

# Early Intervention in Inclusive Education in Mumbai

## The 'Why' and the 'How'

Manual 6

## How to Work with Parents in Partnership



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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.

## How to work with Parents in Partnership ?

Community preschools are the starting point of community development programmes. They ensure the involvement of the people of the community. **The people of the community are the main resource** for the various tasks of the anganwadi. This manual is based on the experiences of running the anganwadis for two years and presents a factual account of what was done and the frequently asked questions by parents.

## How does one involve the family ?

It is difficult to have full attendance of parents for parents meetings. Therefore to get the mothers to work constantly with you requires **regular interaction with the parents in a preplanned manner**. This aids in building their confidence in your competence and leadership. There may however be some areas that will need to be addressed with mothers

- ✓ Interference in class tasks
- ✓ Irregularity in attendance
- ✓ Non adherence to timings

## How to plan regular interaction with parents

The early interaction of the teacher should be **informal**. Informal discussions should be regularly held when the parents come to drop or take the child from school. The teachers and site heads should be always accessible to the parents.

The issues that need to be regularly discussed with the parents are:

- ✓ The syllabus covered in the anganwadi.
- ✓ Taking time out from their daily routine to follow-up what has been done in the anganwadi.
- ✓ Teaching concepts at home using household items
- ✓ Telling the children stories.
- ✓ Cleanliness and hygiene of the child in the anganwadi.
- ✓ Discussion and solution of any problem the parents may have with the anganwadi or with their child.

The **formal meeting** could be in the form of

- ✓ Open days
- ✓ Small group meetings.

**Additional inputs** could be given on the open day on:

- ✓ Report on progress of the children
- ✓ Future learning in the anganwadi (syllabus)
- ✓ Methods of teaching in the anganwadi and how learning can be enhanced at home through conversation, household items, things in the child's environment
- ✓ Talking to the child in the right language



Discussing the children's performance with parents

The **contents** of small group meetings should cover

- ✓ Information on issues of hygiene, nutrition, education of the girl child and the importance of preprimary education.
- ✓ Discussions of any problems concerning the anganwadi like punctuality of children, doubts about activities, dropping children to school etc.

For formal meetings, **preplanning** is a must. A day before, the anganwadi worker should pay attention to the following areas



Discussion

- ✓ Cleanliness of the venue of the meeting
- ✓ Display of children's work in the anganwadi
- ✓ Preparing the material to be shown to the parents.
- ✓ Content of the issues to be discussed with the parents

Home visits by the anganwadi workers and the site heads also help in regularity in attendance and instilling a belief in the parents about the importance of preprimary education. The anganwadi workers should also conduct home visits to the houses of children (specially children with disabilities) who have been absent for two - three days.

For **children with disability**, inputs to parents should be at both informal and formal meetings. In addition to the general information, inputs need to be provided on:

- ✓ Modified aids for writing or activities like communication board, flashcards, shaving brushes for painting, thick paper for paper folding etc.
- ✓ Feeding patterns
- ✓ Follow-up at home
- ✓ Reinforce the notion that children with disabilities should study in inclusive schools

## How do parents participate in the anganwadi ?

Once parents get interested in the anganwadi work, they are ready to start spending time in the anganwadi. This timing may increase by mutual consent. You should be sensitive to problems of the parents especially concerning:

- ✓ **Personal matters** (husband, mother-in-law, other elders in the family do not want the mother to spend too much time out of house. She has to finish all housework before she does anything else).
- ✓ **Time management** (managing between housework, leaving and dropping other children to school, water filling timings and personal work).
- ✓ **Community matters** (the neighbours will talk about spending time out of the house, people will not like the daughter - in- law to go out of the house to work).

Parents are of great help in the anganwadi in

helping to

- ✓ Maintain the cleanliness in the class
- ✓ Managing the everyday, routine work with children with disabilities like feeding, ensuring the attention of the child in the class (here you can ask parents of the children with disability to sit in the class).



Group learning



- ✓ Helping in the recess to hand out nutrition
- ✓ Feeding children with feeding difficulties
- ✓ Supervision during outdoor play activities

Some mothers and siblings accompanied children from the Jawahar Nagar anganwadi to the Bandra site when they came for play activities. They helped in supervising the children, maintaining discipline, participating in play activities with the children. They not only looked after their own children but the entire group that had come to the garden.

- ✓ Maintaining discipline while you are teaching
- ✓ Helping in making teaching aids and writing work for children who cannot write.

## Remember

- ✓ Give parents the choice of work they are comfortable with.
- ✓ In all interactions with parents, respect their views and understand the circumstances of the problems faced by them.
- ✓ While remaining firm on educational and discipline issues, it is important to convey that we are all partners in the same process.
- ✓ Parents have to feel that they are valued.

While conducting neighbourhood sensitization, parents of children with and without disabilities played an important role in street plays conducted in the community. They helped in making placards, gathering crowds, answering questions from the crowd.

Women from the mahila mandals, parents of children who were attending the anganwadis helped in spreading the awareness in their community about inclusion through rallies and meetings.

Father's too play an important role in the education of pre-primary children. They are involved in:

- ✓ Supporting the child's education
- ✓ Lending their expertise to the anganwadi e.g. one father of a child with disability was a carpenter. He made a special corner chair with the help of plastic tub, for the child to sit in the classroom as well as in the house.
- ✓ Transportation of the child to and from the anganwadi



## Remember

It is important that the father believes that pre-primary education is important for his child (especially for child with disability), as he is the main decision maker in a traditional house. If there is resistance from the father, then:

- ✓ Anganwadi workers and a team member of the community support team should pay home visit and try to convince the father
- ✓ The anganwadi workers can also try to work through the mother who should convince the father.
- ✓ Allow time to the father to get convinced to send the child to the anganwadi. Do not hurry the process.

## Frequently asked questions and concerns of parents

Parents are the most important contributors to a child's progress. Parent's voices need to be heard for the success of any programme. They are important stakeholders who can make contributions in the day-to-day management of the child. To make inclusion work well, parents need to begin with this approach from the birth of the child.

This part of the manual is designed for parents with the following aims:

- ✓ To provide guidelines about the role of parents in the growth and development of their child.
- ✓ To provide parents with information about inclusive education and their role in inclusive education.

- ✓ To empower parents to become advocates of inclusion and work towards building an inclusive community.

Information is provided through the format of 'Frequently Asked Questions' (FAQ's).

## What is Inclusive Education? Why do we need Inclusive Education ?

Inclusive education is when all children, whether disabled or not, rich or poor, boys or girls study together.

Disability is NOT a disease and cannot be cured by drugs. You cannot 'catch' disability by being with a disabled person. A majority of persons with disability can be made self sufficient through education and training. People with disability have similar thoughts, feelings and ambitions like any 'normal' person. They want to laugh, play, learn, have friends, go out and work like you and me.

We need inclusive education because everyone is a part of our society. When children learn together, they learn not to be prejudiced about one another. Children with disability can be and are being educated in mainstream schools. Adults with disability who have gone to special schools have themselves said that they learnt more in mainstream schools. No one would like to be separated from their brothers, sisters, neighbours and friends only because they are different. Through inclusive education, we can have a tolerant society where all are respected.

Inclusion means that everyone is important and can contribute. Inclusion means that we value each and every individual.

## What are the benefits of inclusion ?

Inclusion of children with disability into mainstream schools has benefits for everyone. Children with disabilities have more friends, learn from their friends without disabilities, and live in the same society as others instead of being in a separate, special school. This raises their confidence and self-esteem. Children without disabilities learn about differences, learn to adjust, be tolerant and are more helpful to others.



Learning can be fun



Together we can



**Parents** benefit, as studying in a regular school is less expensive than studying in a separate special school. They also feel a part of the community. The regular schools are usually closer to the house and so save time.

**Society** at large benefits, as educated people with disabilities can contribute to the progress of the country and will not be seen as burdens by their families and society. Inclusion can spread to other issues like communal harmony. A more tolerant and unified society can be created.

## Don't children with disability require special schools and specially trained teachers ?

Many parents feel that their child will learn more in a special school because the teachers are trained and the children will be given more attention. They also feel that in a regular school, the studies are very hard. It has been seen through research that the disabled and non - disabled do better if they study together.



Working towards a collage sticking activity

Sometimes, the teacher makes a child who is good at studies sit with one who requires help. This has been seen to help. Friends in the class can help with copying notes using carbon paper.

It is true that some children would require special inputs. These can be provided outside their school hours to help them catch up with the rest of the class. However, the benefits that a child would get in a regular school, like friendship, learning from one another and the saving of the time and energy that they would spend traveling to a special school, cannot be made up or got through any other way except being in an inclusive regular school.

## Will the other children make fun of my child in a regular school ?

If children see and work with children with disability from the beginning then this will not be a problem. It has been seen that children accept people who are different from them. There may however, be some teasing at school. But this happens with other children too. Sometimes this could be because they have not seen disability before and do not know what to do or say. It helps if children with disability are introduced to them and the disability is explained.



Parents meeting discussing the future of the children

Teachers do find ways of dealing with teasing. You can also talk to the Principal and teachers and the students themselves about your child.

### How will my child take the same examination? He/She cannot write.

There are some concessions given by the SSC board for students with disability. These include:

#### Concessions given to students with Disability in Regular Schools

##### For students with physical disability:

- ◇ Nearest examination centre of their choice
- ◇ Thirty minutes extra time
- ◇ A writer for the examinations
- ◇ Exemptions from drawing maps and figures
- ◇ Oral instead of practical examination in Science (Paper I and II)
- ◇ Permission to study subjects such as Work Experience, Social Service, Workshop Technology and other practical subjects in institutions recognised by the Department of Education/Department of Social Welfare/ Department of Vocational Education and Training
- ◇ Arithmetic at Std. VII level instead of Algebra and Geometry.

##### For students with visual impairment:

- ◇ Nearest examination centre of their choice
- ◇ Thirty minutes extra time
- ◇ A writer for the examinations
- ◇ Exemptions from drawing maps and figures
- ◇ Oral instead of practical examination in Science (Paper I and II)
- ◇ Permission to study subjects such as Work Experience, Social Service, Workshop Technology and other practical subjects in institutions recognised by the Department of Education/Department of Social Welfare/ Department of Vocational Education and Training

##### For students with cerebral palsy:

- ◇ As far as possible, seating arrangement made in the school where they are learning.
- ◇ One hour thirty minutes extra time.
- ◇ Permitted to type or write or provided a writer for the examinations
- ◇ Exemptions from drawing maps and figures.
- ◇ Oral instead of practical examination in Science (Paper I and II).
- ◇ Permission not to complete course on 'Health and Physical Education' if certified by an orthopedic surgeon.
- ◇ Arithmetic at Std. VII level instead of Algebra and Geometry.

## Concessions given to students with Disability in Regular Schools

### For students with hearing impairments:

- ◇ Nearest examination centre of their choice
- ◇ Thirty minutes extra time
- ◇ Permission to study subjects such as Work Experience, Social Service, Workshop Technology and other practical subjects in institutions recognised by the Department of Education/Department of Social Welfare/ Department of Vocational Education and Training

### For students with learning disabilities:

- ◇ Nearest examination centre of their choice
- ◇ Thirty minutes extra time
- ◇ Permission to study subjects such as Work Experience, Social Service, Workshop Technology and other practical subjects in institutions recognised by the Department of Education/Department of Social Welfare/ Department of Vocational Education and Training

**Schools are allowed one extra teacher for every 8 students with disability that they admit in their schools**

## How is inclusion possible ?

First **we** need to change our attitudes. We should understand that if a child cannot walk, the problem is not in the child's body but in the surrounding which does not have a ramp. The ramp would sort out the "problem". The child is not the problem. The environment is - the attitude of society is. Once we understand that the problem is outside the person, we can begin to think of solutions to solve it like proper toilets or ramps. As Gandhiji said,

**"One must be the change one wishes to see in the World"**

Then we need to train the teachers of the regular schools and tell them about disability. This can be done through programmes for teachers. Parents can also talk to teachers, as they know their children best.



Community workers training programme

We also need to work on the physical conditions, the stairs, the toilets, the small spaces, and Braille signs for those with visual impairment. This will happen only when people with disability are out in society.

Inclusion is a process not an event. It will not happen in a day or even a year. All of us have to continuously and constantly work for it.

## What is the law? /What is available to us ?

Do not think of schools doing you a favour. It is the right of your child to go to a regular school.

After independence, the government of India wanted to provide education for all - only children with disability seem to be left out. Even today children with disability are seen as a problem. In India in 1995, the government passed a Persons With Disabilities Act, which says that the government or local authority will try to promote the integration of children with disability into regular schools. It also says that every child with disability has access to free education in an appropriate environment till he attains the age of 18 years.

Recently there has been an amendment to the constitution of India. This is called the 93<sup>rd</sup> amendment and it makes education a **right for all children**.

The government also has a scheme called 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan', (Education For All) under which children with disability must be a part of the regular educational system.

The Supreme Court has also ruled that there should be a 3% reservation of seats for children with disability.

### Some arguments that might be used to refuse admission to your child in a regular school

- ✓ **The school is full.**

Schools are supposed to take children with disability and cannot refuse. Parents should fight for this. No school run by the municipal corporation can refuse to take any child who has completed five years of age.

- ✓ **Your child will be better off in a special school. Special School teachers know how to work with disabled children.**

There is nothing that a special school can give that a regular school cannot. Special education is really good teaching, as it means looking at every child in the class. All over the world we have found that children learn more with good teaching in a regular class than with 'special' teaching in a special school.



✓ **We do not have ramps or lifts and the classes are on the upper floors.**

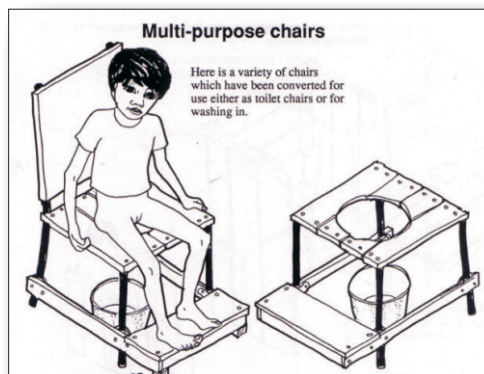
This is true. However this is no reason to deny admission. Some suggestions on this are:

- Classes can be moved to the ground floor.
- You can carry the child up to the class
- You can ask someone else to carry the child up.
- Children help one another in going up the stairs.

✓ **The toilets are not proper for children with disability**

Toilets can be made appropriate with simple changes. For example:

- A stool or chair with a cut out to put over the Indian toilet or a foldable toilet seat
- Readily available plastic potty chairs. These will benefit other small children too.
- Handles or grab bars in the toilet to help the child balance and walk.



Foldable toilet seat





## How to negotiate the admission of your child to your neighbourhood school ?

Prepare yourself and your child well in advance for inclusion.

Know the law in India: There should be no discrimination against any child on the basis of his/her disability.

Speak to the Education Department or the Disability Commissioner if you face a problem

The National Resource Centre for Inclusion, a service of the Spastics Society of India works with mainstream schools to include children with disability. They can be contacted for information, guidance and support.

## Will we need to change as Parents ?

Yes. And it is not just your attitude; your role also will change. You may be required to behave differently. These are some of the differences you may find

In special Schools	In Inclusive Mainstream Schools
The entire team of professionals is under one roof.	You have to make the time available to the team in the school and other professionals required
All feeding and toileting needs are taken care of.	Your efforts and training will be required in these areas
In-house support is available in all areas like physiotherapy, speech therapy, special worker and special educator.	The support provided will be need based. Parent's inputs in the child's progress will increase. It is important for parents to keep in touch with technical resource teams.
You do not need to fight for your rights.	You have to be active and educate the school management.

<p>There is an over - protective attitude.</p>	<p>You need to encourage your child to mix with his/her new friends</p>
<p>The child is viewed as a liability or problem .</p>	<p>Think of the child as a contributing individual with potential that could be developed</p>
<p>The child is hidden from public view</p>	<p>The child is included in all activities and is visible in society.</p>

As parents, your role in the child's life is the most important. Social inclusion should begin from the earliest days. The child's full participation in family life prepares him/her for the inclusive school experience and for life in the community.