

Early Intervention in Inclusive
Education in Mumbai
The 'Why' and the 'How'

Manual 7

How to carry out
an Ecological Inventory



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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.

What is an Ecological Inventory?

An Ecological Inventory is an **analysis of the environment** in which the children live. It is used to design an ecologically valid curriculum.

Ideally, children should be educated in the concepts that they are already aware of. Ecological Inventories are designed by researching:

- The common activities and functional tasks, as well as recreational ones, children in a particular environment usually perform
- The cultural diversity of the community
- Regional, caste and religious differences.

This list is then incorporated into activities in a curriculum. It will be used to decide on equipment, materials, and adaptations to the content of the curriculum. The information in the ecological inventory should be supplemented with a demographic survey to give a full picture of the child's lifestyle.



Home environment

Who conducts an ecological inventory?



Lady at work

Everyone who is in the community support team can administer the ecological inventory. Anganwadi workers living and working in the community, community site supervisors, and research assistants can collect data.

Interviews are conducted with parents, children, and other family members living in the house.

The approach is ethnographic, using a quasi-anthropological approach with observation technique. The tool for data collection is semi-structured interviews and observations with the help of an observation guide (see appendix).

The people in the community welcomed the interviewers. Most of the elders or male members wanted to know what this survey was all about before they allowed the female members to talk to us. This happened even when we went with a known person.



Home visit

Where is the ecological inventory conducted ?

The ecological inventory is conducted in the community where the anganwadi is situated and the children reside. The sample can be 10-15 houses in a community for every 100 children attending the anganwadis. To maintain an unbiased result, a criterion of selection should be decided e.g. every 25th house in a lane.



Child's surroundings

How to conduct an ecological inventory

After these preliminary preparations, draw up a timetable schedule along with the community workers covering:

- ✓ Which areas will be visited on which days
- ✓ Who will administer the inventory in an area
- ✓ How many houses will be covered



How do I go home ?

Along with the observation guide, a diary should be maintained for recording unstructured observations on various visits in the community for other purposes than the administration of the ecological inventory.



Cow shed in the community

When conducting the interviews, the team should visit houses that are willing to participate. The interview should be conducted inside the house, so that those areas that do not need questioning like location of kitchen, utensils used or clothes worn by the members, can be observed. This also increases the comfort level of the people who are interviewed. If you visit the houses in pairs, then one person should question while the other documents the answers.



Interview at home

Remember

- Approach the households for interviews with a person who knows the community and is known in the community e.g. the anganwadi worker.
- Choose a time that most members are free of housework and have time to spare for you e.g. during mid morning or in the afternoon after lunch.
- Explain the purpose of your interview before you start questioning.
- Show respect to the customs and traditions of that community and particularly the house you are visiting.

We ensured that we left our shoes outside the house we were visiting, as was the custom. We also sat on the floor without any qualms. Our dress was traditional so that we were easily acceptable to the elders in the house.

- Have enough copies of the observation guides when going into the community.
- Be sensitive to the time allotted for the interview. If you do exceed the time, then ask permission for further questioning.

Appendix 1 Ecological Inventory Observation Guide

1. General Home Background

- The main earning member of the family _____
- The occupation of the earning member _____
- (Observe the physical condition of the room, for example, ventilation light)

(As observed during the time of visit)

2. Home Environment

Observe the location of the house in details for any kind of environmental hazards present (both inside as well as outside the house)

- Are the children told stories?
Yes No
- What kind of stories are they told?

Probe

- Superstitious beliefs of the family
- How strong are these beliefs?
- How and when are these beliefs communicated to the children?

What are the children's daily routines in the

Morning _____

Afternoon _____

Evening _____

- The kind of objects the child would see in their home

Tubelight	Bulb	Fan
Mixer Grinder	Refrigator	Washing Machine
Television	Tape Recorder	VCR
Radio	Electric Iron	Telephone

- The sleeping arrangements: (Probe the kind of bedding used)

- Place where the clothes are kept
- The clothes that the family members wear

The female members of the house:

The male members of the house:

The children:

- Clothes worn on special occasions

- Shoes worn:

Observe the place where the shoes are kept in the house

- Jewellery

Kind of jewellery

- Place of worship

Observe the place of worship

Observe the materials used while worshipping

Holy days celebrated in the house and how

- Family Recreation (Probe)

When _____

Where _____

Who participates _____

2. a. Kitchen sub- environment (Observe)

- Observe the location of the kitchen
-
-

- Type of food eaten

For breakfast _____

For lunch _____

For dinner

Where is the source of water for drinking and cooking

Is it stored?

What about other storage?

Fuel used to cook fuel

2. b. Toilet sub - environment (Observe)

- What do you use to brush your teeth?

- What time of the day does everyone take a bath?

The Elders:

The Children:

- Where is the bath taken?

- Where is the toilet? Is it an attached toilet or common?

- Where are the clothes washed and dried?

- What do you use to wash your clothes?

2. c. Play

- Activities _____

- Area _____

- Toys and aids _____

- Peer Group _____

Types: _____

- Spontaneous play _____

- Choice of toys _____

- Puppets _____

- Drawing and Painting _____

- Role playing _____

- Dance _____

- Games _____

- Other play/ movement activities _____

3. Geographical Environment (Observe)

- Location of the House (its distance from the main road)

- The nearest

Bus stop_____

Bus depot_____

Railway station_____

- Shops that are found in the locality

- Kind of goods sold in these shops

- Nearest medical centre (dispensary, clinic, hospital)

- Where is the treatment done during ailment?

- Nearest police station

- Tasks performed during

Community special events

Religious functions

Birthday celebrations

3. a. Places of Worship

- Common places of worship in the community

Yes

No

- How often do you go there?
-

- What tasks do you perform there?
-

3. b. Animals

- Which are the animals you see in your environment?
-

- Where are they seen?
-

3.c. Bazaar sub-environment

- Location of the bazaar/ local vegetable market (Probe)
-
-

- Does your child accompany you?
-
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