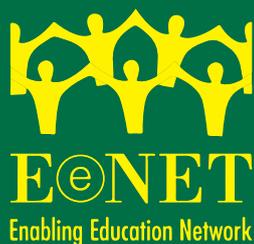


# Enabling Education Review

Issue 8 - 2019: Family involvement in inclusive education



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Cover photo: Supreme, Malawi, see pages 16-17

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## Editorial

**Ingrid Lewis**

One of my first tasks when I joined EENET 17 years ago was to edit and design EENET's publication 'Family Action for Inclusion in Education' (see the Useful Publications page for details). This document was the culmination of a research project to capture the stories of groups of parents and families fighting for inclusive education. Back in 2001, the researchers had aimed to gather stories about parents groups who were advocating on a range of diversity and discrimination issues. It was interesting that they only found examples of parents and families coming together to campaign for the education rights of children with disabilities, not children from other marginalised groups.

In the last two decades, we have seen a growth in commitment to the idea of stakeholder voice in education. There is now greater recognition

that parents, caregivers, family members and learners have a right to contribute their ideas and experiences to the debates that shape education policy and practice. In some places, schools have become more open, enabling parents, caregivers and families to closely observe and participate in school life, and consequently to understand and contribute to solving challenges relating to inclusion. Opportunities for learners and their families to engage in decision-making and problem-solving groups within schools have grown. Despite this, there remains in many places a divide between parents/families and schools. It is not uncommon for teachers to blame parents when children are struggling to attend school, participate actively or learn; or for parents to have unreasonable expectations for teachers.

In many places too, the state continues to rely heavily on families to plug gaps in the education system, even when the state is supposedly committed to delivering free quality education for all. Such reliance on financial, material and human resource contributions from families seems to be happening increasingly in high-income countries like the UK, not just in low-income contexts. It puts many families under increasing pressure and fuels growing inequality within education systems, because families in poorer, more marginalised communities are less able to fill the holes left by inadequate state support.

Given the apparent growth in opportunities for parents and families to shape education decisions, alongside persistent divides between parents and teachers, and the ongoing dependence of schools on parental resources, we decided this edition of Enabling Education Review should look again at the issue of family involvement in inclusive education. We aimed to share a snapshot of the efforts being made around the world by parents, caregivers and families to improve the quality and inclusivity of education for their own children and for others in their community, through direct action and through advocacy. We received an exciting selection of articles covering a wide range of topics, though not as many written by parents and family members as we had hoped for.

Various articles, such as those from Kenya and Trinidad and Tobago, look at different ways in which parents groups can be formed and how they play a role in inclusive education. Peer support for parents of deaf children is described in the articles from Malaysia and India, while the Bulgaria and UK (science education) articles focus on ways for parents to support their children's learning. Supporting parents to develop collaborative relationships in the school community is discussed in the article from Morocco.

A second article from India highlights the dilemmas that parents face when they believe in the principle of, and are actively fighting for, inclusive education but know their child is still having a bad experience in the local mainstream school. The issue of whether parents or professionals are making the decisions about a child's education and best interests is touched on in the article from Malaysia.

Often when programmes focus on 'parental involvement' in education, it is mothers rather than fathers who engage. The article from Palestine therefore looks at an initiative to engage fathers more in the upbringing and education of their children.

Two articles – from Kenya and Malawi – show examples of programmes that include income generation support for parents, as a way of helping to ensure their children's inclusion in education.

Link's article explains their innovative participatory board game for facilitating community engagement in school improvement decision making. Similarly, an approach called Community-Based System Dynamics – which helps communities work together to achieve positive education changes – is described in the article from Afghanistan and Pakistan. The role that people and resources in the community play in supporting early learning and literacy, especially for marginalised children, is highlighted in the article about libraries in the USA and Ghana. Another article from the UK shows how using activities in the community such as rock climbing can boost young people's confidence and motivation to learn.

Despite international obligations and promises, government commitment to and funding for inclusive education globally remain fragile. Parents, caregivers and the wider community continue to have a vital role to play in advocating for change in education systems and budgets. They have a right to contribute their expertise to debates and decisions about education and school improvement. Arguably too, if children are to receive quality inclusive education, then their parents and families need to actively support learning, from birth, and they need help with doing this.

Parents, caregivers, family and community members have multiple very important roles to play in the development of more inclusive education systems. Whether we work in schools, governments or NGOs, we need to ensure we are placing these stakeholders at the heart of our efforts to improve education.

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# Working together to advocate for our children in Trinidad and Tobago

Alicia Phillips-Sealy

**In the South Eastern District of my country, Trinidad and Tobago, which is aspiring to have fully inclusive education, exists a small but dedicated group of individuals who have shown and educated me how to advocate for the rights of my child. They are a paid government group, but their love and dedication goes way beyond their official duties. The people in this group support a large number of children with special educational needs who study in mainstream schools, with compassion and dedication.**

I have seen parents, including myself, walk into their office unscheduled, and be greeted in the most welcoming of ways. On occasions, like most parents of children with special educational needs, I would feel overwhelmed and frustrated, but a visit or phone call to them would quickly renew my spirit. I would be reminded of my responsibilities to advocate for my son to be accepted and recognised as an individual and of his constitutional right to an education.

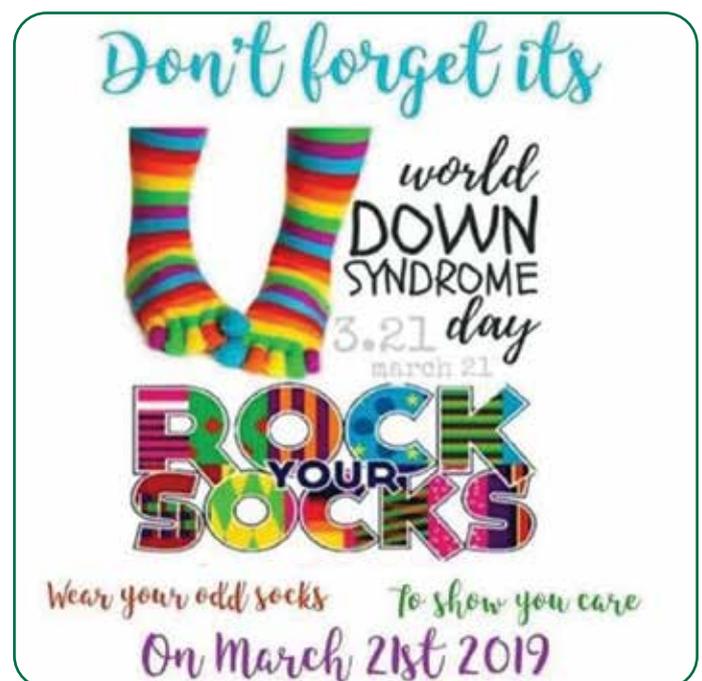
With the assistance of these dedicated individuals, a support group was formed. Every parent who has a child who learns with the support of a teaching assistant in school, or is waiting for a teaching assistant to be assigned, is automatically enlisted in this support group. We usually meet once in every school term, or more often if a need arises. We used to meet once a month, but this was too challenging time wise for some parents. Presently we have approximately 110 enlisted parents in the group.

At the parents group meetings we catch up on the progress of our children, discuss any challenges we are facing and make plans for how we will take part in future advocacy events. It is an important forum where we talk with other parents who understand what it means to have a child who needs additional support at school. This helps us to understand what support we can ask for because our children have a right to it.

From the support of this parents group, I have learned that there is power in unity. If one of our children is being discriminated against – for instance by being denied entry to a school or being rejected from the school for not having a teaching assistant – if we stand united, it opens the way for discussion between both the school and the parents. Most often, you would find that it is either a lack of information or a lack of resources that is responsible for the discrimination. If a parent goes as an individual to challenge this, they would most likely be turned away and not be given the opportunity to be heard.

## Some highlights from my advocacy journey

I have learnt that successfully advocating for my child can open doors and make life a little easier for other children with special needs in the future. In a sense, it is a way of paying it forward, sharing the support and making the world a better place for everyone. So, here are a few of my main ways of finding support, becoming an advocate, and including other children:



A poster for a Rock your Socks advocacy campaign



Wearing multi-coloured and mismatched socks for World Down Syndrome Day.

- If I see or know of a child who is being discriminated against, I will try to engage the parents in friendship. I then try to get them to visit the District Office, where I know they would be informed about their child's educational rights and the opportunities available to them.
- Joining a support group is important. Here you learn that you are not alone in your struggles. You also learn that there are parents out there in even more difficult situations than you are. You learn to be thankful in whatever situation you find yourself. The leaders of the group usually always have updated or important information to share. Most importantly, you always have an understanding ear to listen to you on the days when you need a friend.
- A lack of knowledge about children who have special needs is the biggest challenge to ending problems associated with achieving inclusive education for all. In Trinidad and Tobago, we have the DSFN (Down Syndrome Family Network). To raise awareness we go out rocking multi-coloured and mismatched socks for World Down Syndrome Day. The DSFN also organises monthly networking meetings and conferences. On World Autism Awareness

Day, many wear blue to show their support. In my district group, on International Disability Day, the teachers' aides at the schools celebrate the children with appreciation speeches within the schools and/or the giving of tokens of appreciation to the children. There are many other awareness initiatives being organised by various groups, the objective being to keep the discussion about inclusion going, and increasing the awareness of our children's abilities. This in turn, will hopefully open opportunities for our children.

As parents we must help our children to use their voices. We have to show them how to stand up for their rights, because we are the ones they learn from. But, as parents, we cannot always do it effectively without some kind of support system – be it family members or a community group. Education of not just the children, but everyone (community members, government officials, parents, etc), is the solution for achieving inclusive education for all.

#### Contact

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# Using my experience of working with children in India to advocate for my own child's education

Paul Sunder Singh

## The Indian context

Schools in India mostly focus on children who can do things that they consider 'normal'. Schools are not interested in children who have talent but are differently abled. There is pressure on schools to show good exam results, so they only want to choose children who can perform in this way. This puts pressure on parents too, as we feel we must grill our children at home to help them achieve. In addition, schools often do not deliver all the curriculum content needed for national exams and so parents have to bridge the gap and work with children at home to get them through exams.

A child who cannot take down information from the board immediately or follow the teacher's instructions, or who takes their own time or has their own understanding, does not fit the school's expectations. To meet the needs of these children, teachers must give them support. These children require attention and need their own time and space. Teachers must show an understanding of their needs and strengths, but schools are usually not ready to support this.

## Personal experience

My own child struggled in a mainstream school. The teachers refused to understand that my child worked at a different pace and they did not want him there. They let him feel uncomfortable and unwanted and allowed him to be bullied. One night, when everyone was asleep, my son came to me in tears asking why God had made him the way he was. Why did he let people make fun of him, and why could he still not read and write when he was working so hard? That left me in tears too.

He came to me and I listened. I realised that he was in serious trouble at school, so I reassured him. I told him not to worry, that his teachers did not understand him but I know how beautiful and talented he is. He is very artistic, compassionate, helpful and well behaved. He

is a good swimmer. He was in the school team and was awarded a gold medal – there was no relay team without him.

## Immediate help and long-term change

The school did not train the staff to recognise disabilities, and as parents we were not really aware of the disability either. We used to think our son was just at an age when all children do things differently. We thought he would eventually catch up. It was not until I read an article in a newspaper about dyslexia that I realised my son needed extra support. The article described my son. We saw a specialist who said that even though he was a so-called 'slow learner', he had an IQ of 130 or above. We went to the school, asking that they take more time with him. We asked them not to rub out the blackboard so quickly so that he would have more time to copy, but they did not understand this. The teachers were unfriendly with us and made my son feel uncomfortable.

In the end we found a school that specialised in teaching young people who have dyslexia. We did not want to take him out of mainstream education, but change is a long-term process. We realised that for our son to be happy we needed to find him a solution quickly, but we also know that education needs to change for future young people.

Teachers need to be trained about diversity and how to support all children at whatever level they are at, before helping them to move forward at their own pace. Teachers need to focus on scaffolding learning and not pushing children at a pace pre-determined by the teacher. The curriculum is a problem, along with the environment in which teachers work. If teachers cannot cover all the subject knowledge needed for exams in the time required – and if parents are helping children cram at home to get it all covered – how can teachers feel they have time to support children who struggle to keep up, let alone help them move forward? They are under too much pressure. We need to



Players speaking to secondary school students about participating in the Street Child Cricket World Cup

advocate for schools to become more inclusive, as well as taking immediate steps to address our children's learning needs right now.

### Learning from alternative approaches

When schools only look at how children perform academically, inevitably more children are pushed to find alternative places to learn where they can feel comfortable and feel they belong.

I work for Karunalya, an organisation that focuses on young people who live and work on the streets in Chennai. At Karunalya, we help children to develop a broad set of life skills, enabling them to face the world, to be advocates for themselves and for their peers, and to develop their leadership skills. Mainstream schools, by contrast, focus on academic results, and children are not taught how to do anything except pass exams. There is little focus on creativity and the additional skills needed to survive in life. A child on the streets has had to learn to survive, and we build on these skills to help them move forward confidently. It would be great to take the learning we have developed through working with young people who are on the streets, and promote it in schools to change the way teachers approach teaching.

Currently, we do not have the resources to actively work with schools, but we are sometimes invited to visit schools to talk with the teachers about the children we work with. We also take some of the children with us – especially those who have represented Karunalya and India in Street Child World Cup events. We have participated in multiple events organised by Street Child United, and won the Cricket tournament in London, 2019. When the children go into schools to talk to the teachers and students about how they worked hard to achieve their places on the team, it can inspire both the teachers and the students, changing their opinions of 'street children'.

As a parent, I know I must advocate for my own children, and the young people I work with on a daily basis, and all the children currently affected by an education system that fails to respond to their needs.

### Contact

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# The role of libraries in engaging parents in early childhood literacy: from Brooklyn to Ghana

Jennifer Lauren

**Parents and caregivers are a child's first teachers. In this article, Jennifer looks at how this influential role relates to building the blocks of early childhood literacy.**

## Parents' role in early reading

Young adult novelist Beverly Clearly, shares that "children should learn that reading is a pleasure, not just something that teachers make you do in school". Parents are ideally positioned to introduce and demonstrate that reading can be many things, including a pleasurable, new and unexpected experience, and it offers a unique time for bonding and exchange.

There is a difference between reading to and reading with your child. Active reading involves the latter, and:<sup>1</sup>

- builds neural pathways in a young child's developing brain;
- helps children build vocabulary;
- helps children learn to think, reason and develop their own opinions;
- helps children build their sense of home, place in the world and unique identity;
- helps children prepare to be successful in school.

Some easy ways that parents can begin 'active reading' include:

- Ask questions when reading a book to their child.
- Connect the book's subject to the child's everyday world.
- Connect the book to the child's interests.
- When re-reading children's favourite books, point out different things about the book each time.
- Connect reading to an activity.

Parents should not be put off when a child's interest in reading comes in waves, but should keep trying to weave reading into the child's day or week.

Reading together can be a wonderfully participatory experience and leads to thoughtful action. For example, reading a book about growing vegetables can be a precursor to getting outdoors and gardening with your child.

## The role of libraries

Libraries are public institutions and community centres designed to be open to everyone, of all ages, backgrounds, ethnicities and incomes. They can support parents and caregivers in opening up the world of books and reading to their young children, especially parents and caregivers of children aged 0-6 who may not yet be enrolled in school or other programmes.

Raising small children is not easy, it can be a challenging and isolating experience at times. It is an immersive, messy, revelatory, fun yet loaded prospect to be in charge of a little one's growth, education and development. Having access to a local library is a limitless tool for helping parents be their child's first teacher.

In many countries, there are concerns about children watching too much television, or spending too much time using smartphone or tablet screens.<sup>2</sup> Increasingly parents and educators are supporting more outdoor education and more creative introductions to literacy. Libraries across the United States (US) are responding by providing free and engaging opportunities to convene, learn and read together. Storytime for toddlers is a programme offered by librarians that has exploded in popularity in recent years. At Brooklyn Public Library locations in New York, Storytime programmes are offered in a range of languages to engage local populations, from Arabic to Russian to Spanish.<sup>3</sup>

There is also a free, flexible volunteer-run campaign called '1000 Books Before Kindergarten'.<sup>4</sup> Parents sign their children up and keep track of every 100 books that they read. As they meet each milestone, children can select a prize from the librarian's treasure chest, building momentum to continue to participate.

Because public formal education does not typically start until age five or six, the 1000 Books Foundation created this programme to promote reading to newborns, toddlers, and infants. This could have long-lasting positive impact in a country where 1 in 5 students struggle with reading, and 32 million adults cannot read, according to the National Centre for Education Statistics.<sup>5</sup>

### Boosting access to library facilities

What about reaching parents and caregivers who do not have the access, time, ability or interest to bring their children to the library? One successful, long-running example is the Laundry and Literacy Coalition. It started in 1989 when a local children's librarian in Chicago thought she would reach out to families at the laundromat – where families who do not own washing machines can pay to wash their clothes, and usually wait around for the machine to finish.

The role of libraries in encouraging early childhood literacy is not unique to the US. We can learn greatly from global ideas and best practices for libraries. One such example is the Humjibre community library in Ghana ([www.ghei.org/humjibre-community-library](http://www.ghei.org/humjibre-community-library)).

The Ghana Health and Education Initiative (GHEI) is a unique, grassroots programme offering quality health and education services in the Western region of the country. One of GHEI's main achievements is the creation of Humjibre's community library. Local citizens helped build the library and regularly volunteer at this interactive space that is central to the town's community spirit, supporting parents by providing a space they can take their children to.

Isaac Menseh is a local parent who shares how the library has played a vibrant role for engaging the whole family in learning, reading and writing.

**“GHEI’s Community Library in Humjibre has provided a space for my children to complete their school work without disturbances. It is difficult to study at home and my children look forward to coming to the library every day. It has improved their reading and writing skills in English. In fact, they love reading a lot and I was inspired**



Parents and children in a library in Ghana

**to buy books for them so that they can gain more knowledge. I am thankful that the library exists in our community and I am confident that it is ensuring a brighter future for my family!” ~ Isaac Mensah, Humjibre resident and local parent**

In 2009, I contributed to GHEI's Girls Education Programme. During this experience, I found that the library was a source of pride for the whole community, bringing together local people of all ages. GHEI was able to broaden the impact of the library by creating its Early Childhood programme, which continues to this day. This programme engages early learners and their families in activities that aim to improve children's literacy. The programme has demonstrated long-term positive impacts on students' literacy levels and overall participation and retention in school.

### Notes

[1] These have come from Samantha Cleaver and Munro Richardson's book *Read With Me: Engaging Your Child in Active Reading*

[2] <http://bit.ly/JLaurenFN2>

[3] <http://bit.ly/JLaurenFN3>

[4] <http://bit.ly/JLaurenFN4>

[5] <http://bit.ly/JLaurenFN5>

### Contact

Jennifer is an educator and international development professional living in New York, USA. She enjoys reading with her toddler, who favours books about cats, whales or the alphabet. She can be reached through EENET on [info@eenet.org.uk](mailto:info@eenet.org.uk)

# The inclusion of deaf children in Malaysia: parental support and advocacy

Khairul Farhah Khairuddin

**In this article, Khairul Farhah uses her PhD research to explore the question of who decides what is best for a child when determining how they are educated – the parents or the professionals.**

## The country context

### Policy

Malaysian law has developed to improve the support received by pupils with disabilities. A national review of policy and provision for pupils with disabilities and their families is gathering momentum. The government has a target of ensuring that 75% of children with disabilities, including deaf children, are educated in mainstream classrooms by 2025. In contrast, the government is also committed to retaining special schools as part of a broad spectrum of provision and to enable parents to choose a special school placement for their child if that is their preference.

### Healthcare

Primary prevention of hearing loss through immunisation, health education, and improved maternal and child health services has been the government's priority. Services to support children's audiological and speech needs have improved greatly since the introduction of audiological support in the 1960s. The Ministry of Health has provided cochlear implants to more than 600 severely and profoundly deaf children since 1995. The introduction of the Newborn Hearing Screening in 2001 has enabled deaf children to be identified before their first birthday.

### Learning support

In Malaysia, support from teachers of the deaf is only available when children attend schools and there are no specialist teachers available to support deaf children outside of special education services. Therefore, parents are more likely to have contact with medical professionals than with educationalists before their children start school.

Doctors and audiologists have the most influence on deaf children's mode of communication as they are involved in the initial diagnosis and the fitting of hearing aids. Subsidies are available from the Government. However, approval of these subsidies can take up to two years so parents often have to cover the cost of the technology and its maintenance. While families are coming to terms with their child's deafness diagnosis, they must also understand the management of hearing technology and its benefits.

The majority of deaf children are born to hearing parents with no experiences to draw upon, no expectations to refer to, and no close deaf family or friends to consult. There are many issues for parents to consider in deciding their child's communication needs. Increasingly, initiatives are supporting the learning of sign language but there are limited resources available. Support for learning BIM (Bahasa Isyarat Malaysia – Malaysian sign language) is only provided by NGOs, such as the Malaysian Federation of the Deaf, and training for interpreters is also limited. Therefore, parents often prioritise improving their children's use of spoken language skills.

### The start of a parent support group

Within this context, a group of mothers of deaf children with hearing aids or cochlear implants got together on Facebook (FB) in 2010. The initial purpose was to discuss how they could support each other to help their children and learn from each other. Networking helps parents to build confidence and social capital in order to better support their children. As the group grew, the mothers started to plan gatherings and workshops for the benefits of families, using a public FB group called HEAR ME.

In 2015, HEAR ME Malaysia – locally known as Persatuan Ibumapa Anak Bermasalah Pendengaran (Parents of deaf children association) – was officially registered. The group is now recognised as an NGO. As well as being a parents' forum, it is an advocacy group providing services including: talks and information sessions; one-to-one advice and support; training courses; and family gatherings.



Parents and children in Malaysia

### Results of the parents' advocacy

This emerging trend among parents to advocate for and take a leading role in supporting their children's educational needs demonstrates a concerted effort to encourage the acceptance of children with diverse needs. The movement has been successful in including deaf children into mainstream schools, within their community, rather than in residential settings, in line with the government campaign to move towards an inclusive education system. Attending local schools raises awareness of diversity, increasing children's social inclusion as well as providing more opportunities for them to use hearing more effectively and develop greater spoken language abilities.

However, my study found that the high cost of hearing aids and cochlear implants limits the number of children who can benefit from this technology, since not all parents can afford it. Even if they get an implant and/or hearing aid fitted, daily maintenance is required if it is to be used reliably and appropriately.

Members of the Deaf community in many countries advocate for empowering the teaching and learning of sign language to ensure that deaf children are connected with the Deaf community – an important source of support – and Deaf culture. Teaching children using sign language in mainstream schools also increases the ability of hearing children to communicate with deaf peers – meeting the aims of inclusive education and societies. There are therefore many modes of communication available, but there are gaps in the training of professionals to cater for the changing needs of deaf children.

Professionals working with deaf children need training to understand that there are many ways of developing children's communication skills, and different approaches may need to be considered for each child. But most importantly professionals must be prepared to take parents' opinions seriously because a supportive parent will have been developing their child's communication for several years before they start school.

Where to educate a deaf child, using which methods, is part of an ongoing debate, and it is important to understand all of the arguments and make informed decisions accordingly. I advocate for inclusion in the mainstream using whatever mode of communication the parent and child prefers.

From my research I have found that the best approach is one where parents and professionals work together to develop an inclusive environment. An appreciation of the importance of developing a broad range of flexible support structures in accommodating the individual differences between deaf children would also be helpful in developing inclusive education practices.

### Contact

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**You can find out more about HEAR ME at [www.hearme.my](http://www.hearme.my)**

# Education and dance at the heart of the community: working with Kibra for Kibra

Mike Wamaya and Su Corcoran

**In Project Elimu (PE) we have a holistic approach to education, putting parents at the centre of our work. In this article, we will explain how the organisation has developed from delivering ballet classes to growing a network of teachers across Kibera, Kenya.**

## About Kibra

Kibera, which is known by its residents as Kibra, is the biggest informal settlement in Kenya. It is home to over 170,000 residents, according to the 2009 Kenya Population and Housing Census, but residents estimate that the real number exceeds 700,000. When people think of Kibra, they think of poverty, limited education opportunities, limited healthcare, and overcrowding. At PE we think of potential, resourcefulness and unlocking opportunities.

Many schools in Kibra are community schools, aiming to meet a shortfall in state school provision. A number were set up to cater for particular groups, such as children who are HIV positive. The cost of sending a child to one of these community schools is often less than the additional cost of sending them to supposedly free state-run primary schools. Therefore, while community schools are private schools, their pupils may come from some of the most vulnerable Kibra communities.

## About Project Elimu

Mike Wamaya, the founder of PE, has been teaching ballet in Kibra and Mathare informal settlements since 2009, first as part of Anno's Africa, a children's arts charity, and later (since 2017) as part of PE's education programme. PE was set up to support quality education for children living in informal settlements and beyond, through extra-curricular activities in schools and by supporting teachers to develop and refine their teaching skills.

The problem with building schools in informal settlements like Kibra is space, forcing school buildings to extend upwards. In its early days, PE assisted schools to build additional floors



Dancing in Kibra

and add or refurbish toilet blocks. The aim was to provide learning spaces that were more welcoming and that could enable dance to take place. PE's education programme centres around dance lessons.

Being able to dance gives children confidence, helps raise their aspirations, and increases motivation for school. For those who have different skills, PE is extending extra-curricular activities to include other arts, creative writing, and ICT skills. We aim to build a supportive framework around these activities, with parents at the centre.

## Parental involvement

Parents are involved in all of PE's day-to-day activities. Before dance classes commenced, we called a parents' meeting. We initially wanted to help parents differentiate ballet from other less respected dance activities, such as exotic dancing. The meeting stressed the value of dance to education, especially in terms of the exercise it provides and the discipline it develops – as well as the joy it brings. Many children taught by Mike have gone on to be respected dancers – on the stage in Kenya and overseas – and others have performed well at school and moved on to university.

Peer-to-peer teaching and learning help parents understand not only the value of dance and other extra-curricular arts activities, but education as a whole. We are developing a supportive community of parents, across the community and around individual schools, that can support each other and their children. For example, Christian parents are encouraged to answer questions asked by Muslim parents and vice versa. We conduct quarterly parents' meetings, providing opportunities to discuss their children's activities and other issues that they raise.

A parents' association was set up to act as the intermediary between PE and the parents in between meetings. The parents' association chairs the parents' meetings, explains the projects to other parents, and takes on the role of monitoring attendance in schools. The parents' association contains parents of children who attend all the schools in the PE network.

In order to stay in the dance classes, children need to maintain their efforts and attendance at school. PE works with teachers and the parents' association to monitor the children's performance at school. When a problem is identified, the parents' association works with the child's parents to change approaches to children's workload in and outside of school – especially when grades are dropping because children have excessive responsibilities at home. The parents' association also supports parents who struggle to communicate effectively with schools.

### **Wider family and community involvement**

One of the main barriers to children taking part in extra-curricular activities is their responsibilities at home, such as looking after younger siblings. Multiple teachers therefore co-lead the dance classes, meaning younger children can attend and be looked after while their older siblings dance. Currently, this happens at the side of the classroom, but PE is planning a separate childcare room in their new building (a new dance studio is under construction with funding from the Kulczyk Foundation and individual donors). As their children are looked after, parents are able to work at the same time as the classes, which makes them feel supported and valued by the project.

PE also supports the economic activities of parents and the wider community. In September 2018, PE was funded by the Kulczyk Foundation to stage a show involving over 100 children. The costumes and ballet shoes were made by tailors and cobblers within Kibra and rival the ballet tutus made in Europe. The principle of 'keeping it in Kibra' – and more importantly with Kibra parents – extends to the caterers, builders and other services required by the organisation as it continues to grow. Committing to parents and their businesses, through childcare provision or hiring them to work on projects, builds their respect for PE and willingness to work together to further support their children's education.

### **The future**

Our aims for the future are to strengthen parent-school relationships, using our network of schools to build teachers' respect for parents. Through a project with Manchester Metropolitan University in the UK we are working with teachers to co-design a teacher education programme that helps them to meet the needs of Kenya's new competency-based curriculum – and develop strong communities of teachers and parents around the schools. The starting point was a head teachers' summit in January 2019 and development of a mutually supportive network of schools – each school identified a strength that they were willing to share.

Dancing and education do not happen in a vacuum and Project Elimu wants to strengthen networks to develop a brighter a future for Kibra's children and their communities.

### **Contact**

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# Family-mediated intervention to support inclusion in Bulgaria

Nikoleta Yoncheva

**Every time I think about a child, I think about the family too because I see them as a whole. As part of this whole, the child goes through different stages throughout the years, with their parents supporting the transition from one environment to another. This is a complex process that depends on various parties, but in early childhood it depends mainly on parents and caregivers. Moreover, when there is a child with special needs, the support needs present a bigger challenge. One of the successful ways to support families at this early stage is through family-mediated intervention.**

## **What is family-mediated intervention?**

This type of support was developed at Karin Dom Foundation in Bulgaria in our Centre for Family-Mediated Intervention. Here, three groups were set up to support families and their children (aged 2 to 6) with developmental concerns. The groups help parents cope with the difficulties they face in their daily lives and also prepare children for a smooth transition into inclusive education.

## **Our activities**

In the three groups, we train parents and extended family members, carers and assistants in various strategies that teach children about:

- everyday skills;
- understanding the meaning of communication and enjoying interaction with others;
- the pursuit of autonomy;
- the desire to gain new knowledge.

We visit the nurseries and kindergartens where the children are enrolled and help with building an inclusive environment for all children. We advise about use of appropriate materials and about improving communication and understanding between children and between parents and teachers to ensure continuity of the work.

Each family-mediated intervention group includes between 4 and 7 families and is run by speech therapists or psychologists who train parents but avoid working directly with children. Group sessions take place twice a week for two hours. We have formed three groups according to the needs of the children:



and routines in the kindergarten, and also help with cognitive development.

Over time, working in a group with other parents but having individual support plans and receiving home visits, parents get to know their children better. They learn to understand them and share more easily and openly, thus becoming better advocates for their children. They have a realistic view of their child and his or her needs, and support their inclusion in kindergarten and school.

There is no greater power than the one of the family. We believe that learning, trust and empowerment, giving a hand and making steps together will provide a successful start for the child into the educational environment. The parents we work with are confident. They know how to help their children, they have learned how to deal with different challenges and how to teach their children a love of communication, and an interest in knowledge and learning. Finally and most importantly, they are proud of their children, of their achievements, and they easily understand and support the educational process.

### Contact

**Nikoleta Yoncheva is a speech therapist and trainer at Karin Dom Foundation, Bulgaria.**

[www.karindom.org](http://www.karindom.org)



- one group is for children with difficulties in functional communication and adaptive skills;
- one is for children from the autistic spectrum;
- one is for children with complex and intensive support needs.

There are various activities in the groups but they all stimulate communication between children and also between parents as well as the involvement of children in various games and activities. The activities prepare children for the educational process, for following the rules

## EENET's new inclusive early childhood education video training pack

**Launching mid-2020**

EENET is creating a set of training videos and manuals to support educators in early years settings.

Older children have been involved too, facilitating young children to talk about their experiences of education.

Two main themes for the videos:

- Inclusive pedagogy in early childhood education
- Inclusive transition.

**The package will feature footage from Swaziland and Ukraine. For more information, visit: <http://bit.ly/ECEvideoproject>**



# Mothers in Malawi make sanitary materials to help girls go to school

Evelien Post and Helen Pinnock

**Not having menstrual supplies means girls miss out on school, especially girls living in low-income communities who do not have access to these supplies. In this article, Evelien and Helen look at how mothers in Malawi are solving this problem through training and employment to make sanitary materials.**

## **Menstruation – a barrier to education**

When girls do not have sanitary pads, they often have to miss school when they are menstruating. Girls can struggle to manage their menstruation because of insufficient information about their bodies and because of the social and hygiene taboos that surround menstruation in their communities. This is made worse when schools lack water, sanitation and effective waste disposal. The situation is similar for girls and boys with incontinence, who may not go to school at all.

## **Why are sanitary materials not available for girls?**

Supply and disposal of sanitary pads is often non-existent in low-income areas, especially remote rural areas. Often the only pads available are imported and expensive. Girls and women sometimes use items such as rags or banana leaves, which can cause health problems and are ineffective, or they ration bought towels, using them longer than they should and increasing the risk of infection.

Getting local producers to make sanitary pads is often difficult due to a lack of technical information and the complexity of regulatory approval. International companies are often unwilling to invest in areas where customers cannot afford high prices.



Health education lesson



Sanitary products made by mothers

### Involving local women to fix the problem

Supreme Sanitary Pads is a social business set up in northern Malawi in 2015, drawing on international experience. Supreme employs local women and uses safe local materials to produce affordable, re-usable sanitary pads. The sanitary products are bought directly by women and girls, and sold wholesale to shopkeepers, NGOs and donor programmes.

### Sanitary kits to help girls manage menstruation at school

Pads are stitched together using cotton produced in Malawi, plastic and absorbent foam. Girls are provided with pads and a drawstring bag so they can take used pads home after school, wash them with cold water and soap, and dry them in the sunshine.

These kits, distributed to NGOs, contain:

- 5 re-usable pads (3 medium, 2 maximum) which will last over 12 months
- drawstring wet bag, for used pads
- green soap for washing the pads
- underwear
- school supplies such as notebooks and pens.

Supreme hires and trains women to become either tailors of sanitary materials or local educators. Educators raise awareness in schools on supporting girls' menstrual hygiene and promote local demand for safe sanitary materials. The women employed by Supreme are often single mothers, who use the income to support their children's education – and provide menstrual supplies for their daughters so that they do not have to miss any school.

Supreme's tailors also produce childbirth pads, diapers and incontinence pants for mothers and people with disabilities. Supreme is adapting its training materials to be accessible so that more women with disabilities can be employed.

More local businesses are now seeing the value of producing affordable sanitary pads through employing local women, using Supreme's advice and training to set up their own operations.

### Contact

**Evelien Post was the manager of Supreme Sanitary Pads and can be contacted on [evelien.supreme.malawi@outlook.com](mailto:evelien.supreme.malawi@outlook.com). The current manager is Rose Woods: [rose.supreme.malawi@outlook.com](mailto:rose.supreme.malawi@outlook.com). More information about Supreme can be found on their website: [www.suprememalawi.com](http://www.suprememalawi.com)**

Helen Pinnock is an EENET consultant.

# Visually reinterpreting the concept of 'father' in Palestinian society

Sara Zahran

**In this article, Sara addresses the concept of knowledge as it relates to everyday practices and presents an example of how they use posters as a means of restructuring knowledge and its circulation.**

A person's knowledge is determined by their everyday experiences, relationships with others, self-experiences, adventures and reading. We can divide knowledge into two forms: 1) based on self-interests and desires, and 2) related to exposure to knowledge consciously and unconsciously through engaging with communities.

## Developing committees

In 2010, the Tamer Institute launched the Abi Aqra Lei (My Father Reads to Me) campaign, as a result of over 10 years of working to address a range of social and educational issues. It involved the production of visual materials for community engagement. The campaign focuses on fathers who are often stereotyped as playing specific roles in educational processes. The unequal sharing of roles and tasks within the social structure of the family, means that a father's role is sometimes seen as one of absolute authority and as a source of fear.

As part of the campaign, the Tamer Institute collaborates with artists, writers, community animators, journalists and others who are interested in the delivery of social and cultural activities in libraries, schools and cultural institutions within the Palestinian community. We set up organising committees, formed of representatives from the various collaborating organisations and stakeholder groups (e.g. the Ministry of Education, Community Libraries, artists, writers, and cultural actors) to reflect on the relationship between fathers and their children and how to bring these reflections into wider society.

In the meetings, the committees work to re-examine the role of the father and his relationship with family members, coming up with a theme each year that will be the focus of



the campaign. For example, in 2010 the focus was on reading. Committees develop activities and events around this theme and a poster is produced to showcase that theme with the wider community. The activities take a flexible approach to integrating parents with their children.

## Community-based activities

Fathers are invited to attend activities in local community centres where they are encouraged to participate in cultural experiences with their children. These activities follow the theme on the poster and include painting pictures or telling stories. As part of the activities, and through open dialogue with their children, the fathers are encouraged to connect with their own 'hidden child', remembering what it was like for them when they were very young. A father being with his child in his/her place of activity is a key step in building the relationship between them.

During one activity day, a child depicted his father as very big. This father was often absent, working away from home, and the child focused on his father's shoes. The presence of the shoes in the house was associated with the father being at home, and the discussion was clearly a message from the child to the father about how much he was missed. On another day, a child wrote about his wish to sleep next to his father. Such wishes, included in the letters the children write, stimulate various discussions with their fathers. The Tamer Institute believes



that dialogue helps people to learn, understand and accept one another, encouraging fathers to better understand their social environment and the potential of developing their relationships with their children.

### Strengthening community support for families

In order to support long-term change and provide a social structure within which fathers can rediscover their roles, and spend more time with their children, the Tamer Institute is working to encourage conversations and reflections within the community around father-child relationships, to push for further change and openness. One of the main tools that they are using to push forward this agenda are the posters.

Posters can have a visual social impact as they have the potential to reach wider audiences. A well thought out poster can confront an individual with their social and visual surroundings. We position the posters around the town so they are seen as people travel to work and we post them on social media channels.

Each year since 2010 the Tamer Institute has commissioned a poster, which is based on the committee's conversations and reflections on the activities of the previous years. The nine posters raise a range of issues, including:

- 2010** The poster shows a father reading a book with his child.
- 2011** A child is shown alone on the poster, holding a picture of the Earth. The poster includes a text-based plea for company – 'my father come to my world' – as a

reminder that this child is in a tense relationship and the ramifications of the loneliness suffered by children throughout their lives.

- 2012** This poster shows both parents as very close to their children, sharing the reading and doing a variety of activities together.
- 2013** The father has become older, but he retains the ability to share with his children's diverse world.
- 2014** The father is symbolically present, his head shaped like a tree with two large feet, and his child sat on a swing that is tied to its branches – the father's arms. The symbolism in this poster aimed to redefine the relationship between a father and a child through symbolism, to help fathers to sense their existence within this community structure.
- 2015** This poster showed a fatherless child standing above houses lining a hill. The impacts of the war on Gaza were at the centre of the discussions about this poster. As a result of the war, hundreds of thousands of children lost their parents. Therefore, the posters aimed to encourage the creation of a supportive space inside children and to give them strength and a vision about life.

Hanging the posters in as many places as possible across the local area makes them visual to the wider community. They appear in schools, community libraries, shops, and on screens inside cities, homes and institutions. We hope that by doing this they help to stimulate reflection and potentially conversation about the role of fathers, changing stereotypes and encouraging positive relationships between fathers and their children.

**Sara Zahran is Project Coordinator at the Tamer Institute. More information about the Institute and their projects can be found at [www.tamerinst.org](http://www.tamerinst.org).**

# Engaging community members in play to build inclusive schools

Helen Pinnock

**Link Community Development works in Sub-Saharan Africa, advocating for community involvement in inclusive school development. Over the last five years, the organisation has been piloting a school improvement board game in Ethiopia, Malawi, and Uganda, aimed at helping the players understand how to manage their resources. The game, called the School Management Simulation Tool, brings the priorities of a range of community members into school planning and budgets. I was introduced to the game at a workshop at the 2019 UKFIET conference in Oxford, UK. The following is an overview of the workshop and the positives of the game for developing inclusive schools.**

## The aim of the game

The game is produced in local languages, with game events organised for groups around several boards. The game pieces represent the resources needed for an effective, inclusive school – including less-obvious resources like training, relationships, and time. As part of the game, the participants are given problems that they need to solve by moving their chips around the board and investing in resources as they go.



Elements of the Link game

During the workshop at UKFIET participants were asked to decide how many 'time chips' should be spent on teacher development. We

knew that a school needs a majority of skilled teachers to boost children's learning, but training takes teachers away from teaching, and teaching time is essential. Most teams balanced this by only sending two teachers for training, one being the head teacher, but we reflected that this was an incomplete solution.



Elements of the Link game

The game includes 'chance' cards that are picked up as participants play the game. These present common challenges such as funding cuts, inspectors' visits or administrative demands. The teams were asked to invest school money in developing important resources for the school. For example, we considered whether we should set up email systems or buy sports equipment to motivate children. The next 'chance' card asked for documents to be sent to the Ministry of Education, but only teams which had invested in email capacity could respond in time. Those teams able to send the emails would be helped to get more funding. The game helped us to visualise resources like this in different ways, and think more long term about the benefits of potential investment.

## Who can play the game?

The game can be played with teachers, to help them decide how to distribute their time or how to balance whole-class activities with extra support for the students who need it. It can be played with children to find out what stops them

coming to school. Education officials can use the game to help them establish priorities for funding.

The game is often played with parents and school committee members. It can reduce power differences between literate leaders and less-educated parents. Instead of relying on documents, participants explore decisions through tangible objects, in the equalising setting of a game table. This can encourage people without much power to express what changes are needed for their school to work for everyone. This video shows examples in action:

- technical version: <http://bit.ly/VideoByLink1>
- shorter version showing the game being used in different ways:  
<http://bit.ly/VideoByLink2>

With good facilitation, the game can help to bring the priorities of a range of community members into consideration when school plans and budgets are developed. As well as training facilitators from local education authorities, Link has produced easy to follow guidelines on how to translate game decisions into school plans.

Facilitation to go beyond the game is also important. With the 'sports versus email' decision, one team at the UKFIET workshop

discussed raising money for sports equipment, while spending their current budget on email. A facilitator could pick up on these discussions and encourage a committee to plan to fundraise.

Although responses have been positive, Link would like to capture more results of the school improvement game. They are particularly keen to understand:

- the extent to which school plans developed using the game are more inclusive;
- whether the games manage to bring out the voices of excluded children and adults.

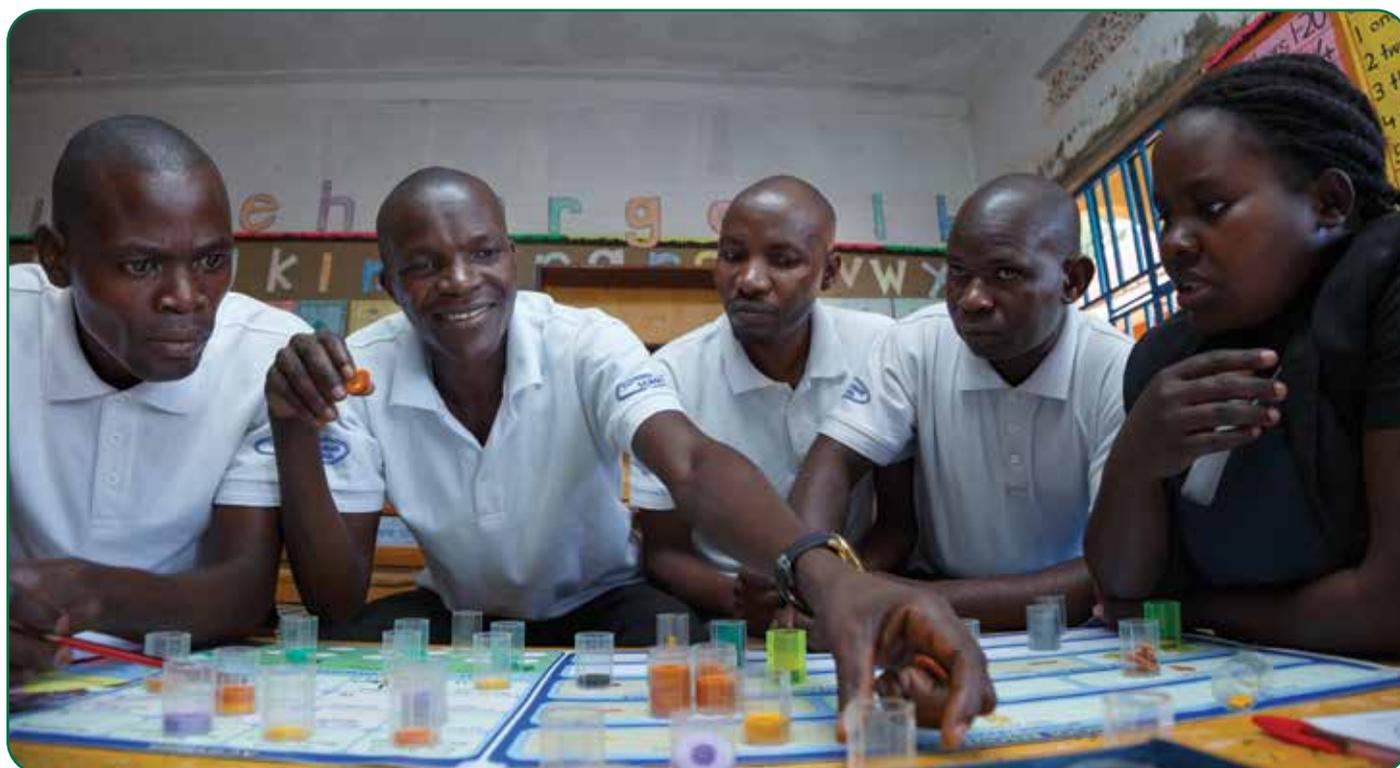
Link will be sharing more evidence as the approach develops.

### Contact

**Helen is an EENET consultant who specialises in inclusive education systems. She can be contacted at: [helenpinnock@eenet.org.uk](mailto:helenpinnock@eenet.org.uk).**

**More information from Link about the game can be found at: <http://bit.ly/AboutLinkGame>.**

**Email Samantha Ross from Link if you have further questions: [samantha@lcd.org.uk](mailto:samantha@lcd.org.uk)**



Participants using the Link game

# Building confidence through sport in the UK

Urban Uprising

**Communities and families have a bigger role in supporting education beyond helping children attend school. A group of amateur sports people in the UK have created their own organisation to bring disadvantaged children into sports, which helps develop their learning and confidence.**

## What we do

To do well in education, you often need the resilience to push yourself into learning new skills. This can be difficult if you already feel excluded and lack confidence. Sports and exercise help build children's confidence and focus but can be inaccessible without money for equipment and venues. Set up in 2016 by a small group of amateur rock climbers, Urban Uprising helps disadvantaged children learn the international sport of climbing. Initially set up in Brazil, the charity now works in several UK cities and relies on volunteers from the local community, many of whom are parents.

## How we work

Urban Uprising seeks referrals from social workers and schools in deprived areas, and offers climbing sessions for disadvantaged children at weekends and during school holidays. These children are often among the poorest who do not have money to travel for exercise or use sports facilities.

Trained volunteers, from the communities in and around the areas where the young people live, use Urban Uprising's skills framework to assess and coach young people aged 8 to 18. Skills include:

- Physical: stamina, strength, flexibility, and coordination;
- Social: trust, peer support, empathy, respect, communication;
- Personal: listening, responsibility, resilience, focus, reflection, confidence, problem solving.

Participants build relationships with the instructors and volunteers. These adults often become positive role models for the children,

which is especially important for young people who would otherwise not have such role models in their lives. Extra time and support are given to help children with disabilities get used to the environment and develop their climbing skills.

## The benefits

Children with autism have benefited from being able to learn new skills and expend physical energy without the potentially stressful features of team sports (like social rules, loud noises and heavy physical contact). Girls and other children who have not been encouraged to do physical activity have found major confidence boosts from learning to climb.

**"All the adults are really helpful. I now can get up to the top of the sloped wall. I never thought I could, but now I know I can."**  
(Connie)

**"Climbing is like a symbolism for autism and for life! Just keep going, thinking of the next step at the time! Climbing made me feel inspired to work harder and seize every new opportunity which comes my way!"**  
(Rameez)

**"I really enjoy going and feel really proud of myself every time I leave."** (Dean)

**"It is great to see the children's confidence in themselves grow week by week. The Volunteer Coach Phil was great in connecting with the kids and helped them work on their resilience. When reflecting on the programme with my pupils, they told me they can feel a change in their fitness levels, their resilience and their self-esteem."** (Mrs Wilson, school teacher)

The benefits go wider than personal skills and confidence. Children are engaged in structured and rewarding learning during the long school break in the UK, applying their critical thinking skills to the climbing wall and keeping their cognitive abilities up for the new school year. Urban Uprising widens its impact by running

awareness raising sessions with experts in schools and linking schools with climbing centres so that they can set up their own climbing sessions.

The UK has a strong rock-climbing community, but young people living in poverty or with disabilities often do not have access to it. Urban Uprising provides an opportunity for them to get involved in the sport and supports them to work towards a nationally recognised educational climbing award, helping them to move forward in the climbing field and potentially find employment. Being supported to gain

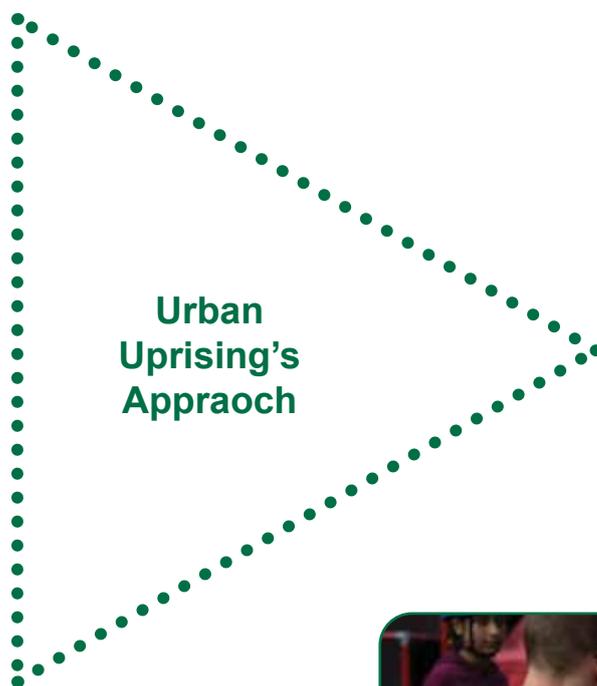
qualifications can be a huge boost for children who have never felt they could do well and this increased self-confidence can improve their motivation and performance in other learning environments.

Urban Uprising shows how important communities are to providing young people with a head start.

**More information about Urban Uprising can be found on their website:**  
[www.urbanuprising.org](http://www.urbanuprising.org)

### 1. Taste

A session for novice climbers aimed at introducing them to the basics and fun of climbing



### 3. Repeat

Drop-in sessions for young people who have completed the climb programme. This takes place at a local climbing wall with subsidised costs. Climbing and personal development goals are continued with support from our volunteers.

### 2. Climb

Weekly sessions to transform a young person from novice to competent climber. We encourage them to reflect on their own progression and support other members of the group. We focus as much on personal development as we do climbing, with our volunteers acting as mentors.



# Using Community-Based System Dynamics to increase inclusive education in Afghanistan and Pakistan<sup>1</sup>

**At 10 years old, Farzaneh<sup>2</sup> is her parents' teacher. Just five years ago she was one of the first girls to start attending the new community school in the Moqur district of southeast Ghazni, Afghanistan. In a village where only one person was literate when the school opened, the hope for an educated future lay with children like her. After school every day, Farzaneh teaches her parents how to read, write, and what she learned in school.**

The story of Farzaneh plays into a bigger and more complex one across rural schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Despite school-based interventions aiming to increase enrolment, academic performance and attendance, the question of if and how children are actually learning in the classroom remains. Poverty, child labour, disabilities, gender-based violence, parents' negative beliefs about education, poor infrastructure, and discrimination and social exclusion all impact on learning outcomes. In Farzaneh's province, war and violence are part of daily life. Where the Taliban has a large presence, schools or mosques are used as security outposts during active violence, and girls are threatened and forced to stop learning in schools. The Pashtunwali tradition of Purdah is deeply entrenched in Farzaneh's community and women and girls have limited life opportunities and autonomy.

With limited access to resources, difficult economic conditions, and generations of inconsistent educational access and achievement, students lack environments conducive to learning. Yet, there is a power behind a focus on community participation.

The Education Equity and Quality in Afghanistan and Pakistan (EEQAP) project uses a method called Community-Based System Dynamics to give community members the power to define what their specific primary school experience should be, and how

everyone working together with the help of partner NGOs can bring positive education outcomes that promote learning, well-being, and empowerment.

## **Group Model Building workshops**

Across more than one-hundred schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan, local teams of facilitators conducted participatory facilitation sessions – Group Model Building workshops – with children, parents, teachers, and community elders. This has brought community members together to define the system in which their school community operates, and how more inclusive teaching methods have an impact beyond the students and their learning outcomes.

Each workshop lasts one day and is separated into four sessions, each session building on the previous. The first is a focus group discussion: the facilitator asks the participants a series of questions around the concept of inclusive education, aiming for the participants to come up with a common definition of their own.

In the second session, the participants then identify and discuss the factors that can positively or negatively impact a child's education, such as child labour, students' attention in class, parents' literacy, teachers' salaries, access to water, etc. The most important factors are voted upon.

In the third session, the facilitator uses the 'Connection Circle' activity to help participants tell stories about how the factors are interconnected. As the connections develop, the participants can identify loops: where a chain of connections between factors leads back to the first factor considered.

For example, children in Bahawalnagar, Pakistan, identified how their parents' ideas of girls' education impacts on them and their learning: more inclusion in the classroom means that parents' negative perceptions

on girls' education will decrease, which will decrease children's psychological issues (especially girls), which will then go back to increase inclusion in the classroom.

In the fourth session, the participants use the connections identified to decide on actions for change. For example, holding parent-teacher meetings as an action for change might increase children's attention in class, teacher behaviour, and/or parent's focus on their children's education, because the accountability and recognition of common goals between the adults will help support children in their learning. These actions for change will require a collaborative approach – a partnership between the community members and partner NGOs to create positive change within the school and the community. Participants then vote on their favourite ideas, before reflecting on what they valued and learned during the workshop process.

After the Group Model Building sessions are completed, a final workshop is held with all participants together to agree on a plan of action. Children and adults are divided into groups to identify which ideas for change will be the most impactful and how to implement those ideas. Participants identify how long each idea will take as well as how much can be achieved by the community and what support is required from the partner NGOs. Everyone comes together at intervals to share their progress and come up with a consensus before moving forward again in their groups.

### A green light for the future

Not too far from Moqur district, Nazira<sup>2</sup>, a young girl in Qarabagh district, stood in front of a room of her female classmates and twice as many adults in an Action Plan workshop. This was the first time these young girls had ever had their ideas heard and considered in front of their parents, teachers, and elders. After discussing and voting, adults and children agreed with the children's plan of action of how to move forward: the young girls' action plan was chosen unanimously. At the end of the session, parents were already talking with the teachers – whom many parents had just met for the first time – about how they can better work together to improve their children's educational experience. They reached these insights because of the perspective shifts from the previous workshops.

By taking an inclusive and participatory approach, different community participants are encouraged to share their own stories. Being heard and seeing their ideas acted upon helps empower them. Farzaneh, Nazira and others like them, become the focal point for a new chapter of education in their communities, and this first and most difficult step will guide their communities to come together and reach a common goal.

More information about the EEQAP project can be found online.

Website: <http://bit.ly/EEQAP>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/eeqap>

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<sup>[2]</sup> Names have been changed to protect anonymity.



Young girl presents the children's plan for change, Ghazni, Afghanistan, 2019

# Creating inclusivity and diversity through a parent support group in Kolkata, India

Child in Need Institute (CINI) and Deaf Child Worldwide UK

## The Indian context

Deaf children in India are particularly vulnerable, often neglected by family and at the receiving end of abuse and insults from neighbours and friends. They are often unable to communicate with hearing people, leaving them feeling isolated and rejected by their peers and family members. Deaf adults are often overlooked during promotions in the workplace and do not receive proper support in the form of accessible buildings, supportive colleagues, and assistive technology services. Even the fundamental right to education is denied to many children with disabilities.

Owing to the growing disability rights movement in India, it has one of the most progressive policy frameworks in the developing world. The country enacted the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009 to enforce 'Free and Compulsory' education for all children up to elementary level as the legal obligation of the state. The RTE Act made the Government, local bodies, and parents the prime duty bearers for compulsory education of children by ensuring school admission and regular attendance.

Samagra Shikha Abhiyan (SSA) is the Government of India's flagship programme for the achievement of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE). The policy promotes inclusive education for children with special educational needs. However, efforts are limited by the challenge of identifying these children and their specific learning requirements and limited resources in schools – such as the provision of specially trained educators and therapeutic learning tools.

Consequently, schools regularly refuse admission to children with disabilities. Those who are admitted mostly do not complete primary or secondary education. Moreover, teaching often fails to result in increased knowledge and skills, creating an increasing gap in learning between disabled and non-disabled



Resource parent teaching her own child

children as education advances. The situation is even worse for girls, who are stigmatised for their gender as well as their disability.

## Our activities with deaf children and their families

The Child in Need Institute (CINI) has been working with international and national organisations and government stakeholders for 30 years to improve the lives of vulnerable children and adolescents in urban spaces. Through our life cycle approach, CINI aims to create an enabling environment for these young people to become self-reliant through education – helping them to achieve their rights to health, education, nutrition and protection using a comprehensive approach.

CINI believes that inclusive education means ensuring quality education for all students irrespective of caste, religion, creed, gender, race, economic background, and disability, by being responsive, supportive, respectful and accepting of the diverse needs of the students. Therefore, all children/students should be enrolled in general government schools and learn and take part in all aspects of school life.

The challenges faced by deaf children and youth pushed CINI to work for their empowerment and advocacy to ensure they

are included as members of society. Emphasis was given to inclusive education and its implementation in local schools.

With technical and financial support from Deaf Child Worldwide UK, CINI began supporting the education of deaf children. The role and importance of parents in contributing to the improvement of deaf children's lives soon became apparent. Participation of teachers and parents to ensure deaf children's inclusion in community is essential for the children's holistic development. Parents are not only role models for their children but can also guide and help them to learn right and wrong.

CINI focused on developing community and parental awareness and building their skills and knowledge to support deaf children to reach their full potential. Building the capacity of parents to understand effective communication, inclusive education, tools and methodologies for language, numeric and social skills development, rights and entitlements, has enabled them to provide the requisite support. Increasingly, deaf children have been enrolled in mainstream schools, ensuring their participation in the learning process and other school activities.

### The role of parents

Dynamic parents who attended CINI training were mobilised to form a support group of 'Resource Parents' to address queries, exchange information, express views, and acquire knowledge regarding disability schemes and scholarships, along with providing academic and learning support to their children. The support group formed by 15 mothers in 2017 provided coaching support at centres for parents to help their children learn Indian Sign Language (ISL) at home.

Through the years, the mothers have become more self-aware, confident, and independent. They stay updated on facilities for people with disabilities, which has led to the support group becoming bigger and better. Currently, 36 parents actively work together to understand the comprehensive challenges faced by deaf children in fulfilling their rights, and function as a support group for each other and other parents to answer questions, spread awareness, and most importantly provide learning support to deaf children.

The difficulties faced during admission of deaf children into general schools have been significantly reduced by the resource parents group. They are establishing relationships with school teachers and Sarva Shikshya Mission Resource centres, thereby facilitating smooth enrolment of deaf children. Parents can now directly communicate with the teachers in cases of urgency and need.

Using a training of trainers (TOT) approach, resource parents learn about child rights, child safeguarding policy and the rights of people with disability in India. They also receive training at the intermediate ISL level and on academic orientation, focusing on lesson adaptation, individual education planning and supporting the development of teaching learning materials.

Resource parents have been instrumental in supporting other parents to provide extra tuition for their children to help them develop their learning and to ensure they receive their entitlements. In the last 4 years, 231 deaf children have been retained and supported out of which 118 have enrolled in government formal schools, receiving a stipend, benefits, certificates, aids and appliances, books, and learning materials from different sources.

The achievements of enrolling deaf children in schools and promoting inclusive education in the community are a small but impactful step to developing a future for all children with disabilities. The positivity and efforts of resource parents are a source of inspiration for other parents to join in with the effort.

The transformation of parents from a state of apprehensive faith to poised leaders who are committed towards bettering the lives of their deaf children is encouraging. They are now setting goals and a vision for their work, becoming a self-sustaining group and inching towards registering themselves as an independent body.

### Contact

**More information about the project can be found on the following websites:**

[www.cini-india.org](http://www.cini-india.org)

[www.ndcs.org.uk/deaf-child-worldwide/](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/deaf-child-worldwide/)

# The positive impact of family involvement in inclusive education, Tetouan, Morocco

Suleiman Omrani

**Families play an essential role in educating children. Family is the first school. As Suleiman shows in this article, the family and the school are two worlds that need to work together to achieve optimal development for the child. Inclusive education offers hope for families seeking answers and assistance regarding the educational futures of their children with disabilities, but lack of clarity about what inclusive education entails means parents also have concerns that need addressing.**

## **Hanan Society's move towards inclusion**

Since 1999, the Tetouan-based Hanan Society for Children with Disabilities in Morocco, in partnership with Save the Children, has sought to include children with disabilities in mainstream schools, having previously supported special education since 1969. The Society's centres, which provided special education for students, are gradually transforming into resource centres to provide pedagogical, technical and therapeutic support to mainstream schools. In collaboration with Humanity and Inclusion, the Society is developing a project to bring a culture of inclusive education into primary education, preparatory education and vocational training.

## **Introducing families to inclusive education**

In 2005 the Society organised workshops for 186 families of children with disabilities registered in the Society's Special Education Centres. These workshops aimed to persuade families to send their children to mainstream primary schools to continue their education.

Some families rejected the idea, others were responsive to it. A large group of households, especially mothers (mostly from low-income families), believed the Hanan Society was expelling their children from the Special Education Centres. They questioned the purpose and content of the inclusive education project. However, mothers from about 30 families were convinced of the importance and

started to register their children in schools close to their homes.

## **Working with families who rejected inclusive education**

Some parents feared their children would be neglected by mainstream teachers or exposed to verbal or physical violence or discomfort. Other families feared their children would fail to achieve academically in mainstream schools. Most families said teachers and administrators were not prepared to work with their children. The Inclusive Education Project Officer in collaboration with Multidisciplinary Team and the inclusive education pedagogical support teachers from Hanan Society held intensive meetings with families to explain the importance of enrolling and staying in mainstream school. Families learned about international laws and instruments relating to disability, how to defend their children's rights and how to better support them at home. Ultimately 80% of families supported their children's enrolment and retention in mainstream schools.

## **Early intervention**

In 2003 the Society initiated an Early Intervention Programme to include children in primary education institutions and nurseries. Families were encouraged to enrol their children with disabilities into the programme from the age of 3. This enabled the inclusive education team to start tracking students' educational paths from a young age, through daily visits to schools, and to provide them with rehabilitation and educational support.

Hanan Society follows-up the inclusion of students into mainstream primary schools but relies on families to follow up with the students in secondary education as the society has limited resources. The Society's experience has demonstrated the extraordinary efforts of families, to support their children. About 19 children reached secondary school and a young man with cerebral palsy started his university education.

## Family support

To involve families in the learning process, the Society created the Parents' School, led by mothers who have experience of including their children in mainstream schools. The experienced mothers support and guide new mothers with children with disabilities at home and in school.

The Inclusive Education Team identify the needs of family members and the types of intervention that can be effective to provide coherent educational tracking. Family-based interventions help parents and other family members to think about and adapt to the inclusive education programme, to foster a better understanding of the general situation and to avoid focusing solely on the child's disability as the problem.

The Society's education team supports families to follow realistic expectations for education and to understand the role of the educational specialist as well as their own responsibilities. These interventions may focus on the individual within the family or collectively with a group of families, according to their immediate needs. The following types of support is offered to families.

### Advocating for their children

Many parents are unaware that their children with disabilities have the right to attend neighbourhood schools. Also, parents' goals may not always match the needs and interests of their children. Parents of children with disabilities have the potential to be their most effective rights defenders but they need support to understand and advocate for their children's

right to inclusive education. Parents may also need support organising themselves as a group to challenge exclusionary practices in education and to work in partnership with disabled persons organisations (DPO) and other community-based groups to advocate for rights.

### Collaborating with teachers

Developing parent/family groups provides a space for education professionals and parents to exchange information and experience regarding children's educational development, the dynamics at home, and general family attitudes. Working with teachers can build families' confidence to share their emotions, their child's difficulties, or their hopes and aspirations.

The groups help family members understand their emotions and share their knowledge and experience of raising their children. The parents also engage in decisions about goals, methodology, or various contacts with other education or health specialists.

### Financial and legal assistance

Parents are given information about administrative resources – interventions or financial and legal assistance – that could help them and their children. They are given the opportunity to contact local associations for parents of children with disabilities and other specialists.

### Conclusion

Providing parents with the space to develop collaborative relationships with other parents, with teachers, or with other stakeholders, gives them the opportunity to express themselves while listening to others' experiences, emotions and difficulties. Families have expressed that they want more such support, on a continued basis, to build their capacity in relation to inclusive education. Some also highlight, however, that financial challenges regarding rehabilitation and education for their children remain a barrier for them.

### Contact

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**This article was submitted in Arabic and translated by Ayman Qwaider.**



# Using context-based teaching to engage parents in their children's learning in the UK

Su Corcoran

**Parental engagement in education – their attitudes to learning and the roles they play in academic achievement and socio-emotional development – influences children's attitudes to learning. In this article, Su discusses ESERO-UK's Tim Peake Primary Project (TPPP), which increased the engagement of parents and wider communities in schools, although this was not an aim of the project.**

## A focus on space

In the UK, educational initiatives have sought to increase students' motivation for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects and boost the uptake of these subjects in higher education and as future careers. Taking advantage of the Principia mission that took the first Briton to the International Space Station (ISS) in 2015, the TPPP aimed to motivate teachers' and students' engagement in STEM subjects in 1,400 UK primary schools.

Using space as a context for cross-curricular teaching and learning, the TPPP directly increased pupils' enjoyment and engagement in science, numeracy and literacy. It increased pupil attainment in science, and teachers' confidence in teaching space-related topics and using space as a cross-curricular context for teaching. The project helped engage girls, and young people with specific learning needs, who would not usually engage in STEM.

## Real-life learning

Effective STEM education and high-quality STEM teaching in primary schools helps promote student interest in and uptake of STEM subjects at higher levels. However, non-specialists, who may lack confidence in their subject knowledge, often teach primary level STEM subjects. Students' learn best in STEM subjects when they have access to authentic context-based learning opportunities involving inquiry-based practices such as active learning, reasoning and problem-solving, and creativity. The TPPP – delivered by the European Space

Education Resource Office in the UK (ESERO-UK), and funded by the UK Space Agency and the Department for Education, with further support from the European Space Agency – provided a real-life context.

The TPPP provided teachers with continuing professional development (CPD), resources, and support from specially trained Space Ambassadors (SA). SAs include self-employed science educators delivering innovative science education activities in schools, and people working for companies involved in science and engineering industries in the UK who act as ambassadors for STEM. Schools interested in taking part applied to ESERO-UK and were assigned an SA, who trained teachers about teaching space, presented practical activities included in the resource pack, and provided ongoing project support.

Some schools only used the TPPP for National Curriculum science. Others developed a cross-curricula whole-school project for all classes over the course of a week/month. For example, in literacy the children write newspaper articles or poems, in art/technology they make/draw planets or space stations or build space buggies, in mathematics they do various calculations on the distance to planets, and in science they do various experiments.

## Community connections

The SAs helped schools link with local industry and STEM groups that could be useful resources (e.g. inviting local astronomy clubs into schools, inviting pilots from local air force bases, or bringing researchers from local universities and/or industry). The activities delivered by the SAs ranged from leading science classes that teachers observe, to whole school assemblies and community events.

## Engaging parents, families and community

Parents, extended families, and to some extent the wider community, are children's first teachers. They are responsible for the majority of what children learn in their first few years.

Even after children start school, parents still have a significant impact on children's learning, particularly in relation to their attitudes to school.

The relationships that parents and communities have with teachers and schools, impact parents' roles in schools and the extent to which they work together on children's wellbeing and intellectual development. In the UK, schools are playing greater roles in educating parents, developing family education initiatives and building community relationships in order to meet social and academic goals. For example, primary schools in North Wales run initiatives like 'Magnificent Mondays', encouraging parents to join their children for an afternoon each week/month to work together on topics like mathematics. The parents learn alongside their children and/or support them with their work.

The TPPP had an impact on parents, grandparents and members of the communities local to a number of participating schools. Tim Peake's mission to the ISS captured their imagination: parents were motivated by their children's participation in the project and the topic of space, and the media coverage of the mission boosted their engagement. Seeing Tim on the television in the morning, linked children and their parents to the activities taking place in school. To some extent, through the project, they felt that Tim belonged to them and they were part of history.

Some schools specifically used the project to increase parental engagement, for instance by setting homework to engage parents and make use of the many free online educational resources about space. Parents were invited to take part in robotics workshops or build models with their children. Some schools ran stargazing events and STEM open days for the whole community, and one organised a video project, encouraging pupils to interview community members about their memories of the moon landings, linking these experiences to the ISS mission. Parental involvement tended to happen more in schools that took a whole-school approach to the project.

There were many instances of parents getting involved without schools necessarily pushing for it (e.g. borrowing extra books from the library, doing more research with their children,

learning to build and launch rockets, and using their spare time with their children to work on the project). In some schools, parental involvement was sustained after the end of the project and parents were excited to be involved in other context-based learning activities.

### Building connectedness

Family engagement in schools is more than just school-focused events and parent-teacher conferences. It involves the development of formal and informal networks that enable a sense of connectedness to school communities (see for instance the article in this edition from Project Elimu in Kenya). Such networks are important for the development of quality relationships between schools and parents. Further research is needed to understand the role of the TPPP in developing such community connectedness and why/how parents chose to participate. Nevertheless, it is clear that the use of a context that grabs the attention of adults and children alike was a significant reason for TPPP's success.

Parental involvement does not always improve academic achievement, and activities engaging parents do not necessarily relate to all learners. However, a teacher who encourages parental involvement can change a class, and a school leader who champions parental involvement can change a school environment.

After the TPPP, STEM-UK's Polar Explorer Programme (PEP) used the building of the RRS Sir David Attenborough explorer vessel – which will gather data in the Arctic and Antarctic over the next 25 years – as a new context for STEM teaching.

### Free resources to download

TPPP: <http://bit.ly/STEMTPPP>

PEP: <http://bit.ly/STEMpola>

### Contact

**Su Corcoran is a Research Associate at Manchester Metropolitan University and Programme Officer at the Enabling Education Network. The TPPP evaluation report can be found at:**  
<http://bit.ly/TPPPEvaluation>

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## Useful publications

### Guidelines

**'Booklet 2: Working with Families and Communities to Create an Inclusive Learner-Friendly Environment'. Part of the 'Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive Learning-Friendly Environments'**  
UNESCO Bangkok 2015

This booklet gives ideas about how to involve the community in the school and students in the community. It will help you identify what is already happening and offer ideas for involving families and communities even more in promoting and developing inclusive education.  
Available at: <http://bit.ly/ILFEbk2>

**Family Action for Inclusion in Education**  
EENET, 2002

This guide was written for family and community members who want to form a support group or advocacy organisation, to challenge exclusion. It is also of interest to those interested in promoting more inclusive practices in education, such as teachers, teacher educators, policy makers and consumer organisations.  
Available at: <http://bit.ly/FAIE2002>

**Family Friendly: Working with deaf children and their communities worldwide**

Deaf Child Worldwide, 2008

This book aims to raise awareness of the important role that parents and families can play in the lives of their deaf children and in their communities. It provides practical examples

showing how families, service providers and deaf people can work together to support deaf children. The book takes an action learning approach and contains case studies from around the world.

Available at: <http://bit.ly/FFDCW2008>

**Parents, Family and Community Participation in Inclusive Education**  
UNICEF 2014

This booklet highlights the importance of engaging with parents, families and communities in the process of implementing inclusive education, with an emphasis on children with disabilities.

Available at: <http://bit.ly/UNICEF2014>

### Videos

**Accessing support – community mapping**  
Inclusive Education South Africa

This is a 2-minute animation providing ideas for where teachers/schools can find support for inclusive education in the community.

Available at: <http://bit.ly/IESAvideo>

### Library

There are over 60 documents in the 'parents, families and communities' section of EENET's online library. Browse here:  
<http://bit.ly/EENETparents>

## Have you watched 'An Inclusive Day'?

- EENET's 10 short videos were filmed in Burkina Faso, Burma, Ukraine and UK.
- They contain simple, practical ideas for making education more inclusive.
- These ideas work best when teachers work together with parents, families and the community.

Watch online: <http://bit.ly/EENET-YouTube>

The videos are available on flash drive. Contact EENET to request a copy.

