provides information on 'inclusive education'.

It provides answers to questions such as **What is an inclusive classroom? Why do we need inclusion?** and the steps taken by the Government to work towards inclusion.

Section II provides a simple overview of different types of disability and guidelines to developing an inclusive classroom. In this section an attempt has been made to cover issues related to 'inclusion of children with disability' that have been the concern of teachers and administrators who have interacted with the SSI/UNICEF team in the course of the project on **Inclusive Educational Practice in early childhood**

Section 1

What is an Inclusive classroom ?

The inclusive classroom is a classroom, which has accepted the right of any student to participate with all others in the process of learning. Differences in race, ethnicity and gender do not lessen that right. Neither does difference in ability. All learners are accepted as members of the classroom community as equal participants within their abilities and needs. It is a place where the child is not asked to change but the environment around him is modified to respond to his unique needs. In this classroom, the teacher believes in education being the fundamental right of one and all.

Why do we need Inclusion?

- **We need inclusion because:**

- ✓ All children have the right to learn together.
- ✓ Children should not be devalued or discriminated against by being excluded or sent away because of their disability or learning difficulty.
- ✓ There are no legitimate reasons to separate children for their education. Children belong together - with advantages and benefits for everyone. They do not need to be protected from each other.
- ✓ Research shows that children do better, academically and socially in integrated settings.
- ✓ There is no teaching or area in a segregated school, which cannot take place in an ordinary school.
- ✓ Given commitment and support, inclusive education is a more efficient use of educational resources.
- ✓ Segregation teaches children to be fearful, ignorant and breeds prejudice.
- ✓ All children need an education that will help them develop relationships and prepare them for life in the mainstream.
- ✓ Inclusion has the potential to reduce fear and build friendship, respect and understanding.
- ✓ Disabled adults, describing themselves as special school survivors, are demanding an end to segregation.

What steps has the government taken towards inclusion?

A recent landmark in the history of evolution of services for disabled persons has been the Persons with Disability Act (1995). Chapter V on Education of the Persons with Disability Act promotes the integration of disabled children into normal schools.

- The government has adopted the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) policy with the aim that all children in the age group of 6-14 years are able to complete eight years of schooling by the year 2010.

- SSA focuses on the Early Childhood Care and Education, as well as on intervention, on children with special needs, and education of girls.
- It also focuses on quality education by "making the education at the elementary level useful and relevant by improving curriculum, child centered activities and effective teaching learning strategies."

There is provision for teacher training and for the child with disability.

Activities started for intervention programme are,

- ✓ Early detection and identification
- ✓ Educational placement in regular schools with needed support services
- ✓ Providing assistive devices, teacher training for an individualized Educational Plan
- ✓ Parental training and community mobilization
- ✓ Removal of architectural barriers
- ✓ Research to educate children to give them equal opportunities.

Section 2

Brief overview of inclusive efforts for the different types of disability:

- Physical disability
- Difficulty in speech and hearing
- Visual difficulty
- Intellectual difficulty.

Physical disability

What can be done to include a child with physical disability in a classroom?

- It is important to know ways in which to conduct activities in a class so that all children are included in it. There are some areas in which children with physical disabilities may face difficulties within a classroom and which may lead to their exclusion. Those areas are:
 - ✓ Seating
 - ✓ Mobility (moving around)
 - ✓ Feeding/Drinking
 - ✓ Toileting
 - ✓ Writing
- It is important to also keep in mind that difficulties can easily be resolved with an open mind, and with some knowledge of solutions that can be carried out in each area.

Why is adapted furniture important for a child with physical and multiple disability?

- It provides security to the child and makes working easier for them.
- Correct sitting posture makes communication easier for the child.
- Eating and drinking are convenient and easier in such a sitting posture.
- It prevents the joints from getting tight and thereby prevents restriction of movement of the joints that may occur at a later date.

How is it possible to design adapted seats?

- Children can sometimes have difficulty in sitting up or have a poor sitting balance. For the rural and peri-urban areas adapted chairs can be made in a very cost effective way using materials like cane, bamboo, bucket, tyre etc. This helps in aiding inclusion in the rural and peri-urban areas.

- Below shown are some photographs of children using adapted seating in the classroom.



This is an example of an adapted seat made in our site. This seat was made by the father of the child with local resources available in the community.



Example of a corner seat made using local resources

Why are walking aids important?

- As a child moves around he experiences his environment.
- This experience leads to development in various other areas. Therefore it is necessary even for a child with mobility difficulties to have this experience.
- To provide a child with disability to have the experience of walking there are various aids available. They are

- ✓ Crutches
- ✓ Walkers
- ✓ Wheelchairs



Example of a walker made using local resources

What are the various aids used for feeding?

There are also some simple aids which if used at home and the school could improve the child's independence in eating.

These aids can be provided by making modifications on regular spoons and cups.



Glass and a straw



Tumbler with handles



Partitioned plate



Modified spoon

Examples of inexpensive and easily available feeding aids

What are the various stages involved in toileting?

- ✓ Indication
- ✓ Going to the toilet
- ✓ Undressing
- ✓ Managing activity independently
- ✓ Cleaning
- ✓ Dressing and coming back to class

- However in the chawls and the community children use the roadside nallas. Hence in the early stages, toileting is never an issue. As children grow older they may require special aids to support them and also to maintain hygiene.

Support to reduce fear



What are the various aids that could be used for writing?

- Writing for children with disabilities may be difficult as they have poor or weak grasp and are unable to hold a pen or a pencil properly.
- This may pose a difficulty with inclusion. But here again this can easily be tackled using simple aids or modifications as and when required.
- Often just a slightly thicker pencil or pen is held better than the pencils of the usual thickness.
- Some other modifications that can be done on regular pencils or pens are by fitting them with the following:
 - ✓ A large eraser
 - ✓ Gas tubing
 - ✓ Thick cloth
 - ✓ Padding done with sponge and leather
 - ✓ A small size potato.

These are pictures of children at the sites receiving training for writing skills.



What are a few things to remember about children with a hearing difficulty?

A deaf child is not necessarily mentally challenged

- ✓ Children who are deaf are sometimes misdiagnosed as mentally challenged, because they do not acquire speech and understanding of spoken language.
- ✓ Unusual sounding speech does not mean the person is mentally challenged.

Absence of speech does not necessarily point to hearing loss

- ✓ There are children with normal hearing who do not spontaneously develop speech. This means that the absence of speech is not always an indication that there is deafness. We must not treat these children as deaf.
- ✓ These children have to be trained to use different and alternative means of communicative devices such as gestures, communication boards, picture mats, flash cards etc.

How can the initial identification for deafness be done?

Early detection, diagnosis, and intervention are important to give the deaf child optimal conditions for language development. It is therefore important to develop the ability to judge if a child has a hearing problem, and if it is so what is the level of his/her deafness. Here are a few points that will be of help.

- **Observe how the child responds to different sounds.** Children in different age groups with normal hearing respond differently to various sounds around them. A deaf child will not respond in the same expected way.

What is the method of training adopted in a classroom?

- **The child needs to be trained and encouraged to understand, and communicate by using words** and gestures that are part of our normal life. This is the first step towards inclusion.
- It is important to remember that for children who are deaf, **language needs to be purposefully presented** and language experiences need to be ongoing.
- **We need to structure the environment for the utmost language input** by relating on their level, through play and daily living activities.
- The teacher should remember that **good teaching is good for all.**

It is essential for the teacher to establish an environment that motivates children to speak and interact in a classroom with each other.



Teaching with flannel board



Using teaching aids

Visual difficulties

Vision, as we all know plays a very important role in development. Children use their sight to learn various things. Many a times we see children rubbing their eyes or looking closely at an object. These could be the symptoms of visual impairment. It is important that visual impairment be detected early otherwise it can affect the child's development.

What are some early signs that could indicate visual impairment?

Some of the signs of visual impairment that should be referred to an eye specialist when noticed:

- The child rubs his/her eyes constantly.
- Crossed or misaligned eyes.
- He/she tilts head.
- The child bangs his/her head or pokes his/her eyes.

What are common visual impairments that we see in young children?

The common visual impairments are **nearsightedness and crossed eyes**. Nearsightedness (myopia) is a condition in which distant objects appear blurry, while crossed eyes is a condition in which one eye does not focus directly at the object to which the other eye is focused. Both these conditions, if not treated, could lead to loss of vision in one eye.

How can a child with visual impairment be included in a classroom?

When a child with visual impairment is included in a classroom, **it is important that he progresses with the other children**. The anganwadi worker should be aware that all children have personal differences. She can help the child feel confident and comfortable with the other children.

How can we help a visually impaired child feel confident?

- **Do not hesitate to use the word 'see'**. A visually impaired child uses this word in his own way.
- **Introduce him in the same way as all the other children.**

- **Include him in all the activities of school.** e.g. physical education, home science, etc.
- **Give him a chance to be the centre of attraction** of the class like all other children.
- **Let the visually impaired child also follow the same rules** in school as others do.
- **Encourage the child to pick up and keep his own things** by himself.
- **Use words instead of gestures** while communicating with him.
- **Let the sighted children know about blindness.**
- If the teacher's attitude towards the child is of **acceptance**, the whole class will accept the child.
- Encourage the **children in the class to interact** with him.

Intellectual difficulty

It is necessary for the teacher and parent to be sensitive and to be aware of the needs of children with different levels of intellectual development.

What are some of the barriers a child with intellectual difficulties experiences?

During the course of a child's intellectual development the child may experience certain barriers in development. These barriers may involve:

- **Difficulty in understanding ideas and words,**
- **Difficulty in understanding instructions,** resulting in problems the child may face while carrying out the task (e.g. Tasks that require basic self-help skills.)
- **A school curriculum that may be difficult to grasp** as this child with intellectual difficulties may experience problems in reasoning as well.
- **Unclear non-verbal gestures** creating difficulties in communication.
- Information which may have been learnt but the child has **a difficulty in recalling.**

What are some solutions that would help children with intellectual problems at varying levels?

- Breaking down complex questions into simpler ones, and dealing with them one at a time
- Involving the child in activities that draw his/her interest thereby gradually increasing their attention span
- Using demonstrations to explain words or ideas, and revising, reviewing as well as repeating information in order to maintain information learnt.
- Explaining a single idea at three different levels. Firstly through picture, then through a three dimensional object and lastly through play.



Using colourful charts



Co-operative play



Developing eye hand coordination



Interacting with children



Involving children



Interacting with children



Action activities