

***Inclusive education** is one dimension of a rights-based quality education which emphasizes equity in access and participation, and responds positively to the individual learning needs and competencies of all children. Inclusive education is child-centered and places the responsibility of adaptation on the education system rather than the individual child. Together with other sectors and the wider community, it actively works to ensure that every child, irrespective of gender, language, ability, religion, nationality or other characteristics, is supported to meaningfully participate and learn alongside his/her peers.*

## **Why Inclusive Education in Emergencies is important to Save the Children**

As an organization whose mission is to create real and lasting change in the lives of the most deprived children, Save the Children aims to ensure that all children have equitable and continuous access to learning across all contexts. Inclusive education encourages teachers and communities to respect each child's individual learning needs, and support all children to reach their potential.

## **What does inclusive education mean for learning?**

Any teacher who has taught a class with more than one student will likely have noticed that children do not all learn in the same way. Sometimes the differences between children can be subtle, such as when one child understands math concepts slightly faster than her friend, or when another child is able to focus more during lessons about animals. Other differences are more significant, such as when one child speaks a different language, or another child cannot see. No matter what makes a child different from his/her peers, he/she still has the right to attend school and learn. As one UN official once said "All children and young people of the world, with their individual strengths and weaknesses...have a right to education. It is not our education systems that have a right to certain types of children. Therefore, it is the school system of a country that must be adjusted to meet the needs of all children." This means that teachers need to be prepared for their students to have a wide range of differences, and know how to adjust teaching styles to help all of them learn.

In an emergency situation, teachers may find this more difficult than usual. They may have larger classes, and more of the children in the class are likely to be struggling with learning differences. Conflict and crisis leads to more children facing psychosocial distress and physical disabilities. The teachers themselves may also be dealing with stress and often times, they are less-experienced and less-trained than teachers in periods of stability.

Despite these significant challenges, inclusive education is a critical component of an education response. It is important to ensure that vulnerable children – including those with learning challenges or disabilities – are not only able to access the safe and protective environment of a school, but learn while they are there. Inclusive education prepares teachers and communities to welcome all children into schools and temporary learning facilities, and ensure that they have the same access to learning as their peers. Studies have shown that preparing the classroom to meet the needs of diverse students actually helps improve learning outcomes for all children, not only those who were previously excluded.

### **How can inclusive education support learning in emergencies?**

Implementing a comprehensive inclusive education response in an emergency will vary depending on whether there was commitment to inclusion before the crisis, and whether there are any cultural stigmas against all children attending school. If inclusive education was in place before the emergency, response strategies will focus on strengthening the education system to resume providing education to all children. If, however, inclusive education was not in place before, the emergency response can offer a chance to build back better and create new opportunities for children who did not have access to education before the crisis.

#### *Sample Guidance*

The following guidance on using inclusive education to improve learning comes from Save the Children's [Inclusive Education Handbook](#):

- Identify whether the curriculum is flexible enough for diverse learners – advocate for additional flexibility, where necessary
- Ensure that teachers are supportive and welcoming of all students
- Support teachers to establish Individual Education Plans for children who are struggling
- Where possible, work with the MoE and head teacher to establish a Resource Room in the school. A Resource Room is an extra room in the school, where children who are struggling can go during the day for extra instruction and support. It should not be used as a daycare center for students the teacher doesn't want to keep in the class, but as an added value to boost learning where additional or targeted instruction is necessary (e.g. a child who is learning the language of instruction, a child who has a learning disability, or a child who needs a quieter location for test taking and assignment completion). Because this requires an additional teacher – or, if necessary a trained volunteer – it is important to plan closely with the education authorities

- Ensure that teachers have been trained and are supported to incorporate key inclusive approaches, such as (additional strategies in annex):
  - Using active teaching and learning practices
  - Practicing patience, and providing adequate time for children to complete tasks
  - Identifying and encouraging strengths and interests that students have
  - Teaching concepts in as many different ways as possible
  - Assigning buddies to children who need extra help
  - Promote cooperative learning in heterogeneous groups
  - Speaking slowly and clearly, facing the students, to ensure that everyone can hear
  - Using small, concrete steps when introducing a new concepts
  - Communicating with parents so children are supported in their learning at home

Effective learning for all children is also strongly related to, and dependent on, social and emotional well-being. It is important to recognize that conditions may arise which impact negatively on a child's emotional well-being (e.g. conflict, displacement, bullying, violence at home, etc.), place the child at risk, and make him/her less likely to be open to learning. Inclusive, responsive teachers are observant to signs that reveal a child's emotional state, and promote a culture of support in the classroom. Inclusive teachers do not label children or contribute to stereotypes and bullying, they model respectful behavior and foster constructive interactions among learners. Again, good teaching is good teaching for all – a positive, supportive teacher will benefit all of the students in the class.

The full 60-page Inclusive Education Handbook offers concrete guidance on incorporating inclusion into each stage of the program cycle. Although developed for both development and humanitarian contexts, the guidance is easily adaptable to any stage of an emergency response.