

TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR ALL IN PALESTINE

A follow-up study of Inclusive Education Project, Ministry of Education
Final report

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Abbreviations

CBR	Community Based Rehabilitation
EFA	Education For All
IE	Inclusive Education
LFA	Logical Framework Approach (Analyses)
MOE	Ministry of Education
NAD	The Norwegian Association of Disabled
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Education Science Culture Organization
UNWRA	United Nations Relief Work Agency
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

Since the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada in September 2000 a peace seems very distant for the Palestinian people. More than three years of severe violence, incursions, curfews, the separating wall construction and all daily harassments etc. have contributed to a rapid deterioration of the living standards of the Palestinian people in all respects and especially as regards children and their mothers. The Palestinian children have during the past years been affected by a lot of stress and traumatic experiences caused by the Israeli occupation. Deaths and injuries have become part of a child's normal life. Needless to say, disabled children as other weak groups, have suffered more than others. The horrendous events have to some extent hampered implementation of the activities related to Inclusive Education but the flexibility and creativity to solve all upcoming problems displayed by all people involved have been remarkable.

The Palestinian Ministry of Education (MOE) took over a next to collapsed system of education in 1994 and has since then unified the education systems, made ten years of schooling compulsory, elaborated Palestinian curriculum and textbooks, constructed and rehabilitated school buildings, recruited new teachers, conducted in-service training for teachers and principals, etc. In 1997, the Ministry of Education, supported by Diakonia/NAD and UNESCO, initiated the Inclusive Education project, recognizing that children have different educational needs and have the right special education in an inclusive setting.

The current study aims, as stated in the TOR, at "reviewing the adopted inclusive policy by MOE at the primary public schools and informing whether the policy has made any difference to the education environment". The study was carried out during January 17 – 26, 2004. Interviews with students and parents, principals and teachers were conducted, classroom observations in public schools, meetings and discussions with MOE staff, CBR workers, NGO staff and others were held. Four issues have been in focus: 1) What changes have Inclusive Education brought? 2) What are the major achievements? 3) What are the major constraints? 4) What could be the next step?

The main findings are as follows:

- The strategy – change of attitudes, set up of a support organisation, capacity building of teachers, integration of students with minor/medium disabilities – has been correct and has had effect. A solid foundation for Inclusive Education is laid.

- Awareness raising has been successful and seems to have resulted in changed attitudes among teachers.
- The Inclusive Education teams, one at each district Educational Directorate, are well functioning and much appreciated.
- Students with disabilities/special needs are socially well integrated, have been equipped with technical aids but have not got their special educational needs satisfied.
- The average teaching is not child-centred, students are passive and rote learning is dominating – a situation not very conducive for students with special needs
- Teachers have, so far, got very little pedagogical support and many are frustrated.
- Inclusive Education is accepted and is rapidly expanding
- The planning and reporting documents are very poor and can hardly serve as tools for implementation or for evaluation of achievements.
- Inclusive Education is assessed as well anchored in the Palestinian education system and thus sustainable.

The recommendations include:

- Expand Inclusive Education to all schools – make it mandatory for all schools to include students with disabilities/special needs.
- Introduce a new role for the Inclusive Education team members, namely as pedagogical advisors on Inclusive Education. This implies heavy investments in training of the teams in pedagogy and inclusive teaching methodology.
- Train the school counsellors to take over the hitherto role of the IE teams, namely to arrange technical aids and reconstruction of schools for easy access. Gradually, also to take over awareness raising activities.
- Include special education in in-service teacher training in cooperation with IE advisors
- Attend to students special needs in a flexible manner according to individual needs. Collaborate with special education institutions. Appoint and train one teacher per school (half time).
- Establish regional pedagogical resource centres for assessment of students needs, elaboration of educational plans, and for tryouts of technical aids.
- Introduce and train in the use of planning tools as LFA at all levels.
- Elaborate a plan for the coming two years focusing on upgrading of the IE teams and a central team at MOE level.

- Diakonia/NAD is recommended to continue its support by capacity building of MOE staff at central and district level. The cost for the suggested training activities will likely exceed the present budget level.
- Coordinate NGO support, e.g. between Diakonia/NAD, Individual Relief (IM) and Rädda Barnen (Swedish Save the Children).

Finally, Inclusive Education in Palestine, i.e. the achievements so far and the firm commitment to continue the struggle for an education that allows every child to learn according to its needs is indeed praiseworthy. Provided further development of the competence of the support organisation and improvement of the teaching ability, the Palestinian way of approaching Inclusive Education may well serve as a model for many countries of the region.

Foreword and Acknowledgements

First of all I would like to thank Diakonia/NAD staff for the excellent assistance in planning and implementing my mission on the West Bank during 16th –26th of January, 2004. Without their flexibility and brilliant organisation I would have been in great troubles.

I would also like to thank the staff of Ministry of Education, particularly the Inclusive Education Co-ordinators and Team Members for moral, technical and logistical support under complicated circumstances. Moreover, I am most grateful to my translator and driver, Ms. Christine Jildeh, without whom I had been quite helpless.

Finally, last but not least, thanks to all the staff I met at Education Directorates, NGOs and Institutions, to teachers and principals in schools, to parents and students. Thank you for giving me your time and valuable viewpoints during the interviews. Particularly, I would like to thank the teachers for admitting me into the classrooms; I know from own experience that it can be somewhat awkward to have an outsider there, observing the teaching activities.

The warlike situation has affected the implementation of Inclusive Education. This is elaborated in the report. The situation naturally also affected the implementation of my study in the sense that it became difficult to visit Gaza and Nablus, as was planned. However, we managed to visit Qabatya in the north of the West Bank — after a couple of hours of waiting at the check point - and we held a valuable video conference with participants from Gaza.

PROGRAMME CONTEXT

1.1. The Political and Humanitarian Situation on the West Bank/Gaza

After 400 years of Ottoman rule the British mandate over Palestine began in 1922. It came to an end in 1948 with the proclamation of the state of Israel. Jewish immigrants settled on the land of the Palestinian habitants. War broke out between Israel and the Arab states in 1949, ending with Israeli annexation of 78 per cent of the Palestinian land. The remaining areas were occupied by the neighbours; the West Bank by Jordan and the Gaza strip by Egypt. Almost one million Palestinians were displaced.

In 1967, a new war broke out, the Six-Day War, resulting in Israeli occupation of the whole of the West Bank and Gaza, the Sinai peninsula and the Golan heights. Since then, Palestinians have lived in an occupied territory under Israel military forces. Erosion of the traditional local economy has made the population increasingly dependent on Israel, enforced by an elaborate system of political and judicial control. Up to 1987, the occupied territories were governed by the Israeli Civil Administration and the UN Relief Work Agency (UNWRA). In addition, hundreds of NGOs, charity-based or politically driven and mostly funded from abroad, provided basic services in the fields of health, education – and rehabilitation.

The first Intifada, 1987 – 1993, occurred as a response to the continuous harassment by the Israeli aggressors. As a result, it is estimated that some 10,000 young people, mostly boys, became disabled.

In 1988, the Palestinian National Council proclaimed the State of Palestine.

The Oslo Agreement of 1993 was formally a peace accord between Israel and Palestine, which gave the Palestinian National Authority charge of limited areas in the occupied territories. Gradually, Palestinian juridical, legal and executive institutions were set up. The Oslo agreement envisaged, within five years, withdrawal of Israeli troops, agreement on the status of Jerusalem, settlements, borders, refugees etc. After five years, no negotiations had begun.

In 1996, the first parliamentary elections ever were held. A formal Palestinian State was envisaged in 2000.

The second Intifada started in September 2000 as an uprising following repeated aggressions and political provocations and a complete neglect of any meaningful peace process. More than fifty years of occupation, and all ignored UN Resolutions, had again made the occupied people totally lose their patience. More than three years of severe violence, incursions, curfews, full-scale military occupation during months, suicide bombs, hundreds of checkpoints, road blocks, erosion of peoples livelihood, movement restrictions, destruction of farming areas, the separating wall construction, etc. have contributed to a rapid deterioration of the living standards of the Palestinian people in all respects and especially as regards children and their mothers. The Palestinian children have during the past years been affected by a lot of stress and traumatic experiences caused by the Israeli occupation. Almost all activities of daily life have been disrupted. Since the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada in September 2000, death and injury have become part of a child's normal life. Needless to say, disabled children as other weak groups, have suffered more than others from traumatizing events.

These very sad developments during the last three years must be kept in mind when reading the current report. The horrendous events have of course hampered implementation of activities but the flexibility and creativity displayed by all people involved have been remarkable. However, all comments and conclusions should always be read and understood against this frustrating background.

1.2. The Educational Context

The Palestinian Ministry of Education (MOE) took over a next to collapsed system of education in 1994. The Israeli Civil Administration had next to completely neglected maintenance and expansion of education, not to mention quality development. Moreover, the situation was further complicated by the fact that the Gaza strip followed an Egyptian curriculum while the West Bank had a Jordanian system. The textbooks had been severely censored not to include any reference to the Palestinian cause. The vast majority of teachers had insufficient qualifications and the school administrations lacked knowledge about leadership and management. Numbers of students had got their education disrupted as the Israelis frequently had used school closures as collective punishments.

During the passed ten years the MOE have unified the education systems, made ten years of schooling compulsory, elaborated Palestinian curriculum and textbooks, constructed and

rehabilitated school buildings, recruited new teachers, conducted in-service training for teachers and principals, etc – remarkable achievements considering the strenuous situation. The large number of students, around 800 000 Palestinian students are attending elementary schools, which constitutes more than 25 per cent of the total population, does not make the situation easier.

Around 70 per cent of the students attend governmental schools, 25 per cent UNRWA schools (in refugee camps) and 5 per cent private school, mostly run by charity or religious organizations. Basic education consists of ten years, followed by two years secondary education, with academic or vocational orientation. Drop out rate is less than 2 per cent and limits are set for repetition. Girls constitute 50 per cent of all students.

Presently, a five year education development plan is being implemented, focusing on improving the quality of education and developing human resources of the education system, two closely interrelated goals.

1.3 Rehabilitation in Palestine

During the Israeli administration, rehabilitation services, for the few who could benefit, were provided by institutions, characterized by a medical approach, and usually financed by foreign charity organizations. People with disabilities were stigmatized, isolated and discriminated. The first Intifada, or rather, the tens of thousands that became disabled as a result of the Intifada struggles, have changed the image of disabled people. Instead of being ridicule, a person with disability has become a hero. This attitude is said to have had impact on all people with disabilities, at least on those with physical disabilities.

The World Program of Action concerning people with disabilities was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1982. It stresses the right of people with disabilities to have the same opportunities as other citizens and to get an equal share of the economic and social development of the society. The concept of rehabilitation has changed to include as objective the social integration of people with disabilities. Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) was launched by WHO in the beginning of the 1980s and aims at facilitating social inclusion and promoting equal rights and opportunities.

In Palestine, a conference on CBR was held in 1990 and shortly thereafter started several pilot projects in different parts of the country. CBR is now adopted as a national strategy, based on the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, approved by UN General Assembly in 1993. CBR projects cover more than half of the country and most of the rehabilitation services are provided at community level. At medium or regional level, more than 140 institutions and organizations provide rehabilitation services and a few institutions at national level provide specialized services.

In 1997, the General Union of Palestinian Disabled was created and in 1999, a Disability Law was approved by the Parliament. The law emphasizes equal rights and opportunities for persons with disabilities and defines the role of the government as a provider of the needed services.

1.4 Background and overview of Inclusive Education in West Bank/Gaza

Inclusive Education as a philosophy has won terrain in many parts of the world, supported by documents such the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities 1993, documents from the Education Conferences in Jomtien in 1990 and Dakar in 2000 and not least, the Salamanca Conference in 1994. Inclusive education recognizes that children have different educational needs and the right to get response to their variety of needs by individualization of teaching methods, adapted curricula and learning material in an inclusive setting and in collaboration by all actors in and outside school. Inclusive Education is regarded as a means to combat discriminatory attitudes and achieve, in a real sense, an education for all that is effective, efficient and equal.

The Palestinian MOE has adopted this global philosophy and launched Inclusive Education as a pilot project for three years in 1997, with technical and financial support from Diakonia/NAD, Rädda Barnen (Save the Children/Sweden) and UNESCO. According to the documents, the general objectives were to enhance the capacity of MOE to work with a policy towards inclusive education, to strengthen the capacity of district Education Directorates to address special education needs and to enhance the capacity of collaboration between the MOE and other institutional bodies involved in special education. 36 persons, mainly teachers, were appointed and trained by UNESCO consultants and later formed Inclusive Education teams in all districts. They have in turn trained teachers and principals in public

schools, which gradually have been included in the project. The UNESCO Pack Special Needs in the Classroom was and is still used as a basic training material. Awareness campaigns to change attitudes have been at core of the project.

In the end of 1999, a report to review the hitherto achievements was elaborated by George E. Malki. His recommendations included a stronger commitment from all departments of the MOE, clarification of everyone's roles and duties, stronger support to the schools, expansion of the project by including more schools, employment of professional leadership and improved supervision, strengthened cooperation between all actors and much more training to the IE team members.

Since then, three co-ordinators have been employed, the number of schools has increased, and capacity building has continuously been on-going. Up to date, more than 3000 teachers have received a total of 15 days training. More than 300 schools are included, supported by the IE teams, who are part of the General Education Departments of the Education Directorates in all 17 districts in the West Bank and Gaza.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Objectives of the Study

The study aims, as stated in the TOR, at “reviewing the adopted inclusive policy by MOE at the primary public schools and informing whether the policy has made any difference to the education environment”.

Specifically the study would assess

- teaching and learning (whether teachers succeed in teaching “inclusively”; whether the inclusive education approach has benefited the teaching and learning method/ the education environment/)
- developments and changes at visited schools compared to non-inclusive schools
- special needs education (how individual needs of the disabled students are satisfied)
- social relations between students (how peers relate together)

Moreover, the study aims at identifying recommendations to improve the implementation of the policy in the future.

2.2 Comments on Terms of Reference

The TOR, as well as many documents about Inclusive Education in Palestinian schools, refers to the Inclusive Education “policy”; a policy adopted by the Ministry of Education, which I assumed to be a written document, a guiding foundation for the on-going and gradual implementation of the Inclusive Education Project. According to received information such a document does not exist. The “policy” exists as an idea, as an approach and as an acceptance of that Education for All (EFA) includes also students with special needs, with the right to education in mainstream schools. To review “the adopted inclusive policy by MOE” was consequently not possible in the sense of reviewing and analysing a policy document. What this study has assessed is the *implementation* of an inclusive education *approach* in (some) public schools.

Assessment of developments and changes in the schools after the introduction of inclusive education is not based on any previous baseline survey or similar investigation as, to my knowledge, no such study exists. As agreed with Diakonia/NAD, comparisons with “non-inclusive schools” was deducted from the TOR.

2.3 Methods

The study was carried out during January 17 – 26, 2004. In addition to literature study of available documents, I visited, in total, seven public schools, all elementary schools and all located in the West Bank. Some were boys and some were girls schools, other were mixed; some were located in rural, others in urban areas; some were considered (by MOE) as successful others as less successful examples of inclusive education. All were supported by the Inclusive Education Team of the Education Directorate of the district.

Table 2:1 Visited schools¹

District	School	Location	No of students: Tot – B - G	No teachers ² : Tot - M - F	Grades
Ramallah	El Bireh	Urban	466 – 198 - 268	?	1 – 6
Ramallah	AL Mazra'a Al Qiblia	Rural	362 - ? - ?	12 – 6 - 6	1 - 4
Hebron	Alfaihaa	Urban	208 - ? - ?	15 – 0 - 15	1-9
South Hebron	Al Razi	Rural	267 – 114 - 153	12 – 0 - 12	1 - 5
Jerusalem	Alfta Al Laji'a	Urban	325 – 0 - 325	19 – 1 - 18	1 - 6
Qabatya	Arrabeh	Rural	640 – 640 - 0	24 – 19 - 5	3 - 7
Bethlehem	Al'Ibayat	Rural	420 – 77 - 343	17 – 0 - 17	1 - 9

The class size varied considerably, the smallest had 18 students and the largest had 43. The school buildings showed much variety in size and quality; some schools were indeed over crowded while others were newly constructed and quite well equipped.

All schools had identified students with special needs; some had severe physical disabilities such as blindness or deafness while others had minor learning difficulties. One school characterised 25 per cent of the students as having special needs while another had identified less than one per cent.

Four issues have been in focus during the school visits and other meetings:

- 1) What changes have Inclusive Education brought?
- 2) What are the major achievements?
- 3) What are the major constraints?
- 4) What could be the next step?

2.3.1 Classroom observations

Approximately 30 lessons were observed, during different subjects and in different grades. Teacher and student behaviour and activity were observed and special attention paid to the students with special needs, following an in advance prepared scheme. During the breaks I observed particularly what kind of activity students with special needs were engaged in, and if they had contacts with other children.

¹ In addition, at Al Salahaddin school in Hebron district discussions with the principal and a blind student in grade 10 were held.

² Including principal

2.3.2.Interviews

School staff, parents, students, IE team members, MOE staff, and NGO staff were interviewed in accordance to in advance prepared semi-structured forms. All interviews took place in the presence of the interviewee, myself and the translator only.

In each school I interviewed the principal according for 30-45 minutes about his/her perception of inclusive education, view on the participation of students with special needs/disabilities in public schools, role as principal in relation to inclusive education, evaluation of support from the IE team and perceived changes in the school as a result of inclusive education.

In every school I also met individual students with disability and so called slow learners” and tried to find out how they looked upon themselves with regards to strengths and weaknesses, their relation to teachers and peers, experience of other type of school, needs and support and experienced changes during their hitherto school life. In some schools I also met “average” students to learn about their attitudes towards their classmates with special needs.

Teachers were interviewed in group; usually also the school counsellor participated. They discussed advantages and disadvantages as regards the participation of students with disabilities/special needs in the mainstream classroom, from various points of view. They were also asked to evaluate the training they had participated in and whether their teaching and/or their attitudes and perceptions had changed as a result of the training.

Finally, in most schools parents were met and were asked to give their view and experience of education for their son or daughter. All the interviewees were asked to suggest improvements to make inclusive education function better.

During each school visit one or more IE team member participated (but not during the interviews) and we had many discussions in the school, in the car or at the office of Education Directorate. There I also met the Directors of General Education and got their views on inclusive education. Moreover, the two coordinators of inclusive education were interviewed as well as the responsible person at central level and staff from Diakonia/NAD.

2.3.3 Video Conference

A videoconference with participators from Gaza was held during three hours. Some 25 people, i.e. teachers, parents, students, IE team members, CBR staff, MOE staff and others responded to questions similar to those mentioned above.

2.4 Limitations of the Study

One major limitation is my own deficient knowledge of the Arabic language and the fact that I had to rely on translation of both questions and answers. Secondly, the limited time (but effectively used!) and scope of the study should also be kept in mind when reading the report and my own relatively shallow knowledge of the Palestinian society. Beyond the scope of this study is assessing the possibility of a tighter cooperation with special schools; however, it had been valuable to also visit such schools and discuss with their staff.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Introduction

In spite of the extreme situation in the West Bank and Gaza there are several favourable conditions for Inclusive Education. The enrolment rate is 95 per cent or higher and girls constitute their just part of the students. Generally, the Palestinian population has a high educational level and a majority of teachers have Diploma or BA in Education as educational background. The fact that the country is small and densely populated favours a rapid spread of new ideas, which the swift dispersal of the concept of Inclusive Education shows. The concept of Human Rights seems to be widely known, as well as Education for All. The fact that Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) has quite a long and successful record is also favourable for Inclusive Education. The sad fact that many have been disabled as a result of injuries caused by participation in the Intifada may also have contributed to a wider understanding of the right to education for all, also for those with special needs.

3.2 Inclusive Education – a project, a programme or something else?

There is a confusion regarding the character or status of Inclusive Education, a confusion displayed in the documents as well as among the practitioners in the field. IE started as a three years pilot project in 1997 and passed through certain stages until it was functioning inside a

number of schools and a support organisation was set up. In a report of September 1999 the progress was assessed and recommendations for future actions were made. In this report the pilot project has become a programme. In other documents it is called approach or philosophy.

The MOE Plan of Action for the year 2000 considers the recommendations of the above mentioned report and has well elaborated objectives, translated into a number of activities. However, only few activities seem to have been implemented according to the (short) report the following year. For the years 2001-2003 I have no plans available, only the agreements between Diakonia/NAD and the MOE but the reports for these years refer to planned activities. In general, the planning and reporting documents are very poor and can hardly serve as tools for implementation or for evaluation of achievements. The goals and objectives vary with the documents, are often vague, dates are missing and objectives and planned results are confused. Some examples of objectives:

- to develop a policy towards education for all at Ministry level
- to build the abilities of the education directorates on developing the concept of special needs education in its schools
- to achieve equal opportunities through the inclusive school for all students
- to create basis for cooperation between ministries and organizations for supporting children and youth with special needs
- to strengthen the central and regional capacity of the MOE to implement this policy.

The reports inform about workshops, conferences, meetings and visits but only seldom provide any information of outcomes or lessons learnt. The conclusion is that there is a great need for practical training in how to elaborate useful plans and reports.

The confusion of vocabulary – project, programme or approach – has implications as regards who is “in”. Only some schools in the district are “in” although all schools have students with special needs. In some schools all students with special needs are “in” while in others only those with evident physical disabilities. The number of “included students” ranges from 25 per cent of all students in the school to less than one per cent. This confusion seems to cause unnecessary problems – see chapter 4:2 for a possible solution.

3.3 Inclusive Education strategy

The Palestinian Authority has, as most countries in the world, adopted Education for All as a guiding policy for its educational activities. As mentioned, any elaborated policy for Inclusive Education does not exist, (consequently) neither a strategy document. However, in *practice*, a strategy for achieving Inclusive Education has been adopted and includes four components:

- 1) A gradual expansion of schools to include "in" Inclusive Education, and selecting schools assessed as having possibilities for success. In 1997, when the pilot project was initiated, 30 schools were included and in 1999, at the end of the project, 89 schools were included. The number increased to 127 in 2001, to 233 in 2003 and amounts presently to 305. (Totally, there are around 1500 elementary schools in the West Bank and Gaza).
- 2) Capacity building, employment and continuous upgrading of support staff, i.e. the IE teams employed by MOE in each Education Directorate, and three co-ordinators, totally 39 persons.
- 3) Focus on attitude change in awareness raising campaigns, information activities, training sessions and workshops for teachers, headmasters, parents and communities.
- 4) Integration of students with less severe disabilities and special needs of less magnitude (mainly).

A change of the often deeply rooted attitudes people have towards disabilities is a prerequisite should inclusive education be accepted and understood. To alter perceptions about disabilities is a long process that needs to be initiated in case the right to education in inclusion should eventually become a reality. That involves removal of prejudice and fear and passes along a pathway of charity and compassion, acceptance and solidarity, to equity and equal opportunities. The concentration of attitude change in the training and information campaigns was (and is) a necessary precondition for launching Inclusive Education.

Implementation of this “new” philosophy – that education for all includes also students with special needs – had likely been much more cumbersome had all the schools been included at once. The slow but sure development is most likely a very correct measure.

From the school visits, I got the impression (but have not found any proof in the documents) that part of the strategy has been to introduce only students with less grave special needs in the mainstream schools, an action that has facilitated the inclusion for all parties. There are

exceptions, for example deaf and blind students, but there seems to be no multihandicapped children and only few, if any, with severe mental retardation in the public elementary schools.

In sum, the chosen strategy has turned out to be very relevant and appropriate and has created a foundation for continuation and development of Inclusive Education.

3.4 Major achievements

3.4.1 Attitudes have changed!

There seems to be no doubt that attitudes and perceptions towards people with disabilities have changed. Practically all the people interviewed described how they had altered their ideas. Everyone witnessed a “before” and an “after”: before the meeting or before the training certain prejudicial ideas had been dominating but after learning to know the student or after getting more knowledge a more informed perception had replaced the previous opinion.

Some teacher voices:

- When they came here and said that we were going to receive disabled students in our school I just simply rejected at first. We were not trained, we had no space, we had no material and how should we have time – I found a number of reasons for my rejection. But I must admit I was wrong. He is not very particular, he is just like everyone else and I think he is an asset for the whole class.
- When I heard that the class had a disabled student in class I did not expect her to be able to do anything at all and I could not see the point of having her just sitting there. But I was very wrong.
- I was afraid that I as a teacher would not be able to cope with the disabled student, how I would react or what I should do. But soon I discovered that it was not so special.

All groups – teachers, principals, students, parents - have found advantages of including students with disabilities/special needs in the classroom. The disabled students are no longer isolated, they participate in social life, they gain self-confidence and they learn normal behaviour from other students, are some of the provided arguments. For students without disabilities there are also many advantages: they learn that all are equal despite differences, they learn to share and cooperate, to accept differences and to care for others. For the parents, the advantages were seen as an opportunity for alleviation and for shared responsibility.

Parents also expressed the satisfaction of having their son and daughter at home and not at an institution far away. The teachers, although frustration and feelings of insufficiency dominated (see below), could also see some advantages for themselves, namely as a valuable experience, a satisfactory feeling of doing a humanitarian work but also learning and accepting that all student share the same right to education in the same school.

It is worth mentioning particularly that all the principals as well as the Directors of General Education were evidently very much in favour of Inclusive Education, something that is of great importance for the continuation. Active support from the leadership at all levels is of utmost value for success.

That attitudes have changed and are constantly changing is a major achievement that cannot be underestimated. The work done in this regard is worth all respect and has an enormous significance for future development.

3.4.2 Students are socially relatively well integrated

In many countries, students with disabilities/special needs participate on equal terms in education activities but are isolated in the breaks and after school. In Palestine, it seems to be on the contrary. According to my observations and information received from all parties, students with disabilities/special needs are not alone. In the best of cases they play together with others as everyone else, many had some special friends to talk to and play with while others were at least not left alone but cared for by the other students. Other students were encouraged to take care, sometimes in turns. Such a situation is of course far from ideal, but considering the starting point and the present alternatives it could be worse.

3.4.3 Students with special needs are detected

It is estimated that approximately 50 per cent of the students with disabilities/special needs have been introduced to the schools by an IE team member. The other students were there before or would have been in school regardless of the MOE initiative. Schools and IE team members apply different ways of registering students as disabled or as having special needs; this is particularly true for students with developmental delays, learning problems or reading difficulties. However, slowly it is getting understood what is really important, namely, not the diagnosis or the cause of the problem in the first hand but rather identification of the special educational needs the student has and how to respond to his or her particular need. The view

that “slow learners” are hopeless cases is giving way for the view that they first of all are learners, learners with special needs, which the school has to respond to. There is still a long way to go before this has become the reality but already today many children with disabilities/special needs have got a chance to develop and learn, not least socially and psychologically as a result of Inclusive Education.

3.4.4 The concept of Inclusive Education is widely spread

That education is a right for every child is since long acknowledged in Palestine. That the right to education includes students with special needs is also widely accepted. Gradually, it is recognised that students with special needs have the right to get their needs of special education satisfied in an inclusive context. Inclusive Education is gaining grounds and many more schools than those included in the list as “inclusive schools” have admitted students with disabilities/special needs. They contact the Education Directorate for assistance and it happens quite often that the IE team members visit these schools as well.

3.4.5 The support organisation is functioning well

All 17 districts of the West Bank and Gaza have at their Education Directorates two or three IE team members employed at the department of General Education. They have a comprehensive job description, focussed on awareness raising in schools, provision of training for teachers, improvement of the physical environment and co-ordination with other actors. The IE teams described the main areas of their work as 1) to change attitudes among school staff and peers and 2) to facilitate for the disabled students to participate in the public schools. The first task is carried out through provision of training sessions and workshops, through meetings and discussions at regular school visits, etc. By providing technical aids, reconstruction of schools to improve access, through referring contacts with CBR projects, special education schools, rehabilitation institutions, etc. the IE team members facilitate the integration of students with disabilities. They are supervised by the Director of General Education and seem to be well integrated and acknowledged in the education departments. Each member is responsible for 5-10 schools with a varied number of students with special needs/disabilities.

Since a few years, three co-ordinators are employed, one for the north and one for the south of the West Bank and another one in Gaza. They function as a necessary link between the IE teams and the MOE and as a link between the teams and the districts. The co-ordinators

represent the MOE and in an ideal situation would rather make up a team at central level; however, in the present situation this decentralisation is necessary. Unfortunately, none of the coordinators of the West Bank could currently travel in more than two (of the intended six-seven) districts.

The IE team members all seemed enthusiastic and committed to their work and were welcomed by the schools. Some confusion or irritation was found with regards to their title; they are called IE counsellors and are confused with the school counsellors.

3.4.6 Great investments in training.

The IE teams (36 members, 3 coordinators and the MOE administrator) have continuously been upgraded after the initial training and approximately 3000 teachers have been informed in various workshops, totally some 15-20 days duration. Schools are visited on regular basis (once a week or once a month) by the IE teams. Their support is generally much appreciated. Lately, IE teams have also lectured at universities about Inclusive Education.

3.4.7 Children with disabilities have got technical aids

A number of schools have been physically adapted to facilitate access, mainly for students in wheelchairs. Ramps have been constructed and WCs have been built. Moreover, a lot of students have received technical aids, often as a result of the efforts by an IE team member. Financing the reconstruction of schools and the technical aids has been the responsibility of MOE, NGOs, the local community, charity organisations, rehabilitation institutions, etc.

3.4.8 Diakonia/NAD's role is limited to technical support

Diakonia/NAD's financial support to Inclusive Education has mainly been directed to training. For the year 2002-2003 the total contribution from Diakonia/NAD to MOE amounted to SEK 250 000 (approximately USD 20 000), out of which around 60 per cent was spent on training activities. No salaries have been paid by Diakonia/NAD. Moreover, Diakonia/NAD's staff has played the role of discussion partner and has supported the advancement of Inclusive Education.

3.5 Major constraints

3.5.1 Teachers have got too little pedagogical support

Teachers get too little support in their work as teachers. Most of them accept the philosophy of Inclusive Education and many have indeed changed their previous perceptions about disabled students. Generally, they appreciate the IE teams but most of them feel deeply frustrated in their role as teachers of a class where one or more students have special educational needs. They express feelings of insufficiency and they often regard themselves as inadequately equipped for the task and have no idea of what it means to teach “inclusively”. They feel overloaded, abandoned and have no one to ask. The IE team member arranges technical aids, listens to the problems and informs about the philosophy but has very little to give as regards teaching methodology. One problem, mentioned by the IE teams, is that teachers often are transferred to other schools; once a student with disability has been introduced and the teacher is trained by the IE team he or she is moved to another school.

How do teachers deal with their frustrations? Very differently, and, not unexpectedly, the headmaster/mistress seems to have great importance for how teachers cope with their situation. In some schools, teachers were involved in supportive and constructive discussions, while in others the frustrations were allowed to affect the work negatively. Sharing experiences and ideas in an atmosphere of mutual understanding of that education *is* a right for all students is of course much more productive than daily repetitions of complaints, where blame is constantly put on others and solutions just cannot be found.

Teachers are at the core for progress and future success of Inclusive Education. They are important models for the children and their way of dealing with *all* students in the classroom is decisive for a real inclusion. Teachers deserve support and acknowledgement and they are in urgent and compelling need of capacity building. So far, one can say that teachers have got psychological but not pedagogical support. Neglecting capacity building of teachers may jeopardise further advancement of Inclusive Education.

3.5.2 The average teaching is not conducive for learning for students with special needs

The teaching and learning in classrooms have a clear competitive character. Seldom are students given the chance to think before answering; rather, as quick replies as possible are promoted. It seems to be most important to be the first to raise the hand. The questioning and answering keeps a very high speed. A slow learner has not much opportunity to participate in this race.

Learning in classrooms is in general quite a passive act. The teacher asks questions and the students answer (the expected correct answer). Students read aloud from the textbook one at a time or all in chorus. They repeat phrases said by the teacher. They are often encouraged to scream and the sound level in the classroom is often extremely high - a horror for a student with a hearing aid. Students are called to the blackboard one by one to write something or everybody copies what the teacher writes on the blackboard. In short, memorisation and rote learning are dominating the teaching and learning process, which hardly can be of benefit for any student, with or without special needs. The teacher is often very active while most students are passive. There are exceptions from this dark picture and I saw attempts, particularly in grade 1 and 2 by female teachers, to alter these patterns. There are of course many, both historical and political, explanations to this situation, and Palestine is far from alone of an education system that favours teaching and learning without reflection.

Many teachers were very concerned about passing through the set curriculum in time. They feared the control from the supervisors of the Education Directorate. For some teachers it seems as passing through the curriculum in order to satisfy the supervisors was more important than what students learn, how they learn, how useful their learning is, etc.

Capacity building of teachers with focus on reflective practice, observation techniques, variety of teaching methods, individualisation (possible at least to some extent also in crowded classrooms) is urgently needed and would favour all students, also those with special needs. To change the one-way communication in classrooms and alter the activity focus from the teacher to the students is, needless to say, a long term process that will require years to attain. That teachers generally seem nice and kind to children is an advantage that will facilitate a change.

3.5.3 Students' special education needs are not responded to.

Students with physical disabilities have, to varied degrees, special education needs as a consequence of their disability. In the classrooms, there are also students with learning difficulties who learn slower or differently than the average students do. In some schools, there may be mentally retarded students, too. In general, students' special education needs are not responded to, neither within the classroom setting nor individually. This is particularly true for slow learners, and have particular effects for this group of students. They are constantly lagging behind and their learning situation becomes more and more complicated.

They lose more and more of their self-confidence and self-esteem. They sit in the classroom and make only little progress. Their social situation is usually acceptable but their education is often neglected.

3.5.4 Inclusive Education is understood as a disability project

Although Inclusive Education is widely accepted it is a long way to go before it is seen as a broadening of the EFA concept, i.e. Education For All includes children with special needs – with a right to education in inclusion. (Such understanding is yet to be common in many countries). Education staff, parents and students alike regard Inclusive Education as a project to help disabled students; it is seen as a humanitarian or religious obligation: it is our duty to take care, to assist and help those who are less well equipped or have been less favourable than ourselves. That they are equal and should have equal opportunities is not yet a fully internalised idea.

3.6 Conclusive remarks

A *solid foundation* for Inclusive Education is built in the sense that the concept seems to be widely accepted, at least in a shallow sense. The awareness raising campaigns have been quite successful and attitudes are gradually changing, a prerequisite for further progress. Numerous children with special needs/disabilities have got a chance to be seen as children in their own right - not as burdens or problems. They are more and more regarded as children with the same rights as other children, including the right to education. Slowly, there is a growing comprehension that children with special needs/disabilities have the right to an education that responds to their special needs, i.e. ***a right to special needs education in an inclusive setting.*** It remains to find solutions for how to satisfy these needs in practice. The present teaching capacity and quality in schools is an obstacle to overcome.

The *relevance* and timing of Inclusive Education is good. The high enrolment and retention rates, an assumed above average number of children with special needs/disabilities, teachers' relatively high education level, a general acceptance of students with special needs, institutional experience of special needs education - all conditions that make the initiation and further development of Inclusive Education highly relevant.

Provided further steps are taken, in particular capacity building of and support to the teachers in order to improve the learning conditions, I consider the *sustainability* of Inclusive

Education as reasonably well ensured. Inclusive Education is firmly established at the district Education Directorates (maybe more steadfastly there than at the central level of MOE) and is acknowledged as important for the materialisation of Education for All. There is no doubt that the ownership of Inclusive Education belongs to the Palestinian authorities. The support from Diakonia/NAD has - correctly - been directed solely towards capacity building.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 A New Stage

Inclusive Education has reached a stage where it is high time to take the next step. After a period focussed on awareness raising, facilitating access and provision of technical aids, a new period where the needs of the students should be in the centre has to come. Inclusive Education is about the fundamental right to education for every child. It is about recognising the fact that every child has unique characteristics, abilities, interests and needs and that schools must accommodate all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. Some have special educational needs, arising from disabilities or learning difficulties and they should be included in educational arrangements made for the majority of children. Inclusive Education is about accomplishing an education that considers all students' individual needs in a setting that does not exclude anyone. To develop a child-centred pedagogy, which provides quality education to all children is the challenge. From such pedagogy all children benefit. Such pedagogy assumes that learning must be adapted to the needs of the child rather than viewing teaching as “one-size-fits-all-instruction”. Child centred instruction takes the child’s abilities and not impairments as the starting point.

To advance towards such a goal, the teachers, needless to say, are crucial. The next period is recommended to concentrate the activities on capacity building of the teachers.

4.2 Expand to include all schools

At first, it seems appropriate and tempting not to expand Inclusive Education further, i.e. not to include more schools and students. It appears more correct to consolidate and review, to strengthen the focus on quality instead of quantity. The IE team members would then continue

to work on attitudes, an activity that indeed is time consuming and worth while. The more than 300 schools now "in" represent 20 per cent of all schools in the West Bank and Gaza.

However, it is simply not possible. Inclusive Education is expanding regardless of plans for consolidation. The concept of Inclusive Education is spreading rapidly; students with disabilities/special needs enter into public schools, parents demand education for their children and the teachers, trained in the concept of Inclusive Education are transferred to new schools bringing the new concept with them. Many schools, not "in" the register of the IE team contact the Education Directorate for assistance and team members visit also these schools for information and support. The snowball is rolling and cannot be stopped. Inclusive Education is here to stay - expansion is ongoing.

It is time to stop thinking of Inclusive Education as a project or programme, with schools and students "in" or "coming in". It would be better to consider IE as a way of broadening the concept Education For All and include students with special needs. *Education is a right for everyone and those with special education needs have the right to learn in inclusion.* Inclusive Education is rather an attitude towards children and children's needs, which implies another way of teaching *all* children. Therefore, it is recommended to work for an inclusive approach to teaching and learning in all schools.

Still, there is a need for special support to schools with students with disabilities/special needs and still the IE teams will be needed, although, as suggested below, in another role. The Education Directorates are responsible for, on average, some 90 schools in their districts. It is suggested that all schools should accept Inclusive Education. The IE team members, at the beginning of the year, should survey some 30 schools each (10 are already well known) to plan their activities, prioritising support, schools for visits, teachers for training, students for referrals etc. With good planning it should be possible to serve all schools in the district, albeit to varied degree each year. Together with the other measures recommended below it is assumed that the support to schools would improve even when all schools are "in".

Project or not, still needed for quite some time is to have a particular management group at the ministry level, a team that works for mainstreaming in collaboration with the other departments at MOE, that works for development of the support to schools, for improvement of inclusive special education, for cooperation with NGOs and donors etc. The team at MOE

needs strengthening; it is recommended to discuss whether an expatriate on long or short term basis would be beneficial or if reinforcement of the capacity can be found locally.

4.3 Continue to change attitudes

However, awareness raising is and has to be a never-ending campaign. Continuation of information activities, particularly face to face meetings, is recommended. Visits to all kinds of schools, kindergartens, public and private schools, vocational centres, universities, etc. are recommended. Also, and not least, to pay special attention to special education institutions, rehabilitation institutions and organisations is particularly important in order to convince them of Inclusive Education and to discuss their future and important role in another system. Parents' organisations, Mothers' and Fathers' Councils, village councils, cultural organisations, media, etc.- there are numbers of possible partners to involve in the work of changing attitudes. It is strongly recommended to *plan* information activities, to set objectives and expected results, to plan activities and set indicators, etc. Co-operation and co-ordination with CBR programs, Children's Secretariat, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Information, etc. is necessary.

4.4 Attend to students' special needs

To attend to students' special educational needs can and should be done flexibly. Some students need a calm and less stressful environment than the classroom now and then, to catch up, to learn in his/her own pace and own way, to get individual support etc. For some students participation in a special school one or two days per week may be a solution worth trying. For others, learning alone or in a small group one hour per day or every other day could be an option. A teacher from a special school attending the school one or two days per week, spending a lesson per class is another alternative. Reducing the number of students in classes with students with disabilities/special needs would make it possible for the classroom teacher to pay more attention to those in extra need.

It is recommended to start planning for special education for students with special needs. To make plans for individual students, to set objectives, expected results, etc. and evaluate the outcomes at the end of the school year is a measurement to start with for at least some of the students, if not all in the beginning. It goes without saying that it is important to involve parents, teachers and principals in such planning.

It is recommended to appoint one teacher per school to act as a focal point for special education. He or she could work half time as an ordinary teacher and half time as special education teacher, working individually or in small groups with some students or assisting the teacher and the students in classrooms. He or she would be responsible for the individual student plans and would be the contact person for the IE team member. Such special education teacher would need substantial training about different students different needs of special education, preferably provided by the IE team members (after upgrading, see below) and in cooperation with special education institutions.

4.5 Improve the teaching capacity

To improve the teachers' capacity to teach inclusively, i.e. to involve and encourage all students, to adapt the teaching to individual students, to vary the methodology, to accommodate student activities in accordance to shifting abilities, to promote everyone, etc., etc. is essential for progression of Inclusive Education. A total of 15 days information is just not enough! Capacity building of teachers must focus on practice and leave aside too theoretical considerations and it should be followed up on site. Crucial is the teachers' own ability to reflect on their role and behaviour, on what, why and how they teach and how to encourage the students to reflect and think. Teachers are recommended to learn observation techniques and to observe each other's teachings.

The educational needs of students with disabilities/special needs must be perceived and addressed within a larger context rather than separately. To address the learning environment for *all* students to become more student-centred will also benefit students with disabilities/special needs. Inclusive Education as a strategy can pave the way for development of teaching and learning processes and eventually for Education for All.

It is recommended that the IE-team members (after upgrading, see below) become responsible for a continuous upgrading of teachers. To my information, in-service training is continuously provided to Palestinian teachers within the project Educational Development. It seems relevant to co-ordinate this training with the one to be provided by the IE teams.

4.6 Develop the support organisation

The team at central level at MOE, i.e. the administrator and the three co-ordinators, is recommended, if possible, to held regular, frequent and structured meetings to plan and evaluate the progress of Inclusive Education. It is recommended that the Director of General Education take a lead role and closely supervise the central team. It is also necessary to closely co-ordinate activities with other departments of MOE. Inclusive Education, as a philosophy or approach should permeate all education activities at MOE.

It is recommended to change the role of the IE team member to become primarily a pedagogical advisor. His/her hitherto role as facilitator (arranging technical aids, organising contacts, finding funds for reconstruction, etc.) could be taken over by the school counsellors - in fact, a role they already have partially taken over in many schools. The role as promoters of IE can also partially be transferred to school counsellors but will naturally to some extent remain with the IE team even when the team members become pedagogical supporters. However, I see it as important that they become just supporters, or counsellors, or advisors and *not* supervisors, who have a task to control and assess the teachers. Advisors for inclusive education may be an appropriate title.

The majority of the IE team members are teachers originally but need comprehensive upgrading in order to function as pedagogical advisors. The core subject is suggested to be children's cognitive, social, emotional and communicative development, particularly how children think and learn. Reflective practice, observation techniques, individualisation in the classroom, students' needs of special education, communication and advisory techniques are other important topics - all to be as practically oriented as possible. Such training can partially be provided by teachers from special education institutions, by education departments of universities and in cooperation with foreign organisations/consultants.

IE team members turned into advisors for inclusive education would still be responsible for a number of schools and would still visit the schools on regular basis. Their main duties would be 1) to advice the classroom teachers on how to teach inclusively; 2) to advice the special education teacher on special education of certain students; 3) to advice the counsellors in their duties and 4) to participate in in-service training of teachers. To equip the IE team members for such a change of roles would extensively raise the quality of Inclusive Education. Most

teachers would likely become more comfortable and skilled and students with special needs would have a chance to develop also academically.

This shift of duties implies that the school counsellors also receive extra training.

4.7 Establish Regional Pedagogical Resource Centres

During the next stage, say, within a period of three-four years, it is recommended to establish regional pedagogical resource centres, two in the West Bank and one in Gaza. These centres would employ two - three special education teachers, one psychologist, one physiotherapist and one speech therapist. The centres would function as referrals, where students with special needs would come for assessment. Students' strengths and weaknesses, or, in other words, their abilities and disabilities would be explored and based on this appraisal an individual "educational plan" with training activities to do in school and at home would be elaborated. The parents and the student, the special teacher of the school and the advisor for inclusive education (= the IE team member) together with the expertise of the centre would plan the activities and make an evaluation after one year. The centre would also try out and prescribe technical aids. Its most important task, however, would be educational, i.e. to facilitate for the mainstream school to instruct also students with special needs.

To make such centres viable, the selection of staff is a keen issue. Their professionalism is decisive but also their attitudes towards Inclusive Education. Likely, some upgrading will be necessary.

4.8 Plan, implement, monitor, evaluate and report

The documents related to Inclusive Education are unclear, sometimes contradictory and inconsistent. Objectives are confused with activities, there are no indicators, reports are just lists of achievements without analyses. Evidently, the project documents have been of no use as *tools* for implementation, monitoring, evaluation and follow up/reporting.

To enter into the suggested new stage requires considerable improvement of the planning capacity. It is recommended that the MOE and Diakonia/NAD staff undertake courses in e.g. the LFA methodology. First, a clear overall objective, a goal for some 5-10 years, is to be elaborated, stating the educational, social, and economic benefits to which the Inclusive

Education approach will contribute. Secondly, the specific objective(s), or the purpose(s) state the goal IE *intends* to achieve within 1-2 years - a specific, measurable, accurate, realistic and time bound objective. The expected results or outcomes that can be *guaranteed* within the timeframe are the next steps of the plan. Finally, activities are planned, activities that are *means* to achieve the objectives, that address the causes and thereby achieve the planned results. Inputs, i.e. resources such as technical expertise, equipment, premises, funds, and time must be planned and budgeted and indicators be elaborated. Indicators are very important to formulate, they are objectively verifiable measures for objectives and results and answers the questions:

- for whom (target group)?
- what (implementation)?
- how much (quantity)?
- how good (quality)?
- when (period of time)?
- where (geographical area)?

With careful and thorough planning, proper implementation is possible, monitoring of activities can be meaningful, evaluation and reporting can be useful and valuable instruments for continuous advancement and improvements. It is strongly recommended to learn and use proper planning tools.

4.9 Co-ordinate

Diakonia/NAD has supported Inclusive Education since its initiation in 1997. Rädda Barnen (Swedish Save the Children) participated with funds and expertise in the beginning but has dropped out later. Individual Relief (Individuell Människohjälp, IM) is another Swedish NGO involved in rehabilitation in Palestine. IM supports a few institutions for mentally retarded children and youth but is presently planning to change its approach towards inclusive education.

For the next stage it seems necessary to co-operate and co-ordinate the support. It is recommended that MOE takes the initiative to elaborate a plan for a next stage and invites NGOs to participate and to support.

Such a plan, for the coming two years, for example, is recommended to focus on five target groups:

- 1) The IE teams. A training plan for the IE teams with pedagogical issues, covering the areas mentioned above is a prioritised area should they convert into Advisors for Inclusive Education. Such training is suggested to run one day per week (or correspondingly). Moreover, the capacity for planning, implementing and evaluating the work is crucial for the effectiveness of the work of the IE teams and should be given considerable time in the training. Likely, foreign expertise is needed in addition to national specialists and likely, the training has to continue for the next planning period as well.
- 2) Special institutions. It is recommended to survey existing special schools and if possible, appoint one per district to collaborate with public schools. As a first step, it is recommended to co-operate around students who would benefit from spending a day or two per week at the institution. Information about Inclusive Education to the staff of these schools is inescapable.
- 3) Special education teachers at public schools. The MOE is recommended to appoint one teacher per school to function as focal point, working half time for Inclusive Education as suggested above. During this period, special training for these teachers has likely to be limited to the information and advice they receive from the IE teams (the Advisors for Inclusive Education) but for the next phase more comprehensive training is needed, particularly on special education.
- 4) School counsellors. Training about the philosophy Inclusive Education, aid provision, awareness campaign techniques etc. is recommended to be included in the plan.
- 5) MOE central team (including the co-ordinators). Strengthening the capacity in the first hand in planning techniques, preferably the LFA technique, is strongly recommended for the next period; possibly, external expertise is needed.

For Diakonia/NAD it is suggested to continue to support the "soft" parts of the program, particularly the training activities of the IE teams and the MOE team. The suggested training activities are of such comprehensive character that the cost is likely to exceed the present budget of Diakonia/NAD.

A Palestinian Model?

Few countries, if any, in the South have taken such an ambitious initiative as Palestine to include all students in a public educational system. Considering the strenuous political and security situation, with continuous backlashes, new obstacles emerging constantly and personal tragedies experienced by everyone in a never ending struggle, the accomplishments are admirable. The achievements are, as a matter of fact, commendable also without any consideration of the hard conditions; the implemented strategy, the achievements so far and the firm commitment to continue the struggle for an education that allows every child to learn according to its needs are in themselves praiseworthy. Provided further development of the competence of the support organisation, i.e. the IE teams and co-ordinators and improvement of the teaching ability, the Palestinian way of approaching Inclusive Education may well serve as a model for many of the countries in the region.

DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background

The Inclusive education program started at the MOE as a pilot project for 3 years [1997/1999] targeting the primary level [from first grade until the fourth grade] supported by Diakonia/NAD and Save the Children/ Sweden and technical support by UNESCO. The main goals were developing a policy towards education for all at Ministry level and the directorates level, to build the abilities of the education directorates on developing the concept of the special educational needs in its schools, to create basis for cooperation between ministries and organizations for supporting the children and youth with special needs and to achieve equal opportunities through the inclusive school for all students. The program phases were; planning phase, introduction phase, capacity building through training the staff, choosing the schools to participate in this program, training the teachers, follow up and assessment phase, working inside schools and finally, supporting the schools to participate in the program.

The program now is working with around 150 inclusive education schools in West Bank and Gaza Strip. An “inclusive education team” are employed by the MOE and are placed at the different directorates to support the implementation of this policy at the schools in the different districts.

General Responsibility

Based on a request by the general directorate of education at the Ministry of education (MOE), Diakonia/NAD has been asked to commission a consultant to conduct a study at a sample of the inclusive education schools. The purpose of the study is to inform the MOE on the changes that have/have not evolved in the teaching and learning environment because of the adoption and implementation of this policy. The MOE would like to know whether this policy has benefited the education environment at those schools, in which way and what are the recommendations to be identified to feed into future planning.

The consultant will be asked to conduct this study focusing on the changes in the education environment that has taken places as a result of Inclusive Education Program at the inclusive schools compared to non-inclusive schools in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and produce a report.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims at reviewing the adopted inclusive policy by the MOE at the primary public schools and informing the MOE whether the adopted policy has made any difference to the education environment.

Specifically the study aims at assessing whether the teachers have succeeded to teach inclusively, how peers relate together, how individual needs of the disabled students are satisfied and whether teaching and learning methods have benefited/not benefited because of this approach. The study also aims at identifying recommendations to improve the implementation of this policy in the future.

Specific Responsibilities

The Consultant shall

1. review relevant background material in English on MOE/ IE program including documents listed below.
2. propose an appropriate methodology for the study which will meet the goal and objectives of the study. The consultant should take into consideration possible and realistic means to implement the proposed methodology despite the current political situation and reflect that in a plan prior to conducting the study.

3. initiate discussion with MOE and agree on a plan and schedule for field visits, a copy of which to be presented to D/N.
4. review and assess the developments and changes since the establishment of the inclusive education program at the visited schools.
5. conclude and recommend to the Inclusive education project regarding future interventions.
6. be responsible to organize all activities in cooperation with Diakonia/NAD/Nad, who will assist with logistical support, translation and transportation needed to conduct the study and to conduct visits and discussions with different schools in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
7. to produce an English study / documentation on 20-30 pages with main findings and recommendations and an executive summary by 10 February 2004 for a draft.
8. meet with the MOE at the end of the visit to debrief on main findings and recommendations.

Methodology

The consultant will spend most of the fieldwork time at schools, observing classroom and schoolyard practices, interviewing teachers, students and if possible parents through semi structured interviews. An approximate number of 8 schools will be visited. If possible, the CBR projects in the same region as the inclusive education school will be interviewed.

The MOE will select the schools based taking into consideration boys/girls schools, urban rural locations, geographical diversity and successful and less successful examples. The integration of various disabilities should also be considered as well as children from all socio economic backgrounds. D/N will be responsible to assist the MOE to prepare a suggested list of schools to be approved by the consultant.

Time Schedule

January 17 is the arrival date of the consultant.

9 days	Field visits
6 days	Writing the report

Relevant materials for review

1. UNESCO report to MOE, by Lina Saleh.
2. Inclusive Education project Evaluation 1999, by George Malki,.
3. Contracts between Diakonia/NAD and MOE.
4. Narrative Reports by MOE.
5. Plans of Action by MOE.

People met

Students and parents in

Jerusalem, Ramallah, Qabatya, Bethlehem, Hebron, South Hebron and Gaza (video conference)

CBR staff

Teachers and school counselors at

Al Bireh school, Ramallah,
Al Mazra'a Al Qiblia school, Ramallah
Al Fata Al Laji'a school, Jerusalem
Alfaihaa' school, Hebron
Al 'Ibayat school, Bethlehem
Arrabeh school, Qabatya
Al Razi school, South Hebron
Gaza schools (video conference)

Manal Younis	Principal, Al'Ibayyat school, Bethlehem
Rula Abu Baker	Principal, Al Bireh school, Ramallah
Muneera Bader	Principal, Al Faihaa school, Hebron
Nabeela Abu Zeina	Principal, Al Fata Al Lajjaa school, Jerusalem
Ali Awad Shalabi	Principal, Al Razi school, Qabatia
Jamal O'udeh	Principal, Al Mazraa Al Qiblia school, Ramallah
Elham Abdel Qader	Assistant Director General, MOE
Ibrahim Ghayatha	Head of the General Education Department, MOE
Haifa Al A'gha	Director General of the General Education, MOE (video conference)
Shifa Shekha	Head of the Special Education Department, MOE
Akram Abu Alia	IE Coordinator / Southern and Central Areas of the West Bank, MOE
Shireen Awwad	IE Coordinator, Northern Area of the West Bank, MOE
Samah Tamimi	IE team member, MOE
Ahmad O'deh	IE team member, MOE
Edris Saker Jaradat	IE team member, MOE
Nadia Abudaka	IE team member, MOE
Ahmad Muhaisen	IE team member, MOE
Waleed Kattoush	IE team member, MOE
Nabila Zahran	IE team member, MOE
Helwa Yaghi	IE team member, MOE
Rima Awiwy	IE team member, MOE
Nihad Abu Samrah	IE team member, MOE
Khalid Hosheyeh	IE team member, MOE
Sahar Abbasi	Program Assistant, Rehab. Program, Diakonia / NAD
Ghada Harami	Rehabilitation Program Director, Diakonia / NAD
Jan-Olof Kennberg	Consultant, IM