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INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN: EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE ENGAGE PROJECT

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Acronyms

AIR	American Institutes for Research
DPO	Disabled People’s Organization
EFA	Education for All
ENGAGE	Engaging with Disabled People’s Organizations in Development Cooperation Project
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
RISE	Revitalizing, Innovating, and Strengthening Education
SMC	School management committee
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Executive Summary

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to implement the Engaging with Disabled People’s Organizations (DPOs) in Development Cooperation (ENGAGE) Project (Cooperative Agreement No. DFD-A-00-07-00189-00). The purpose of the ENGAGE Project was to increase the participation of DPOs and people with disabilities in the planning and implementation of development efforts. This is needed because people with disabilities are more likely to be caught in a vicious cycle of poverty and denial of opportunities for economic, social, and human development. Including people with disabilities and their needs in international development is needed to break this cycle.

The aim of the ENGAGE Project was to create examples of inclusive development in the sectors of education, governance, and HIV in the countries of Mexico, Pakistan, and Zambia. This brief describes the work of the ENGAGE Project in Pakistan to address the issue of increasing access and participation to quality learning environments for children with disabilities. ENGAGE used two approaches to implement the project in Pakistan:

- Integrating curriculum about disability and inclusive education into a teacher training project
- Developing a pilot-inclusive education project

ENGAGE selected an existing USAID teacher training project—Revitalizing, Innovating, and Strengthening Education (RISE)—to demonstrate the benefits of integrating disability in mainstream development investments. ENGAGE provided a technical expert who developed inclusive education curriculum and materials, which RISE used to train 7,000 primary teachers. As a result, teachers are becoming aware of how to create inclusive classrooms and more sensitive to the needs of all students.

After the first cohort of teachers in the District of Bagh completed the 2-year training provided by RISE, ENGAGE initiated a pilot-inclusive education project. The aim of the project was to provide additional training and support so that 25 teachers would be able to educate children with disabilities in their classrooms. The trainee teachers selected for the pilot project had 48 children with disabilities in their classroom. These children had a range of disabilities, including vision, hearing, physical, intellectual, and emotional/behavioral. Within the trainee teachers’ classrooms, 1,373 children were without disabilities. The trainee teachers were from 19 schools.

The pilot project used three approaches to provide training and support: workshops; onsite support with mentor teachers; and cluster meetings, whereby the group of teachers met with inclusive education experts (i.e., university professors) to answer questions and discuss solutions or strategies to resolve difficulties. At the conclusion of the pilot project, changes were witnessed in teachers’ attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Overall, trainee teachers became more confident about their abilities to educate children with disabilities. Changes in the classroom environment and arrangement were noticed, because teachers were more conscious

of the needs of the children with disabilities and how such factors as seating or physical arrangements could better facilitate learning. Teachers also more frequently used interactive and student-centered teaching strategies (i.e., peer tutoring, project, and demonstration).

The ENGAGE pilot project also worked with parents of children with disabilities and members of the School Management Committee (SMC). Information sharing about disabilities was particularly needed in the District of Bagh because people had nowhere to go for resources, information, support, and services. As a result, the project became a conduit for information for parents and community members to learn about different types of disabilities and available interventions.

Based on the experiences of the ENGAGE Project and others in Pakistan (UNICEF, 2003), there are encouraging signs that inclusive education is possible in Pakistan, if the appropriate resources and supports are provided. This project demonstrated that when training was provided to Pakistani primary teachers, they were able to make changes in their pedagogy and become more accepting of differences in their students, which are necessary initial steps to making classrooms and schools more inclusive.

The ENGAGE Project has also shown the feasibility of advancing the interests and needs of people with disabilities into mainstream international development efforts. The project was able to train a large number of teachers and bring awareness of the needs of children with disabilities to regional education officials. There continues to be a need for donors and implementers to support the efforts in developing countries to provide educational opportunities to all children, particularly those with disabilities. International development donors and implementers must continue to work with governments in developing countries to establish strategies that promote inclusive education.

Introduction

At the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000, 164 countries committed themselves to the goal of providing quality basic education for all children in these countries by 2015 or earlier (UNESCO, 2000). Before the meeting in Senegal, representatives from the Asia–Pacific region met to gain consensus on the topic and develop a framework for action:

All must have the opportunity to receive a basic education of good quality that focuses on the ‘whole’ person, including health, nutrition and cognitive and psycho-social development. In order for this to happen, education systems must be able to adapt to the individual needs of child, youth, adult learners, by incorporating formal and non-formal approaches and programmes within an integrated and inclusive system of basic education. A strong and serious commitment must be made to include the excluded. . . . Greater, more explicit focused and commitment must be given to the identification of unreached children who are not in school and to the promotion of innovative and varied approaches by government and NGOs [non-governmental organizations] to meet their diverse educational needs. (UNESCO, 2000, p. 58)

The Dakar Declaration also indicated that the learning needs of children with disabilities demand special attention and emphasized that as an integral part of the education system, steps need to be taken to provide equal access to education to every category of children with disabilities. However, the reality is that 95% of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend schools (Richler, 2004).

Achieving this goal in developing countries will be challenging. Most special needs schools are typically located in urban areas in developing countries and thus do not provide access to children in rural areas. While community schools are located closer to these children’s homes, most teachers are not trained to attend to the needs of children with disabilities.

One way to advance the goal of the declaration is to provide training to teachers to improve their knowledge and skills of educating children with disabilities. This brief describes the experiences of the Engaging with Disabled People’s Organizations (DPOs) in Development Cooperation (ENGAGE) Project. The project developed curriculum for a teacher training program and a pilot project to develop inclusive education in the District of Bagh, within the state of Azad Jammu and Kashmir in Pakistan. The term inclusive education refers to “schools, centres of learning, and educational systems that are open to all children” (UNESCO, 2001). This implies addressing the varying needs of disadvantaged children, including girls, those belonging to low castes, children in remote areas, those subjected to abuse and exploitation, and those having a disability. The ENGAGE Project focused on the needs of children with disabilities, so this brief solely describes inclusive education in relation to this group.

This brief shares the experiences from the ENGAGE Project, adding to the limited amount of information about strategies used to make education more inclusive, particularly for children with disabilities in developing countries. The information in this brief can be used by others to

reflect on what they can do to establish inclusive educational systems that address the needs of all children.

The brief is organized into three sections. The first section gives contextual information about educational services for children with disabilities in Pakistan. The second section describes the ENGAGE Project and its implementation and results. The third section provides reflections about the project and concludes with recommendations.

Policy and Services for People With Disabilities in Pakistan

People with disabilities are the most marginalized group within Pakistan and face great stigmatization in society (JICA, 2002). This may be due to the fact that independent assessments have found a significant lack of information, rules and regulations, rehabilitation centers, and specialized services for people with disabilities (UNICEF, 2003; JICA, 2002). This also may be due to the fact that some in society, particularly those with limited education, view disability as a curse or punishment or view those with a disability as a burden to society (Miles, 1983; Akhtar, 1994; as cited in UNICEF, 2003). Because limited information is available in Pakistan, this may have contributed to a lack of awareness to or misconceptions about people with disabilities.

There are different societal factors between Pakistan and western countries. These differences may explain why Pakistan has followed a different policy direction for people with disabilities than western countries:

Pakistan is a profoundly religious country, in the sense that, ultimately, law and right and meaning in life are widely believed to derive from Allah. Children are considered to be born as parts of an extended family network within a wider community of mutual duty and obligation, rather than as little individuals with personal rights. The duty and entitlement of support and care is traditional and religious, rather than being laid down by the State. There is a theoretical 'equality' of persons before Allah; but that is quite different from the idea of constructing a society where individuals are 'equal before the law'. Notions of individual rights and equality that may seem self-evident to westerners often look flimsy and artificial in Pakistan. (Miles, 2004, p. 8)

The Ministry of Women's Development, Social Welfare, and Special Education has authority to formulate policies on employment and rehabilitation for people with disabilities. However, policies are then implemented at the local level, and no particular department is responsible for programs for people with disabilities (JICA, 2002). Perhaps, because the implementation of services is a provincial responsibility, the availability of services for identifying, rehabilitating, and educating people with disabilities varies greatly, especially between urban and rural areas. For example, community-based rehabilitation is not available throughout the country and when these services are available, they are mainly offered by international organizations and NGOs (JICA, 2002). Thus, an effort has not been coordinated to provide services to people with disabilities throughout the country.

Similarly, the availability of educational services for children with disabilities also varies greatly. Most services for those with disabilities are located in urban areas and are primarily special schools provided by the private sector, NGOs, or the government. The Pakistani government has established 46 special education schools that provide assessment, diagnostic, and special education services (JICA, 2002).¹ Some provincial governments have also set up special education schools. Pakistan has only a few inclusive schools: Most of them are located in large urban cities and are operated by the private sector. As a result, most schools and services (inclusive or special needs) are not accessible to children with disabilities who live in remote or rural areas.

Because Pakistani policymakers have not reached a consensus toward inclusive education, Pakistan's national policy does not advocate for it. Supporters have maintained that inclusive education is the way to create a more open and accepting society and provide educational services to children who reside far from the special needs schools. Supporters have also suggested that inclusive education may be less costly than special needs schools because housing is provided at such facilities.

Opponents, on the other hand, believe that inclusive education is advocated by international organizations that know little about the realities in Pakistan (Miles & Miles, 1993, as cited in UNICEF, 2003). They point out that 278,051 teachers work in 106,275 primary schools in Pakistan (Bureau of Statistics, 1998, as cited in UNICEF, 2003). Government schools are under resourced. Most teachers are not equipped to handle the needs of children with disabilities, because they have not been trained to do so. Teachers do not usually allow children to play a participatory role in classrooms, and teachers do not stress creative or critical thinking ability (UNICEF, 2003). Instead, classrooms mainly use memorization and rote learning, which creates an inaccessible curriculum and learning environment for many children with disabilities.

Finally, the education policy landscape is complex. The National Policy of Special Education (enacted in 1998) and National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (enacted in 2002) give oversight of special needs schools to the Ministry of Women's Development, Social Welfare, and Special Education, rather than the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Women's Development, Social Welfare, and Special Education has no role with regular government schools, but the policy does not provide any involvement of the Ministry of Education in special or inclusive education (UNICEF, 2003). This has resulted in the two systems working in isolation and trying to maintain authority and identity independent of the other (UNICEF, 2003).

Purpose and Focus of the ENGAGE Project

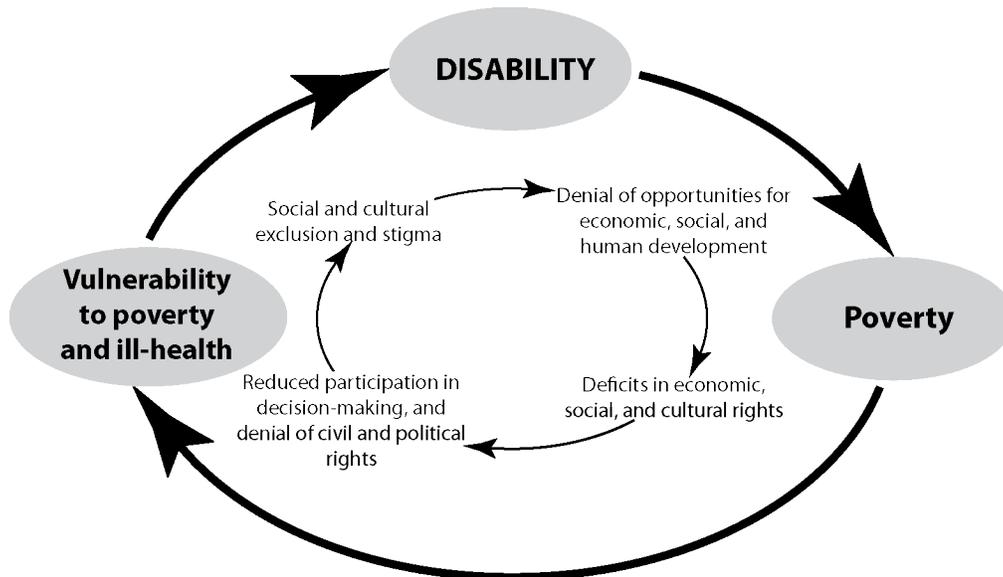
The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to implement the ENGAGE Project (Cooperative Agreement No. DFD-A-00-07-00189-00). The purpose of the ENGAGE Project was to increase the participation of DPOs and people with disabilities in the planning and implementation of development

¹ Pakistan has 11 centers for persons with visual impairments, 12 for those with intellectual disabilities, 12 for those with hearing impairments, and 11 for those with physical disabilities.

efforts. As posited by Guernsey, Nicoli, & Ninio (2006, p. 1), “reaching the Millennium Development Goals is unlikely to be achieved unless the rights and needs of people with disabilities are considered in the process of development.”

There is a strong association between poverty and disability. Poor people with disabilities are more likely to be caught in a vicious cycle of poverty, as depicted in Figure 1. People with disabilities have lower education and income levels than the rest of the population and are more likely to earn income below the poverty level. Additional costs resulting from the disability also make people with disabilities or their families worse off (Elwan, 1999). Excluding people with disabilities from educational opportunities can be damaging to a society, because it virtually ensures that they will live in long-term poverty and be an economic burden to their families and communities (Jonsson & Wiman, 2001). Denying opportunities for economic, social, and human development inhibits the realization of their human rights, which creates vulnerable conditions for people with disabilities and perpetuates poverty (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Conceptualization of Poverty and Disability Cycle



Note. Adapted from U.K. Department for International Development, 2000, as stated in Guernsey, Nicoli, & Ninio (2006, p. 10).

The way to break this vicious cycle is to make development inclusive—that is, include people with disabilities in all aspects of socioeconomic development. This would embody the principles outlined within the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:

- Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons
- Non-discrimination
- Full and effective participation and inclusion in society

- Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
- Equality of opportunity
- Accessibility
- Equality between men and women
- Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities (UN, 2006, p. 8)

Creating examples of inclusive development was the aim of the ENGAGE Project. To accomplish this, AIR took the approach of connecting people with disabilities and DPOs with mainstream international development investments, by integrating their needs into USAID’s project activities, so that people with disabilities could benefit from these resources. ENGAGE worked in three countries (Mexico, Pakistan, and Zambia) to create inclusive development within the areas of education, governance, and health/HIV. This brief describes the work of the ENGAGE Project within the education sector in Pakistan to address the issue of increasing access and participation to quality learning environments for children with disabilities. ENGAGE used two approaches to implement the project in Pakistan:

- Integrating curriculum about disability and inclusive education into a teacher training project
- Developing a pilot-inclusive education project

These strategies support the involvement of people with disabilities in development efforts and provide educational benefits to children with disabilities in Pakistan. ENGAGE selected an existing USAID education project—Revitalizing Innovating Strengthening Education (RISE)—to demonstrate the benefits of integrating disability in mainstream development investments. Then, ENGAGE initiated a pilot-inclusive education project to further the work of the RISE project, working with the first cohort of trained teachers in the District of Bagh.

Description of RISE Project

The RISE Project helps communities, teachers, and educational officials to improve the quality of instruction and educational management of schools in areas most affected by the earthquake of 2005: the Mansehra district in the North-West Frontier Province and Bagh, Muzaffarabad, and Poonch districts in the state of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. By the end of the project, RISE will have trained and provided sustained support to more than 10,000 primary, middle, and high school teachers. Training is focused on student-centered and active learning methods that are linked to the content areas of English, mathematics, and science. After completing the 12-day training, RISE brings the trained teachers together to support each other in monthly cluster meetings and professional development forums. In these meetings, teachers help each other resolve challenges they face in their classrooms, review and model active learning techniques, and support each other in bringing about changes in their schools. Finally, a 3-day follow-up workshop is provided to teachers at the end of the 2-year training cycle.

Staff from the ENGAGE and RISE Projects discussed ways of integrating disability into the training curriculum, because this was an aspect that was not originally conceptualized in the RISE teacher training curriculum. Staff from both projects recognized an opportunity to apply the training on student-centered and active learning methods to illustrate how these practices can encourage the participation of all children, regardless of difference in ability, gender, or tribe. Staff from both projects also realized that teachers were more sensitive and open to the topic of disability because the earthquake had caused disabilities for many community members. These conversations created synergies between the two projects. As a result, ENGAGE provided a technical expert who developed inclusive education curriculum and materials that RISE used to train 7,000 primary teachers. Training on this scale is one in which the ENGAGE Project could not have achieved with its limited resources. Moreover, making teachers aware of how to create inclusive classrooms resulted in them becoming more sensitive to the needs of all of their students. Thus, staff from the RISE Project viewed the inclusive education curriculum as an important component of the teacher training program, because it had helped to sensitize teachers and they could reflect on how to create more supportive learning and welcoming environments for all of their students.

Inclusive Education Project in the District of Bagh

After the first cohort of teachers in the District of Bagh completed the 2-year training provided by the RISE Project, ENGAGE initiated a pilot-inclusive education project. The aim of the project was to provide additional training and support so that 25 teachers would be able to educate children with disabilities in their classrooms. Teachers were selected by staff from RISE and the Education Department in Bagh based on the following factors: gender of teacher, location of the school, and whether children with disabilities were already enrolled in the school.

Located in the state of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, the District of Bagh is composed of 230 villages. This area falls within the lesser Himalayas zone, as shown in Photograph 1. Most of the population live in rural areas.

Photograph 1: Area Near Bagh, Showing the High Elevation and Difficult Terrain



In the District of Bagh, 123 primary schools serve children in Grades 1–5. Many of the schools are still operating from the temporary structures that were erected after the October 2005 earthquake. The project worked with 25 teachers (14 males and 11 females). The District of Bagh did not operate any special schools for children with disabilities. If a child with a disability were to attend school, then he/she would be in one of the primary schools, unless the child resided at one of the special schools located in Islamabad (the capital of Pakistan) or Muzaffarabad (the capital of the state of Azad Jammu and Kashmir). Few children with disabilities were enrolled in primary schools, and most were not in any school. In addition, community rehabilitation services were not available to people with disabilities. For these reasons, a pilot-inclusive education project was needed and supported by education officials in the District of Bagh.

The trainee teachers selected for the pilot project had 48 children with disabilities enrolled in their classrooms. These children had a range of disabilities, including vision, hearing, physical, intellectual, and emotional/behavioral. The trainee teachers' classrooms also included 1,373 children without disabilities. The trainee teachers were from 19 schools. Most of the schools had multiple grades in the classroom (70%, $n = 13$), with most schools composed of a single classroom (60%, $n = 12$). None of the schools had easy accessibility for physical disabilities, and nearly all of the children with disabilities (83%, $n = 40$) had to travel a long distance or through difficult terrain each day to get to schools. Despite this barrier, the children came to school.

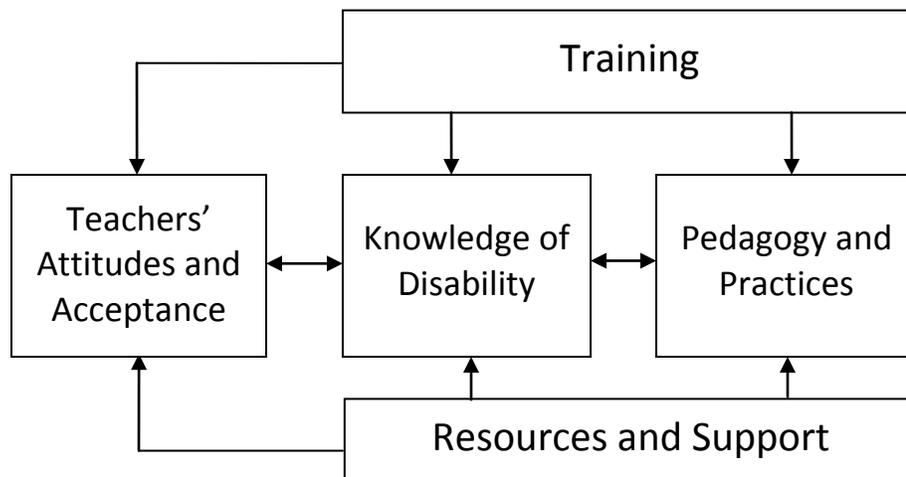
The project used three approaches to provide training and support: workshops; onsite support with mentor teachers; and cluster meetings, whereby the group of teachers met with inclusive education experts (i.e., university professors) to answer questions and discuss solutions or strategies to resolve difficulties. ENGAGE structured the professional development with these three approaches, because it was recognized that a one-time workshop or short-term series of workshops was not sufficient. Instead, the project designed ongoing professional development,

which is more likely to promote lasting changes in teacher knowledge and practice (Garet, Birman, Porter, Yoon, & Desimone, 2001). Professional development is also most effective when it encompasses the principles of adult learning of active engagement and opportunities for implementation, reflection, and sharing (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002).

A comprehensive professional development approach was used because inclusion of children with disabilities is dependent upon teachers' attitudes toward students with special needs, the skills of the teacher, and the supports provided to teachers (Engelbrecht, Forlin, Eloff, Swart, 2001; Meijer, 1999). In other words, the project recognized that the perceptions of the teachers, amount of resources given to support teachers, and the skills of the teachers would affect whether the teachers felt positive or negative about including students with disabilities in their classroom. Other factors that also influence teachers' perceptions on inclusion of students with disabilities are the nature and severity of the disabilities, teachers' experience and their beliefs about the power of teaching, their professional training, and experience with people with disabilities (Opdal, Wormnaes, & Habayeb, 2001; McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998).

Professional development has been reported to be a key to enhancing positive attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities (Opdal et al., 2001). Figure 2 depicts a conceptualization of the impact that the training and resources provided by the ENGAGE Project were expected to have on teachers' attitudes, knowledge, and skills.

Figure 2: Conceptualization of the Impact of Training and Resources From ENGAGE



As Figure 2 indicates, teachers' attitudes and acceptance of children with disabilities is related to their knowledge of the disability. Teachers often express a greater willingness to include children with physical disabilities, rather than children with learning, behavioural, or intellectual disabilities. The nature and severity of the child's disability is a large factor in teachers' attitudes (Opdal et al., 2001). Therefore, improving teachers' knowledge of the disability was an important aspect of the training provided to teachers in the pilot of the ENGAGE Project,

because this would in turn improve their attitudes and acceptance. As noted in one study in Uganda, teachers expressed a personal change process of “getting used to” the presence of children with disabilities, which started from an initial state of ignorance, fear, prejudice, or lack of confidence and moved toward the development of a relationship with children with disabilities, and development of confidence, skills, and coping strategies (Arbeiter & Hartley, 2002).

When teachers have a better knowledge of a disability and how it may (or may not) impact learning, teachers will begin to understand how their instructional practices may (or may not) be appropriate for children with disabilities, as noted in Figure 2. For inclusion to be effective, teachers need to be willing to deal with differences and need a repertoire of skills and pedagogical approaches (Engelbrecht et al., 2001; McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998). As teachers progressed through the training, the training was expected to gradually transform a teacher’s willingness to (a) interact with students who varied from their peers and (b) learn the skills needed to teach all students. Thus, training, resources, and support were the means employed to affect changes in teachers’ attitudes, knowledge, and pedagogical skills, as noted in Figure 2.

Such resources as pedagogical materials and specialized equipment are factors that help to support teachers. These factors are needed to make inclusion effective. Children with disabilities have a variety of needs: Some disabilities have limited impact upon learning, and others may require accommodations in the format of content (i.e., audio, visual, or tactile). Children with physical disabilities may need accessibility to the school and within the building (e.g., classrooms and latrines) but may not need any other accommodations. Children with sensory disabilities may need assistive devices, such as magnifiers or hearing aids. Because of the varying needs of students, schools often require specialized resources in the form of pedagogical materials, equipment, or assistive devices. The next section of the brief discusses (a) the specific strategies used by the pilot project to provide training, support, and resources to teachers and (b) the results that were achieved.

Training and Support Component of the Pilot Project

The ENGAGE Project provided a subcontract award of \$115,000 to Orgone International, a Pakistani NGO based in Islamabad, which in turn provided the ENGAGE Project with access to three professors from the Department of Special Education, Allama Iqbal Open University in Islamabad to implement the pilot project in the District of Bagh.² These professors were experts in special needs education and inclusive education and had conducted studies on the education sector in Pakistan. Allama Iqbal Open University serves the entire country through its distance education program by offering a master’s degree in special education. Approximately 1,500 students have completed this program and are working as teachers throughout the country (UNICEF, 2003).

² In addition to the financial resources, the ENGAGE Project provided five trips by AIR staff to Pakistan to provide support in curriculum, development, training, and project monitoring. The subcontract to Orgone International occurred from September 2008- January 2010.

Because of the broad reach of the Open University, a few teachers, who had completed the master's program in special education, actually resided within the District of Bagh. Four of these teachers (3 males and 1 female) were selected to become mentors to the trainee teachers.

After participating in a 3-day orientation about the pilot project and their roles and responsibilities therein, the mentor teachers provided onsite support to 25 trainee teachers. Mentor teachers were responsible for visiting trainee teachers in their classrooms, conducting observations, providing guidance, and answering questions. To make this logistically feasible given the terrain and difficulty in reaching some of the schools, the trainee teachers were divided into four groups. Groups were assigned based on the location of the school in correspondence to where the mentor teachers resided and/or taught.

In addition to onsite support, trainee teachers were provided with professional development from the professors from Allama Iqbal Open University. Workshops were held periodically throughout the school year in Bagh. Photographs 2 and 3 illustrate the sessions in which mentor and trainee teachers modeled the active and learning principles. These sessions applied the strategies that the teachers learned during their training with RISE and expanded them to children with disabilities in the content areas of English, mathematics, science, and social studies. Other topics were also covered, including inclusive education; categories and causes of disability; and adapting the environment, curriculum, or instruction.

Photograph 2: Group Presentation at a Workshop



Photograph 3: Group Activity at a Workshop



The professors from Allama Iqbal Open University also held bimonthly cluster meetings with the mentor and trainee teachers in Bagh. This was done, because an important type of professional development is teacher-to-teacher sharing to give teachers regular opportunities to learn from their peers. These meetings provided an opportunity for teachers to discuss their problems and for the professors or peers to offer solutions. When the professors were in Bagh for cluster meetings, they also visited teachers at their respective schools with the mentor teacher to offer additional onsite support. During these meetings, trainee teachers never

hesitated to discuss their challenges. With this support, project staff began to see changes in teachers' attitudes toward children with disabilities within the first 4 months of the project. Teachers began to realize that all children could learn. They also created welcoming environments so that all children felt a sense of acceptance.

At the conclusion of the pilot project, changes in teachers' attitudes, knowledge, and skills were witnessed, as well some additional results not originally anticipated. Overall, trainee teachers became more confident about their abilities to educate children with disabilities. Changes in the classroom environment and arrangement were noticed, because teachers were more conscious of the needs of children with disabilities and how such factors as seating or physical arrangements could better facilitate learning. Teachers more frequently used interactive and student-centered teaching strategies (i.e., peer tutoring, project, and demonstration). Photographs 4 and 5 illustrate teachers involving students in lessons. Teachers used simple and available materials as teaching supports and manipulatives to make lessons more visual or tactile for students with special needs. Teachers often asked students to bring supplies from home for lessons. Based on observations and reports from project personnel, some of the children with disabilities (21%, $n = 10$) showed improvements on school assessments.

Photograph 4: Teacher With a Group of Children



Photograph 5: Teacher Involving a Child in a Lesson



To achieve these results, consistent participation on the part of the trainee teachers in the cluster meetings and workshops was needed. The collaboration and association of the ENGAGE Project with the RISE Project assisted in garnering this support. The RISE Project had established a solid reputation in the community, so teachers wanted to go to its training. Therefore, teachers also wanted to participate in the ENGAGE training.

Involving Parents and the Community

The ENGAGE pilot project also worked to involve parents of children with disabilities and members of the School Management Committee (SMC). The purpose of this involvement was to (a) inform parents and SMCs about project activities to gain their cooperation and support, and (b) increase their awareness and knowledge of children with disabilities. Information sharing about disabilities was particularly needed in the District of Bagh because people had

nowhere to go for resources, information, support, and services. For example, Bagh did not have (a) community-based services to provide vision or hearing screenings or such services as speech or physical therapy or (b) provisions for specialized equipment (e.g., wheelchairs, canes, hearing aids, and magnifiers).

As a result, the project became a conduit for information for parents and community members to learn about different types of disabilities and available interventions. Many parents came to visit the local project office in Bagh. For this reason, project staff also invited parents of children with disabilities to participate in the cluster meetings. After this informal invitation was extended, at least six parents attended each cluster meeting. These meetings provided an opportunity for parents to get answers to their questions. In addition, the project held a 1-day workshop for parents of children with disabilities in which 37 parents (29 mothers and 8 fathers) participated. The parents viewed these meetings as very helpful opportunities for them to learn.

Mentor and trainee teachers also initiated direct contact with families either by conducting home visits to families or holding weekly meetings with parents at the school. Through these efforts, 42 parents (16 mothers and 26 fathers) were provided guidance. Thus, parents began to see their child's teachers as a source of information about disabilities and a greater working relationship emerged.

Because of the lack of resources in the District of Bagh, project staff brought resources to Bagh and connected children with such resources in Islamabad. For example, the project had an audiologist come to Bagh to conduct testing on children who were suspected of having hearing losses. Then, the project fitted five children, who were diagnosed with hearing impairments, with hearing aids in Islamabad. Specialized resources and equipment are an important consideration when trying to provide appropriate educational access to children with disabilities. The project allocated funding in its budget to be able to devote resources to these areas of need, because existing resources in the school would likely not be sufficient to address some of the more specialized needs of children with disabilities.

Although this project focused on teacher training, project staff also saw the importance of involving and engaging parents, particularly those who had children with disabilities. Parental support can be an important source of advocacy in the community, but before they can become advocates, parents need to have access to information and knowledge. Save the Children has found that an important condition to support the inclusion of children with disabilities is awareness by parents that their children have a right to education (Save the Children, 2008). Without knowledge about disabilities, services, and rights, parents may not move to become advocates. During this project, parents began to understand that their child had a right to education, because five additional children with disabilities were enrolled in three of the participating schools. Project staff anticipate that parents will enroll additional children with disabilities in the following school year.

Reflections on the ENGAGE Project

Several lessons were learned and reflections emerged from the work of ENGAGE. The project demonstrated the possibility of bringing awareness to the needs of children with disabilities and improving attitudes and acceptance about disabilities in Bagh, Pakistan. Within a short period of time, ENGAGE's pilot project achieved many successful outcomes. The experience of the ENGAGE Project shows that inclusion of children with disabilities in community schools is possible, when the appropriate training, support, and resources are provided. Three important factors appeared to have contributed to the success of the project: changes in attitudes, support from education officials, and credibility of the project.

To become inclusive, the first step for a teacher, school, or education system is to change attitudes. Through trainings and cluster meetings, teachers began to recognize their prior beliefs and behaviours toward people with disabilities. Teachers' attitudes are critical. Inclusion cannot advance until attitudes change and teachers become more sensitive to the needs and abilities of children with disabilities. With sensitivity, more welcoming environments can be created.

The presence of students with disabilities challenges teachers to consider whether their classroom environment, curriculum, and instructional practices meet the needs of children with disabilities. Once teachers begin to reflect on their pedagogy, this will stimulate them to consider the diversity of other needs within their classroom (i.e., gender, caste, tribe, poverty, etc.). In other words, the training provided by ENGAGE and the presence of children with disabilities created a catalyst for teachers to consider the diverse learning needs of all students.

Teachers became more confident and comfortable instructing children with disabilities. They became more sensitive to the individual needs of children and used more child-centered, interactive teaching strategies in their classrooms. Children with disabilities were more accepted by their peers. These are positive indicators of success and good practices for all teachers to engage all learners.

The project was also successful because of the support it had from education officials in the District of Bagh. These officials were kept abreast of project activities through periodic communication with project staff. As a result, the project experienced no resistance from the education officials. The fact that Bagh did not have a special needs school is, perhaps, one reason the project was supported by education officials, who viewed the training as a way to equip teachers with the skills to educate children with disabilities. By the end of the project, education officials wanted the project and its supports to be expanded to other districts within the state of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Credibility was another reason why the project achieved its outcomes. The connection between RISE and ENGAGE was helpful. RISE was positively regarded by teachers and education officials in the district. Because of this, the pilot project did not have to establish its reputation: Instead teachers wanted to be part of the project. In addition, the pilot project was implemented by Pakistani experts in disabilities and inclusive education. They were knowledgeable insiders who

advanced the topic of inclusive education. Such topics as disability and inclusive education can be controversial in Pakistan. Having domestic experts lead the pilot project was an important factor in the perceived credibility of the project, which may not have been the case if the project had been lead by foreign consultants. Klein (2004) suggests that “outsiders lack complete knowledge of how their clients operate on a day-to-day basis and have difficulty building the trust among employees that is required to implement change”. The Pakistani professors in this project understood the culture, had credibility, and were able to leverage the situation, and so could be considered “outsiders on the inside.” Yet, the Pakistani professors were not blinded by cultural assumptions and so could see alternative approaches to overcoming the challenges of providing access to education for children with disabilities.

Despite the positive results evidenced after a short period of time, the duration of the pilot project is a significant limitation. Research indicates that sustaining change takes time, with some suggesting it may occur after 4–6 years of implementation (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). Thus, the project recognizes that sustaining the results will require additional follow-up and monitoring of the teachers. The training provided to teachers during the pilot was ongoing, but they will still require some level of support and technical assistance to ensure their continued use of inclusive education practices and strategies. With continued support to the teachers, the District of Bagh would develop a group of teachers who could become mentors to others, thus, increasing the capacity in the area to support inclusive education.

Finally, this project focused on teacher training, which is an important contributor to inclusive education. However, in developed countries, inclusive education stems from other factors, such as curriculum, accountability, assessment, funding, and governance and administrative procedures (Consortium on Inclusive Schooling Practices, 1996; Meijer, 1999). These aspects were not addressed in this project. This suggests that the involvement of the education system in Pakistan will be needed to move inclusive education to a wider implementation beyond the scope of this pilot project. Wider adoption of inclusive education requires clearly articulated policies that address systemwide development of teachers, educational assessment, curriculum, and financial management (UNESCO, 2003; Meijer, 1999).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the experiences of the ENGAGE Project and others in Pakistan (UNICEF, 2003), there are encouraging signs that inclusive education is possible in Pakistan, when appropriate resources and supports are provided. The ENGAGE Project demonstrated that when training was provided to Pakistani primary teachers, they were able to make changes in their pedagogy and become more accepting of differences in their students: Both are necessary initial steps to making classrooms and schools more inclusive.

The ENGAGE Project has also shown the feasibility of advancing the interests and needs of people with disabilities into mainstream international development efforts. The project was able to train a large number of teachers and bring awareness of the needs of children with disabilities to regional education officials. There continues to be a need for donors and implementers to support the efforts in developing countries to provide educational opportunities for all children, particularly those with disabilities. It will be important for international development donors and implementers to work with governments in developing countries to establish strategies to promote inclusive education.

Based on the experiences of the ENGAGE Project, sensitizing all teachers to the rights and needs of children with disabilities is important. This can be partially accomplished by preservice training programs that provide classes to all teachers on disabilities and inclusive education. For inservice training programs or projects, we recommend the following actions:

- Incorporate content on inclusive education and disabilities in all materials
- Provide training and ongoing support to teachers on inclusive education and disabilities
- Share inclusive education training materials that are developed across projects to reduce duplication of efforts

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