

Identifying and Promoting Good Practice in Equity and Child-Friendly Education



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'Identifying and Promoting Good Practice in Equity and Child-Friendly Education'

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Executive summary

“UNICEF is non-partisan and its cooperation is free of discrimination. In everything it does, the most disadvantaged children and the countries in greatest need have priority.” – UNICEF¹

“Marginalization is not random. It is the product of institutionalized disadvantage – and of policies and processes that perpetuate such disadvantage.” – UNESCO²

The equity of development outcomes has become a crucial part of the discussions leading to 2015, when achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All targets will be assessed, and new goals and targets will be set for the future. Equity has become a significant part of this discourse because current assessments of progress point to two results: Many of the global goals and targets will not be reached; and where achievements have been made in reaching the goals, they have not been equitably distributed. Sub-national areas and population groups that were marginalized before and during the development process have remained so or have fallen even further behind.

Despite the importance of equity, the world seems to become more inequitable and exclusive every day. Social and economic disparities within and across countries and communities are increasing, as are conflict and violence within and across nations, religions and cultures. The digital divide is a growing reality. Food security is becoming more tenuous, and climate change is already exacerbating the gap between those who have access to water and arable land and those who do not.

The key message of this paper is that an equity-focused approach to education must be genuinely inclusive – aiming to reach both children who are not in school and those who are in school but are not learning – through the development of rights-based, child-friendly education systems and schools.

Analysis of the nuances of inequity in education has sharpened the understanding of what an equity-based approach requires in education systems and, especially, in schools:

- Achieving greater focus on equity and more genuinely inclusive learning to ensure that access and achievement are independent of social circumstances.
- Removing barriers and bottlenecks within and outside education systems to provide equitable learning opportunities for all.
- Identifying children not in school proactively, and getting them enrolled and learning.
- Adapting the school to the needs of the individual child, rather than the child to the needs of the school.

Equity in education is centred on the human rights principles of inclusion, social justice and

¹ United Nations Children's Fund, 'UNICEF's Mission Statement', UNICEF, New York, http://origin-www.unicef.org/about/who/index_mission.html, accessed 16 October 2013.

² United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and Oxford University Press, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010: Reaching the marginalized*, UNESCO and Oxford, Paris and London, 2010, p. 135.

fairness. The focus should be on equity in access, equity in the achievement of an individual's full potential in terms of learning, and inclusive education as the bridge between access and learning. There are several reasons why the world should be more concerned about achieving genuine equity in and through education, including to realize a human right; to promote more equitable economic, social and political development; to promote social cohesion and inclusion; to fulfil internationally mandated goals; and to improve the efficiency and cost-benefit of education systems.

Child-friendly education (CFE) has two major characteristics, both of which relate directly to the right to education and to equity: (1) it is child-centred; and (2) it is child-seeking, trying to ensure that all potential learners, whatever their background and ability, have an equal chance to enter the education system. Child-friendly education focuses on addressing the full range of barriers to accessing good-quality education – including gender discrimination, poverty, isolation, language, ethnicity and disability. It treats children as rights holders and the ministry of education as a duty bearer with obligations to fulfil these rights and to demonstrate, promote and help monitor the rights and well-being of all children in the community.

The essential principles of child-friendly education include child-centredness, inclusiveness, democratic participation and protection. Based on these principles, many countries develop CFE programmes around specific dimensions that form the basis for national quality standards in education. Development of these standards usually begins with the original child-friendly schools (CFS) framework, which is then adapted by individual countries and incorporates the following dimensions: inclusion; academic effectiveness; health, safety and protection; gender sensitivity; and child, family and community participation.

Entry points for enhancing equity through child-friendly education

The CFE principles are meant to permeate every aspect of the system, both formal and non-formal – from planning, budgeting and policy development to implementation, monitoring and evaluation. There is a range of priority entry points that can be used to initiate the process of systemic change towards child-friendly education. These include:

- A common understanding of the principles and dimensions of rights-based, child-friendly education.
- Situation analyses and baseline assessments at the national and local levels of the current state of 'child-friendliness' and laws, policies, programmes and practices that exist or could be developed to promote child-friendly education.
- Standards and indicators related to greater access and higher quality, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess their achievement.
- Sectoral development plans based on CFE principles and standards.
- Pilot programmes that attempt to develop and then model best practices for replication.
- Communication and advocacy within government and out to the public about the importance of child-friendly education.
- Partnerships within the government and with non-governmental and community organizations, the private sector and international development agencies.

- Securing the necessary human and financial resources that will enable the education system to become increasingly child-friendly.

To illustrate how the entry points can be used to promote child-friendly education, this report summarizes six case studies:

1. The learning environment: Protecting children and combating violence through behaviour management in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean
2. Inclusive pedagogy and curriculum: Using mother tongue instruction in Belize
3. Curriculum and pedagogy: Celebrating multiculturalism in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
4. A policy of inclusion: Reaching the hard-to-reach in the Lao People's Democratic Republic.
5. Policy reform: Decentralized CFE services in Mozambique
6. Comprehensive child-friendly reform: Sri Lanka

Based on a review of these case studies, developing the CFE framework beyond pilot programmes towards broader equity requires two important levels of action: (1) at the macro/system level of policy and strategy development, through an expanded, enriched conceptual framework and the broadening of the focus of child-friendliness from individual schools to genuinely rights-based, child-friendly education systems and processes; and (2) at the micro/school level of implementation, through a comprehensive whole-school/community approach focused on achieving equity-based outcomes at the local level. Both of these processes could focus first on a high-priority entry point and then expand to ensure that the broader CFE framework is being implemented.

At the macro level, actions to be taken in moving towards a rights-based education system include those outlined below.

Start with early childhood and extend through secondary school – Develop inclusive, child-friendly early childhood care and development/education programmes, and make the early grades especially child-friendly. Extend the CFE framework upward, through lower secondary school and beyond. Raise awareness and build the capacities of essential actors in the CFE process, especially its link to equity-based outcomes.

Strengthen inclusion – Promote the 'child-seeking' characteristic with more targeted affirmative action to reach excluded learners. To help achieve this, build stronger links with a wide range of social protection measures to ensure that child-friendly schools bring together education stakeholders in the sectors related to health and nutrition, water and sanitation, labour and women's issues – especially in areas vulnerable to conflict, disaster and extreme poverty. Focus pre-service and in-service education for teacher education – and training for head teachers, administrators, supervisors and district officers – more towards issues of child-friendliness, inclusion and equity. Incorporate mother tongue-based, multilingual instruction throughout the education system.

Develop national standards and monitoring – Focus standards for the various components and dimensions of child-friendly education on both access and quality. In terms of physical infrastructure, ensure that the ministry of education constructs or renovates all schools to international standards of accessibility, health and disaster risk reduction. Ultimately, work towards equity-based, redistributive goals and targets for post-2015 in which child-friendly education systems should play an essential role. The decentralized, multi-sectoral five-year plans developed in Mozambique could serve as a model for equity-based CFE programming if these kinds of goals and targets were included. To measure progress towards more equity-focused CFE outcomes, a monitoring and assessment system needs to be developed. To help sustain progress, a mechanism to collect and disseminate examples of good practice should be established.

At the micro level, advancing towards rights-based/child-friendly schools will include taking action to:

- Implement equity-focused school self-assessment, and develop planning and management processes leading to more equity-focused school improvement plans.
- Develop stronger links with local health and nutrition programmes and services.
- Provide support services and personnel required at the school level to assist in the achievement of greater equity.
- Help schools develop genuinely local curriculum content.
- Promote community involvement as an integral part of child-friendly schools.

Challenges and possible solutions

As classes are getting larger due to the success of Education for All, promoting child-friendly education becomes more difficult in certain aspects. In many countries, teachers are less motivated, the curricula are more complex, and there is greater competition for good-quality higher education. In addition, there is evidence that many children are learning little despite increased investments in education, leading to a response that promotes teacher-centred, rote learning. Strengthening the role of child-friendly education in promoting more equitable access and outcomes – for example, through more heterogeneous classes and personalized instruction for all students, not just those who are successful – is often even more challenging.

The case studies described in this report, however, show that child-friendly education can work – sometimes in only a few schools in a small project, but increasingly as the basis for a national education framework. To ensure even greater success in this process, it is essential for UNICEF to take into account a number of challenges.

Moving beyond small, complicated projects – Child-friendly education remains based on ‘boutique’ projects involving model schools and often limited to regions assigned to or prioritized by UNICEF. These programmes are frequently identified by national governments, other development agencies and international non-governmental organizations as ‘UNICEF projects’. UNICEF’s initiatives for quality improvement in a particular country are often carried out alongside similar projects conducted by other donors, in other parts of the country, and the ministry of education does not claim ownership or internalize any of them.

It is vital that pilot projects evolve towards less complexity by identifying essential components, principles and standards. The key components of a CFE programme could include, for example, a community-based child-seeking mechanism; essential health interventions, both physical and psychosocial; and training for teachers in personalized instruction and gender responsiveness. Such components should be clearly defined to enable understanding by the ministry of education and to encourage government financing. They should also be the basis for, or at least be easily inserted into, national education quality standards, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and local school assessment processes that can be widely replicated.

Early and strong collaboration with other development agencies involved in similar, though often less comprehensive, innovations is also necessary. The early and strong involvement of the ministry of education, including as many relevant units as possible at all levels of administration, is necessary to ensure that ownership of a programme resides with the ministry and not with UNICEF – and is seen so by other development agencies.

High-level advocacy for the inclusion of CFE principles and practices into national education sector development programmes, frameworks and plans must be sustained and consistent.

Expanding the focus beyond quantity – UNICEF and/or the ministry of education often appear to be compelled to focus CFE programming on quantity, for example, the number of schools labelled as ‘child-friendly’. This can preclude an enriched understanding of child-friendliness and impede the mainstreaming of the framework throughout the education system. It may also hinder reform of the system itself to genuinely reflect a rights-based, child-friendly approach to education.

Continuing analysis by UNICEF global and national staff of the changes in context, educational and otherwise, will require rethinking what child-friendly education means and how it might best be adapted over time. This analysis should include evaluating the characteristics of a child-friendly secondary school, compared to those of a primary school, and piloting various models for secondary schools in districts without child-friendly primary schools, as well as districts where they have already been established.

Engagement with existing monitoring and evaluation/quality assurance units in the ministry of education will also be important. This process should focus on support for the development or amendment of national education quality standards, the indicators and instruments used to assess their achievement, and the formats and checklists used for school self-assessment and improvement planning. In addition, serious attempts should be made to engage pre-service education institutions in revising their curricula and retraining their staff towards understanding CFE principles and applying good practices.

Promoting coherent policies and plans – Public discourse with ministries of education and development agencies has intensified the promotion of child-friendly education as a framework/paradigm designed to identify and remove all barriers to the achievement of good-quality basic education. Inclusive education, in this sense, extends beyond addressing the needs of children with disabilities and others who have typically been excluded and is broadly

defined to include both access (inclusion in the classroom) and quality (inclusion in learning). A growing number of countries are developing national policies, strategies and action plans for inclusive education. As a result, the CFS framework is 'competing' with an increasing number of national education policies and plans. Promoting 'child-friendly' schools/education systems in parallel to the development of 'inclusive' schools/education systems is potentially duplicative and counterproductive.

UNICEF should adopt a clearer position regarding the relationship between inclusion and child-friendliness in order to inform the content of its programming and to make the argument that child-friendly education is an essential mechanism for achieving more equitable societies. One way to do this would be to emphasize that education systems must be more genuinely inclusive in regard to both access and quality in order to achieve greater social and economic equity – and child-friendly education represents an essential mechanism in the achievement of such equitable and inclusive systems.

I. Background

A. Equity as the focus of development³

The equity of development outcomes has emerged as a crucial part of the discussion leading up to 2015, when the world will assess the extent to which it has achieved the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) targets, and determine what new goals and targets will be set for the future. Equity has become particularly important in this discourse because current assessments of progress point to two results:

1. Many of these goals and targets will not be reached.
2. Where achievements have been made in reaching the goals according to nationally aggregated data, they have not been equitably distributed. Sub-national areas and population groups that were marginalized before and during the development process have remained so or have fallen even further behind.

Marginalization and the inequities that arise from it are often masked by the global reporting process, which seeks national and statistically comparable data and presents these data in global or regional trend analyses and league tables. But going deeper into these national aggregates to analyse data by population group, administrative level and geographical location almost always demonstrates significant disparities. And in many countries, such disparities in social and economic development outcomes are increasing between men and women, majority and minority ethnic/linguistic groups, urban and rural areas, the rich and the poor, and the 'abled' and the disabled – the included and the excluded.

The world is waking up to this issue. United Nations instruments of the past decade have gone beyond the obvious at-risk populations of children (the Convention on the Rights of the Child and various child labour documents) and women (the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) to new declarations on indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, refugees and migrants. Global statistical agencies such as the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and periodic reports on development outcomes such as the Human Development Report and the Education for All Global Monitoring Report focus more on sub-national, group-based analyses and disparities.

Despite this better understanding of the importance of equity, the world seems to become more inequitable and exclusive every day. Social and economic disparities within and across countries and communities are increasing, as are conflict and violence within and across nations, religions and cultures. The digital divide is a growing reality. Food security is becoming more tenuous, and climate change is already exacerbating the gap between those who have access to water and arable land and those who do not.

During the 1970s and 1980s, education was often seen as the panacea for these challenges. It was said that better education, and more funding for it, would reduce poverty, promote democracy and social justice, reduce intolerance and conflict, spread the benefits of

³ Portions of this section are adapted from: Asian Development Bank, 'Strengthening Inclusive Education', ADB, Metro Manila, Philippines, 2010.

information and communication technologies, guarantee a sustainable future – and, in the process, ensure that all of humankind is equitably included in these achievements. As time has passed and such progress has not been made, more people are calling for greater awareness of the cases where education perpetuates social, economic and political disparities and the inter-generational transfer of poverty and exclusion – and education systems become conduits for maintaining disadvantage and ensuring that society remains unequal in both opportunity and achievement.

Both of these views, however, are too simplistic: Education by itself can neither perform miracles of equitable development nor be solely blamed for social injustice and inequalities. Yet more and better education is certainly necessary. And it becomes more powerful to the extent that the opportunity for achieving a good-quality education is universally and equitably available to all – in other words, Education for All, not ‘education for the advantaged’.

The fundamental issues in achieving this essential goal are satisfaction with what has already been achieved, an emphasis on quantitative enrolment numbers rather than qualitative achievement outcomes, and a lack of high-level commitment to do more. The national enrolment ratio represents a visible sign of development to ministers of education, their constituents and higher-level politicians. Getting close to achieving an official enrolment rate of 95 per cent or 98 per cent is their priority, not looking at the accuracy of their data or at other household-based data such as school attendance rates. Satisfied with what has been achieved, they are reluctant to discuss their system’s net non-enrolment rate – a figure that would focus attention on inequities and on potential learners the system does not see, count or serve. This includes non-enrolment rates in secondary education, which are often much higher and even less visible than for primary education.

Equally ignored, despite mounting evidence, is a decrease in the quality of education, especially for disadvantaged populations, as indicated by achievement scores in national and internationally comparative assessments. The ‘non-achievement rates’ of children in more and more countries – Grade 5 pupils reading at Grade 2 levels, for example – are staggering. Thus, the essential elements of an equity-focused approach to education encompass calculating, analysing and publicizing non-enrolment and low achievement rates; developing organizational cultures, policies and programmes to improve these rates; and, at the same time, increasing the quality of education for all.

UNICEF has been particularly concerned with this type of an approach. Education as a human right is at the centre of UNICEF’s promotion of equity and justice in society. Evidence shows that education can break the inter-generational cycle of poverty and deprivation, improve children’s health and nutrition, create opportunities for further education and promote gender equality. UNICEF’s focus on quality and equity in education follows logically from a human rights-based approach to development and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, insisting that the rights of all children must be equally realized. It also follows from the conviction that because the needs are greatest among the unreached, the benefits of reaching them outweigh the additional costs, particularly with the advantage of new, more efficient development tools and mechanisms.

With this as background, the key message of this paper is that an equity-focused approach to education must be genuinely inclusive – aiming to reach both children not in school and

children in school but not learning – through the development of rights-based, child-friendly education (CFE) systems and schools.

B. What is equity in education?

Equity in education is a complex phenomenon. The distribution of prior experience, knowledge, skills and abilities that learners bring from their home and family life to the educational setting will never be equitable: Not everyone has the same start in life, and each individual is unique. Many students arrive in school without having adequate stimulation as young children – visually, linguistically and cognitively – and with little experience with books or other early learning. The results arising from their educational experience will also not be equitable, both for the more immediate results in terms of new knowledge, skills, values and behaviours and the longer-term outcomes of life opportunities, ranging from employment, health and social-economic status to general well-being and happiness.

What is imperative in terms of equity is what occurs during the process of turning the inputs learners bring to the educational setting into the outcomes they derive from education. This is equitable access to, and an equitable opportunity to gain, a good-quality education and therefore reach one's fullest potential. Achieving this may begin with securing equitable access to education, providing enough places in affordable, accessible schools so that all learners have an equal opportunity to enrol. But equitable access to a desk in a classroom does not necessarily lead to the same opportunity to achieve an education of good quality. The quality of education provided – system inputs (books and materials, facilities and teachers); the school environment (healthy, safe, protective); and the teaching-learning process (learner-centred, relevant, focused on what children want and need to learn) – must also be equitable, encompassing greater equality in completion rates and learning outcomes across learners, schools and education systems.

For UNICEF, equity in education has been described as having two essential dimensions: “The first is fairness, which basically means making sure that personal and social circumstances – for example, gender, socio-economic status or ethnic origin – should not be an obstacle to achieving educational potential. The second is inclusion; in other words, ensuring a basic minimum standard of education for all – for example, that everyone should be able to read, write, and do simple arithmetic.”⁴

Analysis of the nuances of inequity in education has sharpened the understanding of what an equity-based approach requires in education systems and, especially, in schools:

- Achieving greater focus on equity and more genuinely inclusive learning to ensure that access and achievement are independent of social circumstances.
- Removing barriers and bottlenecks within and outside education systems to provide equitable learning opportunities for all.
- Identifying children not in school proactively, and getting them enrolled and learning.
- Adapting the school to the needs of the individual child, rather than the child to the needs

⁴ United Nations Children's Fund, 'Statement to the Global Management Team', UNICEF, New York, September 2011.

of the school.

C. Why should equity in education be achieved?

Equity in education is centred on the human rights principles of inclusion, social justice and fairness. The focus should be on equity in access, equity in the achievement of an individual's full potential in terms of learning, and inclusive education as the bridge between access and learning. There are several reasons why the world should be more concerned about achieving genuine equity in and through education, including those outlined below.

To realize a human right

Arguably the most fundamental rationale for equity is the universal right of all individuals to quality education, whether defined as basic, fundamental or primary.⁵ A wide range of international conventions and declarations, some binding to governments and some not, have proclaimed this right, from the most general (the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child) to those dealing specifically with the education rights of particular groups – girls and women, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, migrants and refugees, working children and many others.

These documents all make clear the obligation shared by a large range of duty bearers, from the minister of education to teachers and parents, to realize the right of all to education. To work from such a rights perspective has far-reaching implications for education development. It necessarily entails promoting values, knowledge and skills that incorporate the basic principles of non-discrimination, protection and participation. Achieving equity in education is therefore actualizing the right to non-discrimination.

To promote more equitable economic, social and political development

If it is accepted that more and better education leads to greater individual and social development, then equity-based investment and reform in education – getting all citizens educated, to a higher level of quality – will lead to a broader, stronger and healthier human resource base able to participate more effectively and responsibly in the development process, with greater equality of outcomes. This will lead a more effective and efficient use of development resources, as well as a greater reduction in poverty and more inclusive growth. In the long run, it will lead to cost savings, especially in the social development sectors such as health and social welfare.

Guaranteeing an equitable opportunity for all citizens to pursue education to their fullest potential will allow societies to reap the economic and social benefits of globalization, while resisting its negative effects. The lack of equitable educational opportunities, on the other hand, will increase the already growing disparities between rich and poor, the connected and not connected, found within and across nations around the world.

⁵ See, for example: Tomasevski, Katarina, 'Manual on Rights-based Education: Global human rights requirements made simple', United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Bangkok, 2004.

To promote social cohesion and inclusion

An increasingly important function of education is to more effectively teach learners how to live together, which does not deny the fact that some systems try to do the opposite. This implies tolerance of diversity and pluralism, including affirming one's own identity rather than negating it, and the promotion of mutual understanding, cooperation and solidarity. Schools in education systems that focus on equity of access and opportunity are expected to be able to change attitudes towards a positive view of diversity. This would be accomplished by educating all children together, in an inclusive and participatory manner, on such issues as social justice, human rights and sustainable development, thus forming the basis for a just and non-discriminatory society. It can be argued that such schools do much more than tolerate diversity. They welcome it, celebrate it, and see diversity as an opportunity to provide better-quality education, rather than a problem to be solved.

To fulfil internationally mandated goals

Although they are not binding on governments, two major education declarations made the same obligation clear. The World Declaration on Education for All adopted in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, states that providing basic education to all children requires consistent measures to reduce disparities by reaching underserved groups, including the poor, remote rural populations, ethnic, racial and linguistic minorities, refugees and migrants, people with disabilities and those affected by war.⁶ The Dakar Framework for Action refers to the need for “developing ‘inclusive’ education systems which explicitly identify, target and respond flexibly to the needs and circumstances of the poorest and the most marginalized.”⁷ Thus, inclusive, equity-based education becomes the guiding principle to transform education systems, from vision to practice, and to achieve the EFA goals and the MDGs.

To improve the efficiency and cost-benefit of education systems

It seems counter-intuitive that focusing equity approaches to education on the populations that are most difficult and often most expensive to reach can actually help reduce ministry of education budgets. But a focus on marginalized, disadvantaged and at-risk learners leads to less wastage caused by large numbers of children repeating grades or dropping out entirely. Through the equity approach, learners enter the system at the mandated age and progress more quickly, on schedule and more successfully. In addition, many equity-based approaches to education – multi-grade and multi-age teaching, initial literacy in the mother tongue, and the conversion of special schools for learners with disabilities into resource centres to help regular schools genuinely include these learners – are either less expensive from the outset or save money in the long run through reduced unit costs and greater effectiveness and impact.

⁶ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, ‘The Dakar Framework for Action’, UNESCO, Paris, 2000, p. 75.

⁷ Ibid., p. 18.

II. Child-friendly education as a rights-based approach to equity

A. The evolution of child-friendly education

Decades ago, during the early discourse and practice surrounding development, it was widely assumed that if a school were built, children would attend. This seemed logical, based on the assumptions that education was a social and individual good that all people desire, especially those in newly independent and supposedly newly empowered nations, and that greater equality as well as democracy would surely follow.

This proved to be partly true: Enrolment did rise dramatically in many new states as education systems expanded and the ‘best and the brightest’ succeeded in getting to the top. Yet many children remained out of school. A school building might be in place, but teachers were often badly trained, poorly paid and poorly motivated; facilities were inadequate and textbooks few; and what was taught in the classroom was usually by rote, often irrelevant and, in terms of the language used, often incomprehensible to the learners and their community.

This realization led to larger donor and government investments in what was seen as necessary for better quality and therefore high enrolment: more teacher training, revised curricula and new textbooks, and better facilities. Where this happened, more children entered school, national net enrolment ratios increased, and ministers of education could feel justifiably proud of ratios that were 92 per cent, 95 per cent and even higher. But four things became apparent during this process:

1. Despite high enrolment rates in many countries, including significant progress in many of the poorest and largest, many children were still excluded from school: girls, the extreme poor, those living in remote areas, those with disabilities or speaking a language not used in school, and others with different, often multiple, disadvantages.
2. Higher initial enrolment did not always translate into high and sustained attendance, completion or achievement. Likewise, greater equity in enrolment did not automatically lead to greater equity in achievement.
3. Education quality often did increase, especially in regard to inputs, with more schools having more resources, better facilities and more qualified teachers. But increases in quality were inequitably distributed, and the gap between urban schools (both public and private but usually elite in nature) and ‘the rest’ widened. Disadvantaged schools, although better than in the past, were still relatively disadvantaged and many children, although sitting in a classroom, still excluded from learning.
4. The blame for a child’s failure to enter school or complete a good-quality education had to be shared between the learner, and her or his family and community, and the school, as well as the wider education system that supports it. Failure is not only the fault of the child or the parents. It also results from the system and the school itself and can be caused by an irrelevant curriculum, a language that learners do not understand, absent teachers, or unaffordable formal and informal school fees. Sharing the responsibility for failure – understanding that children are more often ‘pushed out’ by the system rather than ‘dropping out’ on their own accord – has significant implications for how a ministry responds to, programmes for and financially supports excluded groups and learners.

This experience has led to a major dilemma: Even schools of better quality, defined as having adequate facilities and textbooks, a more relevant curriculum and more highly educated teachers, will not automatically lead to more equitable outcomes in terms of enrolment, quality and achievement. It has also led to a clearer understanding that one way out of this dilemma is through a more comprehensive, holistic and proactively equity-focused approach to education development. And this is where the concept of inclusive, child-friendly education and schools becomes so important.

A child-friendly school (CFS) is essentially a 'rights-based school', with characteristics based on the Convention of the Rights of the Child. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, for example, the CFS programme is called Schools of Quality, or SoQ, and is described as: "the rights-based, child-friendly approach to improving the quality of education ... The underlying principle is that school systems should be based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the country made a legal commitment to in 1991. The SoQ approach aims to ensure all children realize their right to a basic education of good quality that prepares them with the life skills required to be healthy, productive members of society, prepared to face the challenges of a fast-changing world."⁸

It soon became clear that child-friendliness in a single school must be extended to a much larger whole: child-friendly education. In some cases, this led to extending a programme that originated with a focus on primary education to other levels and kinds of education – such as early childhood programmes, secondary education, non-formal and adult education, which also have to be learner friendly. It also led to the realization that the education system as a whole, and the major actors in the system, had to be reoriented towards child-friendliness. This includes child-friendly (safe, secure, healthy) school construction and facilities; curricula and textbooks that promote CFE principles; teacher-friendly pre-service and in-service professional education that enables teachers to learn how to make their school child-friendly; examination processes that are adaptable to the needs and learning styles of individual students; and education budgets that provide adequate funds to develop child-friendly education.

B. Characteristics, principles and possible dimensions of child-friendly education

Child-friendly education has two major characteristics, both of which relate directly to the right to education and to equity: It is child-centred, and it is child-seeking. Child-centred education acts in the best interests of the child, leading to realization of the child's full potential. It is concerned about the whole child, including health, nutritional status and well-being, and about what happens to children in their families and communities before they enter a school and after they leave it. Schools and other learning centres in this type of system are continuously and appropriately adapted to the characteristics, capabilities and diverse needs of their individual learners.

'Child-seeking' means attempting to ensure that all potential learners, whatever their

⁸ McLaughlin, Bob, 'UNICEF CFS Case Study: Schools of Quality – A case study on rights-based education reform in the Lao People's Democratic Republic', United Nations Children's Fund, New York, March 2011, p. 13.

background and ability, have an equal chance to at least enter the education system. The school system does not wait for children to knock on the door and enrol, it proactively looks for those children who are not participating and makes sure they become enrolled. It reaches out to girls and, increasingly, boys, overage children, those who are poor or living in remote areas, children with disabilities, and those who work to help their families or speak a different language than that of the school. Similarly, child-friendly education does not push children who are considered to be different, difficult or 'slow' out of school. It identifies the early warning signs of failure and works to individualize teaching-learning methods in order to help at-risk children stay enrolled and achieve academic success.

Child-friendly education focuses on addressing the full range of barriers to accessing good-quality education, including gender discrimination, poverty, isolation, language, ethnicity and disability. It treats children as rights holders and the ministry of education as a duty bearer with obligations to fulfil these rights and to demonstrate, promote and help monitor the rights and well-being of all children in the community.

To fulfil their role in promoting equity, all child-friendly schools must have a mechanism for identifying and enrolling children who are excluded, and for tracking students who are at risk of failure. The mechanism might be described as a child-focused, school- and community-based Education Management Information System. Data collection would cover all children, beginning with age 0–6 and beyond, their family circumstances, their health history and their educational achievement. Local, community-level structures such as village governments and parent-teacher associations could be a conduit for gathering this data, which might include local government censuses and other records. Students can also take responsibility, mapping homes with out-of-school children and working with teachers to encourage them to enrol.

Actively seeking children who are not enrolled and welcoming the diversity they often bring to a learning environment once they are enrolled are not easy responsibilities to promote or maintain. Parents of 'normal' children in school may not want teachers to pay too much attention to 'difficult' and labour-intensive children at the expense of their own. Teachers often prefer small and homogeneous classes with children of the same age, socio-economic class, language and ability. But it is this child-seeking characteristic of child-friendly education – bringing children into a child-centred learning environment and helping them succeed there – that makes a child-friendly school such a powerful contributor to equity.

Arising from the core characteristics of child-friendly education, other essential principles include those described below.

Child-centredness – making the rights and well-being of the child central to all decisions in education, and ensuring that this is applied to teaching and learning methods. This implies that schools must meet customary expectations for teaching their students required academic content, the national language, and core subjects such as mathematics, science and history; traditional expectations might also include teaching national or political philosophy or doctrine. Child-friendly education, however, does more than this. It promotes quality learning outcomes by helping individual learners acquire life skills, resilience and specific skills that are appropriate for local labour markets, as well as literacy and numeracy. It also teaches them how to learn; provides personalized instruction appropriate to each learner's needs and

abilities; and promotes active, cooperative, participatory and democratic learning.

Inclusiveness – ensuring that all children can fulfil their right to education. Child-friendly education does not exclude or discriminate on the basis of difference, language, gender, income, caste, ability or any other characteristic. It provides education that is free, compulsory, affordable and accessible. It proactively seeks out and welcomes all children for enrolment and find ways to help them stay enrolled and to succeed. And it respects and welcomes diversity, responding to it as an opportunity rather than a problem.

Gender sensitivity and responsiveness are especially important in regard to inclusiveness and equality. Child-friendly education promotes gender equality in enrolment, completion and achievement. It eliminates gender stereotypes in curricula, textbooks and teaching-learning methods, and guarantees child-friendly facilities for both girls and boys. In addition, it socializes girls, boys, men and women in a non-violent environment that encourages respect for each other's rights, dignity and equality.

Rather than responding to learners' needs in separate categories – one programme for girls, for example, and another for children with disabilities – an inclusive school or system responds to the unique characteristics of each learner, especially those at risk of marginalization and underachievement. Its curriculum, pedagogic strategies, physical facilities and services are all part of this response. Such inclusiveness is an essential component of and prerequisite for equity.⁹

Democratic participation – ensuring that children and those who help realize their rights, including their parents and the wider community, have a say in the form, content and processes of their education. In too many educational contexts, learners are treated as passive recipients of knowledge rather than active participants in their education. The families and community surrounding the school are explicitly or implicitly kept away from it. Child-friendly education, on the other hand, welcomes and promotes the participation of children, families and communities in several ways. Child-friendly schools are:

- Learner-centred, promoting the participation of all children in their education, including in school governance as well as in the classroom.
- Family-focused, working to strengthen the family as a child's primary caregiver and educator and helping children, parents and teachers establish harmonious, collaborative relationships.
- Community-based, encouraging local partnerships in education, such as school-based management and genuinely collaborative committees made up of parents, teachers, school administration and staff, and community members. As the school acts in and with the community for the sake of children, representation on such committees must be gender- and class-balanced, and avoid being dominated by community elites.

Protection – ensuring that children are protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally, and can learn in a safe and healthy environment – a place of sanctuary rather than risk and danger, where they can grow and reach their full potential. Child-friendly education

⁹ See annex 1 for a description of other UNICEF projects that utilize child-friendly education to promote the inclusion of groups that are often excluded from education systems.

insists that quality consists of more than the traditional components of inputs, processes and outcomes. It considers the school environment to be equally important, and thus promotes the school as a physically, socially and emotionally healthy place. It therefore ensures a healthy, hygienic and safe learning environment equally for all learners. It provides life skills-based education and knowledge, including in relationship to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. In addition, it promotes the physical, psychological, social and emotional health of teachers and learners, and helps to defend and protect all children from abuse and harm such as corporal punishment.

The implications of this child-friendly component for equity are numerous. Education programmes must have facilities of equal quality for girls and boys, for example, sanitation; must have explicit policies against abuse and harm; and must ensure that learners, regardless of individual or group characteristics, are treated compassionately and equally by their teachers and their peers.

Based on these principles, many countries develop CFE programmes around specific dimensions that, in the best examples, form the basis of national quality standards for education. Development of these standards usually begins with the original CFS framework, which is then adapted by individual countries and incorporates the following dimensions: inclusion; academic effectiveness; health, safety and protection; gender sensitivity; and child, family and community participation.

It is clear that the CFE framework/approach is flexible, with several core principles that make it child-friendly but also allow considerable leeway for individual countries and ministries to expand, enrich and redefine how these principles are applied in practice. Thus, the exact number and names of the principles and/or dimensions that compose child-friendly education can be changed according to a specific context and situation. It remains essential, however, that every CFE framework must be closely linked to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The fundamental concepts of a rights-based school address both access and quality, and ultimately lead to greater equity of educational outcomes.

III. Entry points for enhancing equity through child-friendly education

The comprehensiveness and flexibility of the CFE framework permit ministries of education to decide which principle or dimension to use as the initial entry point to promote child-friendly education. Subsequently, it can be determined which of the other principles should be assigned to higher priority, given the education system's particular contexts and needs. CFE principles are meant to permeate every aspect of the system, both formal and non-formal – from planning, budgeting and policy development to implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This means there is a range of priority entry points that can be used and actions taken to begin systemic change, including:

- A common understanding of the principles and dimensions of rights-based, child-friendly education.
- Situation analyses and baseline assessments at the national and local levels of the current state of child-friendliness and the laws, policies, programmes and practices that exist or could be developed to promote child-friendly education.
- Standards and indicators related to both greater access and higher quality, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess their achievement.
- Sectoral development plans based on CFE principles and standards.
- Pilot programmes that attempt to develop and then model best practices for replication.
- Communication and advocacy within government and out to the public about the importance of child-friendly education.
- Partnerships for child-friendly education, within the government and with non-governmental organizations, community organizations, the private sector and international development agencies.
- The necessary human and financial resources to help the system get closer to child-friendly education.

At the school level, there are other, more concrete entry points for the development of child-friendly schools. Most such schools focus first on academic effectiveness because that comes closest to the traditional definition of educational quality that all educators want to be seen as promoting and all parents want to have for their children.

Schools that care about children who are not enrolled might develop mechanisms to find and enrol out-of-school children, and establish programmes for their inclusion in the system. Schools with high rates of disease and malnutrition or violence and poor discipline might want to focus on school health, safety and protection. Those with high gender disparity might opt for the dimension of gender sensitivity to address access and achievement. And schools that are trying to promote more democratic, participatory government might focus on participation, for example, of children in student councils or of parents and the community in school management committees.

The programmes described in the six case studies below utilize a variety of child-friendly principles and dimensions and a range of entry points for system change to build the

commitment and capacity of ministries to promote child-friendly education. Given the overriding importance of the problem being addressed – school and community violence in the Eastern Caribbean, the decline of indigenous cultures and languages in Belize, intolerance in the multicultural society of Macedonia – some schools have maintained a major focus on one dimension of child-friendly education, while further embedding it in the larger framework. Others – the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Mozambique and Sri Lanka, in rather different contexts and different ways – have moved quite quickly towards the more complete integration of CFE principles and practices in the national education development framework.

A. The learning environment: Protecting children and combating violence through behaviour management in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean¹⁰

“Child-friendly schools greatly reduce or eliminate common physical threats and other types of violence in and around schools and learning spaces, such as corporal punishment by teachers, student-on-student violence, gang fights, bullying, sexual attacks, other forms of gender-based violence, and school attacks by external groups.” – UNICEF¹¹

“I find that the children’s behaviors have improved. For example, they don’t litter; they don’t shout in a rowdy manner like they used to do; the break and lunch times are much more peaceful now; they look out for each other; everybody is a police now. Just the other day, a father came and was running up the steps and the children reprimanded him and told him that he was supposed to be walking up the steps”. – Principal of Salisbury Primary School, Dominica¹²

Introduction

The increasing incidence of violence in and around schools, by and against children, in many countries is fundamentally related to the persistent use of corporal punishment, despite national laws and international campaigns against it. Whether in the home or school, such punishment serves as a negative model for problem solving and is associated with a general increase in children’s aggressive behaviour. Other forms of violence are also becoming prevalent in the education sector, including:

- Psychological, emotional and physical violence in schools, ranging from teachers shaming slow learners to schoolmates bullying each other and students being raped.
- Conflict among schools, especially among students of technical/vocational schools, leading to gang brawls and other violent behaviour.
- Schools and teachers as specific targets of violence, usually by minority ethnic, political or religious groups that see them as symbols of a repressive state.

¹⁰ Much of the information for this case study is based on documentation from the UNICEF Office for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, with special contributions from Elaine King, Wycliffe Otieno and Violet Warnery.

¹¹ United Nations Children’s Fund, *Manual for Child-Friendly Schools*, UNICEF, New York, March 2009, p. 8.

¹² UNICEF Office for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, *In Touch Eastern Caribbean Child-Friendly Schools Newsletter*, United Nations Children’s Fund, Christ Church, Barbados, vol. 5, no. 1, 2010, p. 11.

More generally, there is an apparent increase in violence in many societies around the world – between religions, cultures and political movements and also between the rich and the poor, the privileged and the disadvantaged, the landed and the landless, the elites and the disenfranchised – which leads to both more common criminality and much more widespread and more violent conflicts.

Although the education system is only one actor in the fight against this larger context of violence, it has the ability to reach children early, be involved with them for many years of their lives, and deliver messages through the curriculum and teaching methods. Therefore, many governments consider education as potentially of great importance in reducing levels of individual and social violence. This is found most visibly in formal subjects such as conflict resolution and peace education. But it is also found in attempts to convert school and classroom environments into safe, secure and protective environments for children.

This has led to national policies and school practices that promote behaviour management towards less violence and more positive discipline. This effort is characterized by a process of school situation analyses; the establishment of standards of behaviour for students and teachers; public advocacy in favour of positive discipline; and the piloting of a range of child-friendly activities. Given the myriad forms of violence often found in Caribbean schools and the larger society, this is an appropriate CFE entry point for this case study.

Context

Although the level of school-related violence, conflict and lack of discipline in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean is lower than elsewhere in the Caribbean, it is still considered frequent, severe, widespread and even tolerated “with a disquieting number of students having witnessed or been involved in a physically violent act at some point in their lives.”¹³ This can take place in the school itself, the family and home, or the community, and is no doubt instrumental in what is considered to be a general increase in societal violence. A 2010 review of a CFS programme concluded that “violence and aggression continue to be the major causes of trauma within schools, as a small, yet significant number of students become involved in gang rivalry, drug trafficking, drug use, drug abuse and fights, sometimes with deadly weapons.”¹⁴

An assessment conducted by the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States in 2006 found that “discipline problems are both frequent and severe in the school environment, with the vast majority of teachers, principals, and students observing indiscipline, conflict, and violence at least weekly.”¹⁵ This study indicates that many of the factors that contribute to such problems are within the control of schools and education systems, including the ability to ensure that the school environment is clean and quiet and has many extra-curricular activities as well as a

¹³ United Nations Children’s Fund, ‘Positive Behavioural Management in Schools in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean: A child-friendly schools initiative’, UNICEF, n.d..

¹⁴ United Nations Children’s Fund, ‘Child-Friendly School Initiative Case Study: Antigua and Barbuda & Barbados’, UNICEF, 2010, p. 10.

¹⁵ Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, Education Reform Unit, ‘Comprehensive Study of School Discipline Issues in the OECS: Research report summary’, OECS, 21 January 2006, p. 34.

strong academic focus; trained teachers who are interested in pupils; a clear, coherent, public and consistently enforced school discipline policy; a high-level education policy that defines and supports appropriate disciplinary practices; and supervisory practices to ensure safe school spaces and secure school entrances.

Programme

In 2006, the Caribbean Community Secretariat and UNICEF began meeting with a range of actors around the theme of disciplinary practices with children. This included both pro- and anti-corporal punishment viewpoints and led to a coalition against corporal punishment. Given the sensitivity of that topic, however, the discussion moved towards a broader context of discipline and behaviour management and how they might be translated into positive outcomes for children and, ultimately, a wider equity agenda.

The Caribbean Union of Teachers agreed to pilot a child-friendly, whole-school approach to test alternative strategies to behavioural management for children in public classrooms. This work resulted in collaboration between the UNICEF Office for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, local ministries of education and the Caribbean Union of Teachers in a programme that began in Barbados and now includes several countries in the region.

The programme's initial objective was to transform the classroom and school environment from one of harsh punishment and fear to one where praise and rewards inspire students to more actively participate in learning. Using a whole-school approach, UNICEF has sought to work with the ministries of education to modify school practices and promote more inclusive, protective, child-centred learning environments. Initial roll-out of this process focused largely on positive behavioural management.

This CFE programme as implemented in the Eastern Caribbean has four main features: (1) school-wide approaches to positive behavioural management for children; (2) training for teachers beyond behavioural management to a wider range of teaching methods and learning resources, and a focus on increasing teachers' professionalism and accountability; (3) collaboration with parents and the wider community to eliminate the tolerance of violence against children; and (4) linkages with support agencies for specific family and child challenges. As the programme has grown and evolved, the main strategies employed include:

- Use of positive behavioural management.
- Promotion of child-centred, learning-ready classrooms, with an emphasis on child-centred and gender-sensitive teaching strategies.
- Enhancement of parent and community involvement in schools and in the education of their children.
- Strengthening the delivery of the life skills-based Health and Family Life Education curriculum, which focuses on self-management, negotiation and conflict resolution.
- Enhancement of student participation in the classroom and in school life to better address the wider psychosocial environment in schools.

Across the schools covered by the programme, specific activities include several important

developments. School environments were improved in order to make them more welcoming and inclusive, for example, repainting the school in 'friendlier' colours, replanting the school gardens, and establishing fewer unsupervised spaces. Sensitization meetings were held for principals, teachers, parents and children to explain the programme, listen to parents' concerns and encourage their involvement in the school.

A clear and coherent school-wide plan and policy on discipline were developed, with agreed upon behavioural models appropriate to the schools. Ongoing monitoring, revision and evaluation of the plan were carried out by a school management committee that includes the principal and teachers, with inputs from the parent-teacher association and students. In addition, a school-based needs assessment was conducted, in which surveys, focus groups and direct observation were used to collect data on behavioural management and discipline problems from school personnel, parents and students.

Students' participation in leadership roles was promoted to improve pride in and attachment to the school. Other efforts to enhance students' self-esteem involved a focus on creative activities such as music and art; higher expectations from teachers, and rewards for high achievement and good behaviour; and communication of positive messages, for example, through 'self-esteem mirrors' that proclaim "I am smart" to anyone who looks in them.

Teacher training included behaviour management and how to apply personalized instruction. It also provided information on how to identify children with difficulties, disabilities or developmental delays, at risk of behavioural and academic failure, or in need of care and protection, with the referral of at-risk children to appropriate professionals. Leadership and mentorship training for principals, who are key to the change process, included study tours and the promotion of national and regional networks for principals.

Teaching negotiation, conflict-resolution and other interpersonal skills through the Health and Family Life Education curriculum has been particularly important. This goes beyond the usual life skills messages on adolescent health and sexuality/sex education to cover a wider range of skills and values related to behaviour management, violence avoidance and respect.

Results

The results of this programme, though still limited in the number of schools covered, have been significant, starting with 1 school in Barbados in 2007 and now covering 170 schools in seven countries. Among the results:

- Participating schools have planted trees and flowers, revitalized their gardens, and repainted buildings and classrooms in bright colours, filling them with student work and mottos, affirmations, 'colour wheels' (which use various colours to track the behaviour of children during a class session), student comment boards and other materials designed to motivate students towards better discipline and higher achievement.
- Parents have been mobilized to be concerned with and supportive of their children and the school. One school hosted a 'Parent O Rama' that provided parents with information on resources available in the community and in Barbados.
- Students have been encouraged to take part in a range of school clubs and, starting as

early as age 6, in school governance through student councils whose members receive training in team building, communication, project planning and conflict resolution.

Partly as a result of these activities, focus group discussions and teacher/principal interviews have indicated a wide range of positive outcomes from the programme. There has first of all been a reduction of challenging behaviours, indiscipline, truancy and drop-out rates, largely because of greater student attention to and consciousness of the consequences of good and bad behaviour. Corporal punishment has been significantly reduced, partly as a result of greater public and academic pressure, with a commitment to alternative strategies for positive discipline. School environments are generally calmer, with students who are more settled. Parents are more willing to seek and receive support for working with their children, and in some cases, the private sector has supported the process of school change.

Most importantly, the discussion that began around corporal punishment – and was met with staunch resistance from teachers, parents and the larger community alike – evolved towards a strategic change in focus to address the psychosocial and academic outcomes for learners. Beginning, for example, with poor discipline and low achievement, the strategy then moved to consider the wider protective environment in schools and communities.

This process has led to a stronger interest in ministries and schools for focusing on a wide range of positive outcomes for children and on greater social and educational equity. These outcomes have led various ministries in the region to move towards institutionalizing the CFE approach through the entry point of improving the psychosocial environment in schools.

While implementation of child-friendly education in the Eastern Caribbean was context-based and demand-driven, it has been evolving from the initial focus on positive behaviour management to the gradual introduction of other elements to establish a truly holistic CFE framework, embedded in local realities, to address the right to quality, rights-based and child-centred education.

Remaining challenges

Although national ministries in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean are generally supportive of child-friendly education, more effort must go into ensuring its sustainability in schools and further replication and mainstreaming throughout the relevant education systems. This requires a whole-school approach to change that goes beyond eliminating corporal punishment and promoting positive behaviour management to improved teaching and learning.

Although the attitude is changing, many educators and parents still believe that corporal punishment is an effective incentive for discipline and that 'friendly' implies a lack of firmness. Even more challenging is the need to transfer more positive behaviour management from schools to homes and other out-of-school settings.

As in the other case studies to follow, a final challenge is to have stronger monitoring systems – including standards, indicators, consistent formats and trained staff – for the generation and analysis of data to effectively measure progress and impact. The UNICEF Eastern Caribbean Office is already addressing this through an expanded set of CFE standards that are being

gradually built into routine school monitoring and regular data collection instruments. There is a long way to go, but at least the process has started.

B. Inclusive pedagogy and curriculum: Using mother tongue instruction in Belize¹⁶

“In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.” – Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 30

“Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State, without discrimination ... States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.” – United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, article 14

“Indigenous children and adolescents ... require special attention in many ways ... [such as] the erosion of the socio-cultural fabric of the indigenous peoples. They are surrounded by assimilatory forces that destroy their values, organizational capacity, knowledge and general confidence in themselves. The very institutions and interventions such as school, that are aimed at help, are more often underpinned by a form of racism that construct indigenous people as ‘lacking’, ‘backward’, ‘ignorant’. These interventions and institutions assume a ‘civilizing’ agenda and end up becoming colonizing projects.”¹⁷

Introduction

Language is essential to a young child’s development. The use of the child’s mother tongue or home language is essential to help establish the child’s cultural and linguistic identity, ensure easy interaction with family and peers who speak the same language, and enhance the child’s ability to gain the emergent, pre-literacy skills required for literacy in the early school grades.

From a cultural perspective, when a language dies, that particular knowledge, human thought and world view are lost and cannot be replaced. Thus, languages in danger of extinction must be revitalized and further developed because they are needed to maintain cultural and linguistic diversity for a sustainable future. They express identity and transmit culture, and they are essential for human and social development and the fulfilment of human rights.

¹⁶ Information for this case study is adapted from: UNICEF Belize, *Indigenous Children and Adolescent Rights*, Report no. 1, United Nations Children’s Fund, 2012; The Belizean Child, National Committee for Families and Children, and UNICEF, ‘The Belizean Child: Virtual Knowledge Centre on the children of Belize’, <http://dbzchild.org>; and personal communication with UNICEF Belize staff, particularly Denise Robateau and Pamela Ann Scott.

¹⁷ UNICEF Belize, *Indigenous Children and Adolescent Rights: 2011/2012 progress report*, United Nations Children’s Fund, 2012.

A language can survive and thrive only if it has a strong presence in the education system. Yet most education systems are inappropriate for, or even hostile to, indigenous and minority groups and their languages. By many estimates, millions of children enter school every year not understanding the language being used in the classroom. They are therefore excluded from the learning process and many of them, eventually, from further education.

To ensure that children gain the basic skills required to become literate, the starting point of learning how to read and write should be the language of the learner. Skills in the first language of literacy should be promoted in early childhood care and development programmes and consolidated before a second language is mastered, preferably during at least three years of primary school.

Thus, a strategy of multilingualism that begins with mother-tongue instruction is more inclusive. It helps the young child master literacy in his or her own language; produces better learning outcomes and higher rates of internal efficiency – including higher enrolment, less repetition, lower drop-out rates and higher achievement; and helps keep cultures and their languages intact. If the mother tongue is not used, many children will not enter school, will fail and will be pushed out of the education system.

There are, however, many objections to this type of strategy: the lack of conventional spelling systems and alphabets; the cost and expertise to create instructional materials; the difficulty of recruiting and training facilitators/teachers who are fluent in minority languages; the so-called ‘underdevelopment’ of some languages and their perceived inability to express complicated ideas and concepts. In addition, minority communities, as well as the dominant political and economic groups may be indifferent or opposed to mother-tongue instruction.

Nonetheless, most of the objections have been overcome in many parts of the world. Thus, a policy to promote mother-tongue education through bilingual curricula and teaching-learning methods is a means to ensure that education systems and schools are inclusive. It is therefore an important entry point for child-friendly education through the development of pilot projects, strong public advocacy, and the promotion of partnerships between schools, communities and cultural organizations – as illustrated in this case study from Belize.

Context¹⁸

Belize is a small nation in mainland Central America with close ties to the Caribbean and a multi-ethnic population of about 310,000. Despite the categorization of Belize as a middle-income country, economic inequities are significant. One third of the population is living in poverty, reaching up to 80 per cent among the largely indigenous (Mayan) people of the Toledo region. Such poverty and inequity in Belize are outcomes of two major factors: (1) general economic and environmental vulnerability, for example, to global market fluctuations, and to hurricane and storm damage; and (2) a pattern of unequal access across the life cycle to economic, educational, health and protective assets, and to political resources and support, by gender, region, culture and socio-economic group.

¹⁸ *Adapted from:* UNICEF Belize, ‘The Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Belize 2011: An ecological review’, United Nations Children’s Fund, Belize City, July 2011.

Nearly universal enrolment has been achieved, with a gross enrolment ratio of 95 per cent and a net enrolment ratio of 84 per cent. The average 2007/08 repetition rate, however, has been estimated at 7.2 per cent, and is higher for males (8.4 per cent) than females (6.0 per cent). In general, the education system is hindered by several factors, including:

- Economic barriers (school fees, transportation costs).
- Lack of capacity and cultural inflexibility.
- Complex organization and management processes.
- Lack of trained teachers.
- Issues with classroom and school discipline practices that do not respect child rights.
- Lack of public awareness about children's developmental needs, including books and educational materials at home.
- Gender biases that affect girls' and young women's continued school attendance and, increasingly, boys' as well.

The multicultural strength that Belize offers also presents one of its most sustained challenges. To achieve equity, progress towards full participation for women and children across the country's various cultural groups is required. This encompasses, for example, ensuring that communication efforts are available in multiple languages, school curricula and teaching practices are culturally relevant, disaster and crisis procedures are multilingual, and employment opportunities extend across regions.

Although the education system in Belize is multicultural, language remains a key issue. Only 6 per cent of the population speaks English as a first language, but the education system uses English as the language of instruction. As a first language, 43 per cent of Belizeans speak Spanish, 37 per cent speak Creole (Kriol), about 7.5 per cent speak either Mopan or Q'eqchi' Maya, 2 per cent speak Garifuna (Garinagu), with the remainder speaking Plautdietsch/Mennonite, Chinese, Hindi and Yucateca Maya, among others. Languages are linked to the country of origin and/or ethnicity, and in Belize, ethnicity is also linked to residential location and, hence, to transportation and ease of access to education.

Programme

Supporting the equitable involvement of all cultures in education and development increases participation, strengthens the attainment of equity in all domains, and increases cultural identity and a sense of belonging. This assumption is the basis for the UNICEF Belize promotion of child-friendly/quality schools. Now being piloted, this initiative promotes an increased focus on school self-evaluation, improvement planning and implementation. Two primary objectives are: (1) developing a common concept of and framework/system for defining a quality school; and (2) utilizing this framework to engender ownership for quality at the school level through school self-evaluation and planning for and implementing self-improvement programmes.

Through its 2007–2012 Country Programme Action Plan with the Government of Belize, and in the context of its focus on child-friendly/quality education, UNICEF launched the Protecting the

Rights of Indigenous Children in the Development Process initiative, which includes intercultural bilingual education (IBE) as one of four main components.¹⁹ This initiative was a response to disparities in the quality of education, which tend to particularly affect indigenous people, and to the demand from indigenous organizations for relevant education.

The project aimed to improve the education quality in pilot schools, using an IBE framework and, in the process, develop greater understanding of this framework to inform plans and policies. Other major objectives are to contribute to the development of intercultural bilingual education in Belize as a way to improve education quality, and to prepare indigenous children in target villages for the future, facilitating their ability to function in the context of 'Western' culture.

Three schools were chosen for the pilot project, which aims to promote a more inclusive society, improve the quality and responsiveness of education offered to students, and generate a knowledge base for informing a national policy and plan for intercultural education. In addition, it seeks to integrate the student's first language and indigenous culture into the learning process to help them understand and appreciate their history and traditional practices. The primary languages in selected pilot schools were Q'eqchi, Mopan and Garifuna, which essentially included a school from each of Belize's indigenous groups.

The central strategy consisted of building teachers' and principals' capacities to develop and deliver intercultural bilingual education, supporting their efforts to transform their schools using an IBE framework, and documenting the process and results. Initial training was provided to teachers on the IBE framework for engaging in the improvement of quality education. Training was also provided in reading and writing their own language, and opportunities for exchanging their experiences were facilitated. On the basis of the training, each school developed basic action plans that included activities for transforming curriculum content, pedagogy and the physical and social environment of the school, and for promoting the participation of parents and the community. The schools' action plans were supported through a technical coordinator and limited financial aid. An oversight committee was established to provide overall direction for the project, consisting of representatives from the Maya Leaders Alliance, the Ministry of Education, UNICEF, UNESCO, the National Institute of Culture and History, the University of Belize and the National Garifuna Council.

At the Aguacate Primary School pilot site, major components and supportive activities featured changes in:

- The physical and sociocultural school environment, including adoption of a culturally relevant uniform for students and teachers as a visible message that the school was engaged in a change process that valued local knowledge and culture.
- Curriculum, including the introduction of traditional arts as part of the arts-and-crafts curriculum. This required teachers to learn how to make products and involved parents in obtaining materials and engaging local knowledge bearers to help with the teaching

¹⁹ *Details on the programme, results and challenges adapted from:* UNICEF Belize, 'Aguacate Primary Schools: Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) at primary level', United Nations Children's Fund, 2011; UNICEF Belize, 'Belize: Indigenous children and adolescent rights', 2012; and Penados, Filiberto, and Pablo Mis, 'Safeguarding the Rights of Indigenous Children in the Process of Development: Intercultural Bilingual Education component project review', UNICEF Belize, 2009.

process. Traditional music and dance were introduced by hiring nearby village community members as teachers, and playing music between school sessions and at the end of the day. The Q'eqchi' language was introduced through use of the Q'eqchi' alphabet and the Maya number system in the classroom, and mother-tongue instruction, along with English, in group and class discussions. At the upper levels, the curriculum included reading and writing in Q'eqchi', posting signs on the walls in Q'eqchi' and English, and the translation of songs and daily morning prayers into Q'eqchi'.

- Pedagogy, including story-telling sessions in Q'eqchi' presented by community elders. Community members were also invited into the school to teach children arts and crafts and to encourage transmission of knowledge from one generation to the other.
- School and community relationships, including observance of a 'Cultural Day' event to celebrate Maya identity. The school exhibited children's arts and crafts, and parents and community members sold local food. In addition, a radio programme is broadcast every Friday to other villages, featuring reports on such topics as the Maya number system.

The project also provided institutional strengthening for the Congress of Maya Teachers, which aims to increase teachers' and principals' capacities to plan and deliver responsive quality education, increase community participation, and strengthen the institutional and organizational capacity of the Congress as a key advocate and facilitator of responsive quality education for indigenous children.

UNICEF has also established a partnership with Battle of the Drums (an annual event meant to help revitalize Garifuna culture and language) and the National Garifuna Council to ensure the preservation and promotion of this culture by teaching its music, dance, language and drumming. These organizations participated in exchange visits to Aguacate and Gulissi to learn from the example of IBE implementation. As part of the cooperation with Battle of the Drums in 2012, goals were set related to learning Garifuna songs and drumming, as well as words, proverbs and phrases.

Results

A 2009 review of the IBE pilot programme indicated that much had been gained towards children's increased motivation, pride in language and identity, and basic understanding of the curriculum. This was achieved through, among other things, investing in teachers, developing a relevant school culture, and involving parents and communities in school affairs.²⁰ Positive outcomes for children, parents, and teachers and principals are outlined below.

For children – Evidence indicates that children felt more motivated, liked their schools more, felt prouder of their language and identity, and could understand concepts better because of the bilingual approach. They also demonstrated:

- *Increased participation.* After the incorporation of intercultural bilingual education, students' participation and self-expression increased. They felt they had genuine ownership of their education and were part of their school's development, appreciated

²⁰ Penados, Filiberto, and Pablo Mis, 'Safeguarding the Rights of Indigenous Children in the Process of Development: Intercultural Bilingual Education component project review', UNICEF Belize, 2009.

their language being used in the school, and expressed a stronger desire to learn. Students also said that they were happy to be allowed and encouraged to speak their language with peers and teachers.

- *Increased learning.* Children said that they learned more because teachers took time to explain concepts in their own language, and they felt more comfortable speaking in their own language. Teachers observed greater participation from children in class discussions and better comprehension of concepts, which led to better performance on national examinations.

For parents – Intercultural bilingual education can be a powerful strategy for enhancing parents' involvement with their children's education and a useful tool for empowering communities to provide quality education. Parents commented on the difference they experienced in terms of being welcome and feeling that they have a role in the school. They experienced a higher level of participation and a sense of school ownership, with something to contribute as a result of the introduction of local knowledge in the curriculum. This led parents to become engaged in creating a healthy and safe school, ensuring positive behaviour, and establishing a school feeding programme with their own resources.

For teachers and principals – With very little training and support, the teachers and principals in the pilot schools had a significant role in creatively implementing the IBE pilot. While the initiative opened up a safe space for considering new ways to approach education, developing a school culture that supports intercultural bilingual education is crucial to sustaining the initiative. Teachers in all three schools commented on the important leadership role that principals had in sustaining the initiative. More specifically, teachers gained:

- *Increased language skills and the capacity to apply them.* Teachers' were better able to read and write their language and apply new knowledge in the classroom, through such activities as putting up signs and translating rhymes and songs.
- *Increased pride and confidence, and strengthened identity.* Teachers reported that they felt proud and confident about celebrating their identity as Mayans. This was reflected by their excitement about the IBE programme, the integration of their culture and the use of their language in school. The project offered a framework for thinking about relevance and quality, and in the process, liberated their creative energy. It constituted a restructuring of the system that made education locally and culturally relevant so teachers could contextualize it for their own understanding. Once the IBE project was implemented, teachers' activities moved quickly beyond the school. They came to see themselves as social actors and advocates for children's rights and their own rights as indigenous peoples, leading to the establishment of the Congress of Maya Teachers in 2008.

In 2012, the IBE programme was expanded to two more villages: Otoxha and Pueblo Viejo, in Toledo District. There are now four IBE schools. A major success of the IBE project has been its integration as a component of Quality Child Friendly Schools, an initiative of the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, intercultural bilingual education has been accepted as an integral part of the national language policy, which acknowledges use of a student's first language during the primary school. It will be institutionalized and sustainable through the national policy that will be implemented in Quality Child Friendly Schools.

In Toledo District, a second phase of activity went beyond school-based programming to support the design and establishment of a platform to facilitate the participation of indigenous adolescents. Key lessons for policies at the national level focused on advocacy for fulfilment of adolescents' right to education and protection.

Remaining challenges

The explicit commitment and support for intercultural bilingual education from the highest levels of the Belizean Ministry of Education are pivotal to guaranteeing greater support at the technical level. This may require increasing awareness about the IBE initiative, including its benefits and cost implications, and about the rights of indigenous people, particularly children. It is necessary to deepen capacities through an IBE certificate programme for teachers and IBE leadership training for principals that will build on the language training currently under way.

Consolidation and dissemination of existing models' components and processes must be further developed and mechanisms established to ensure their dissemination and adaptation to other regions of the country. A major challenge has been the need to mobilize resources to support implementation of teachers' ideas and school action plans, especially after UNICEF support ends. Some aspects of programme expansion will be covered by the Government's Social Investment Fund Project, but to make the programme sustainable, it is also necessary to diversify funding sources.

One aspect of sustainability is sound leadership and continuity. When leadership changes, it is necessary to promote and nurture the project among stakeholders including teachers, parent-teacher associations and community members to take responsibility for developing an IBE continuity plan. This could include investment in the Congress of Mayan Teachers to strengthen its capacity to convene, advocate, coordinate and oversee further development and implementation of intercultural bilingual education.

Although the IBE proposal called for a monitoring and implementation plan from the beginning, this was not fully developed. Standard indicators for intercultural education and criteria for Quality Child Friendly Schools exist, but they are not being utilized to inform the establishment of a sound monitoring and evaluation plan. Because it serves as a key resource for critical reflection and strategic planning, further investments must be made in monitoring and evaluation. Proper documentation can also support effective orientation of new teachers, enhance donors' understanding of the initiative's history, and generate more attention in the education community. There is a strong need for a monitoring and evaluation framework that would produce baselines and indicators to measure students' well-being and accomplishments in both quantitative and qualitative ways. This would highlight potential challenges to be confronted, as well as give more credibility to the model's successes.

Some suggestions for monitoring and evaluation at the school level can be based on the Quality Child Friendly Schools framework for Belizean schools established by the Ministry of Education. The framework identifies six 'Key Areas of Quality' under which educational institutions should conduct their assessment: (1) school identity and governance; (2) effective leadership; (3) the curriculum and its delivery; (4) safe, healthy and supportive learning community; (5) school and community relationships; and (6) quality assurance. The basis of

these areas of quality on the Belize CFS framework is testimony to the efficacy of the principles of child-friendly education and their implementation in the Belizean context.

C. Curriculum and pedagogy: Celebrating multiculturalism in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia²¹

“Despite the existence of a CRC [Convention on the Rights of the Child] curriculum and training for teachers on how to use it, confusion remains among children about their rights. Instruction is biased towards the ethnic group delivering it, and Macedonian children have the least opportunity to learn about the culture, tradition and history of other ethnic groups living in Macedonia. Although space in ethnically mixed schools appears to be shared, good ‘interethnic relations’ are often considered to be the absence of open conflict between teachers and pupils from classes with different languages of instruction.” – UNICEF²²

Introduction

Contrary to expectations for what is generally seen as a rapidly globalizing world, where narrow national, ethnic and cultural identities would be subsumed under a broader sense of global citizenship, these identities have persisted, re-emerged or even been strengthened in many countries – often despite the best intentions of governments to create one nation and one national identity. In this context, a focus on tolerance of difference and diversity is no longer enough. A much more proactively inclusive approach to diversity, welcoming and celebrating it, is required. Rather than focusing on diversity as a problem leading to classes where too many languages are spoken or religions practised, or there is too wide a range of ages and abilities, it should be seen as an opportunity for richer education.

A multicultural school that includes many ethnicities, languages and religions is a textbook example of the choice between problem and opportunity. As a problem, the school could be formally or informally organized along the cultural divide, pitting one group of teachers and students against another, never learning to live together, to respect – or even tolerate – each other and exacerbating the prejudices brought into the classroom. But as an opportunity, it can present a forum for sharing cultures, learning other languages and understanding other religions – leading to an appreciation of the value of diversity and the need to maintain and celebrate it. It is this focus on promoting multiculturalism in a complex and conflicted cultural environment through school situation analyses, setting curriculum standards and piloting concrete initiatives in multiculturalism that is the entry point for child-friendly education in Macedonia.

Context

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, like many countries in Eastern Europe, is a multicultural nation. Almost two thirds of its 2 million people are ethnic Macedonians, about

²¹ Adapted from project reports and correspondence with staff at the UNICEF Country Office for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, particularly Nora Sabani, education specialist.

²² Miske, Shirley J., ‘UNICEF CFS Case Study: Developing child-friendly schools in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’, United Nations Children’s Fund, New York, 2009, pp. 12–13.

one quarter are ethnic Albanians, and smaller populations are ethnic Turks, Roma and others. Cultural, religious and linguistic divides formed during centuries of conflict, migration and redefined national boundaries have created individual distrust, social tensions, and ethnic and religious prejudices. The Roma, as elsewhere in Europe, are particularly disadvantaged socially, economically and educationally. They have a high rate of non-enrolment, with 63 per cent of 7-year-old Roma children not in school in 2007, and school failure. This is partly because the Roma language, unlike the languages of other groups mentioned above, is not used as a language of instruction in Macedonian schools.

Although there is a high rate of initial enrolment in primary school, Macedonia faces very low preschool enrolment rates and transition rates to secondary education. Moreover, students in Macedonia have low achievement on such international tests as the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study and the Programme for International Student Assessment.

In response to such issues, Macedonia has made education one of four national priorities, together with accession to the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, economic development and improving inter-ethnic relations. It also undertook a massive project to decentralize government structures, which was implemented in the education sector under the Education Modernization Project that ended in 2009. Through this project, Macedonia made strides towards enhancing the participation of various stakeholders – teachers, principals, other school personnel, parents, community members and municipalities – in the operation of schools.

One intractable problem, however, has been the difficulty of achieving a truly positive multicultural education system. The ethnocentric orientation of education has been identified as an obstacle to preparing Macedonian citizens for a multi-ethnic/multicultural country. Curricula in history and literature lack information about other ethnic groups, and students who are taught in Macedonian learn very little about the history and literature of others. Although students who are taught in languages other than Macedonian learn comparatively more about other ethnic groups, ethnocentricity in history and literature, regardless of the language of instruction, tends to promote narrow nationalism rather than multiculturalism.

Linguistic/ethnic parallelism, which allows students in ethnically mixed schools to learn separately according to their language of instruction, and the lack of activities in which students from different ethnic groups can communicate and collaborate, only lead to further separation. The UNICEF study *Multiculturalism and Inter-Ethnic Relations in Education* comprehensively explores these issues in relation to all aspects of education, including curricula, textbooks, opportunities for interaction in schools and teachers' professional development.²³

A similar lack of interaction exists among teachers and students in pre-service teacher training, and even quite young children hold negative views of ethnic groups other than their own – except Roma children who also hold negative views about themselves, probably due largely to the intense negative stereotypes towards them by the other ethnic groups.

²³ UNICEF Country Office, Skopje, *Study on Multiculturalism and Inter-Ethnic Relations in Education*, United Nations Children's Fund, November 2009.

In addition, practice shows that teaching in history is ethnocentric in all languages of instruction. Teaching is directed towards the ethnic community whose language is used in the teaching, and the content in the textbooks for the other ethnic groups is almost not studied at all. At the school level, research indicates that some primary schools appear to be ethnically/linguistically mixed, with at least two languages of instruction. Education is organized in the different languages within the same shift and the same physical space. But the manner in which activities are carried out in the schools shows division and a lack of activities and interventions that foster interaction and tolerance. Teachers are divided according to the language of instruction: They do not cooperate with each other, and they do not organize joint curricular, extra-curricular and out-of-school activities for the ethnically/language mixed groups of students.

Programme

From 2009–2012, the United Nations implemented a joint programme in Macedonia, Enhancing Inter-Ethnic Dialogue and Collaboration, which was coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF and UNESCO and funded by the MDG Achievement Fund. Its overall purpose was to “promote inter-ethnic understanding and tolerance as a prerequisite for sustainable human development ... [and] to enhance the capacity of central and local bodies to facilitate inclusive problem-solving processes and consensus building around community priorities and to strengthen the commitment to an inclusive civic national identity with respect to diversity.”²⁴

One area of focus was to support education’s longer-term role in facilitating constructive civic dialogue that promotes intercultural awareness and values that inform peaceful coexistence. Specific education outcomes included:

- Understanding, tolerance and respect for ethnic and cultural diversity are incorporated in national education policies.
- Mechanisms for democratic participation, good governance and dispute resolution in the education sector are strengthened.
- Children and youth have opportunities for interaction and dialogue in school and the community.

These outcomes fit well with UNICEF’s CFS approach, which was already founded on cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science. Thus in 2006, UNICEF and the Ministry collaborated to develop child-friendly school standards in five dimensions: (1) inclusiveness; (2) effectiveness; (3) safe and protective environments; (4) gender equality; and (5) child participation. UNICEF organized a CFS baseline study that identified several areas of concern, including inclusiveness, school violence and inter-ethnic relations.²⁵ Based on this broad analysis and initial findings of the CFS baseline on major gaps/problems, UNICEF conducted more in-depth studies.

²⁴ Sluyk, Robin Philip, ‘Final Evaluation of the Programme “Enhancing Inter-Ethnic Community Dialogue and Collaboration,”’ MDG Achievement Fund, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 20 July 2012, p. 4.

²⁵ CFS National Expert Team, Macedonia, and Shirley Miske, ‘Child-Friendly Schools: A situation analysis for FYR Macedonia’, UNICEF Macedonia, 15 August 2007.

Reflecting the same concerns and given the recent history of Macedonia and its complex multicultural society, a sixth dimension underpinning child-friendly education was added: “respect for children’s rights and multiculturalism,” with an outcome indicator for “the school prepares children to live in a multicultural/multi-ethnic society.” Key performance areas for this indicator were established, including that all students study the history, traditions and culture of all ethnic groups in the country, and that students in schools with different languages of instruction learn about each other through mutual activities in school.

The strategy adopted by UNICEF and the CFS team it sponsored to promote child-friendly education in Macedonia applied several different approaches. System-wide standards and goals were developed to help stakeholders assess progress in education and the fulfilment of children’s rights, and to ensure that the ‘Concept for the New Nine-Year Compulsory Education’, prepared in 2008, included essential CFE principles. The team also participated in revising the curriculum and ensuring that learning encompasses cultural heritage, traditions, authors and heroes from the history of all ethnic communities living in Macedonia. This takes place through such compulsory subjects as music, English, literature and the arts, and through new subjects that were developed, such as ‘Learning about Religions’ and ‘My Country and Me’. In addition, a new compulsory subject in primary and secondary education on life skills-based education focuses on skills relevant to children’s everyday lives, including issues of acceptance, tolerance, and the promotion of diversity and differences, non-discrimination, peaceful communication and citizenship.

The specific programme on multiculturalism and inter-ethnic relations then focused on the following strategies:

- Supporting teachers for the implementation of life skills-based education in all primary and secondary schools.
- Developing a methodology and mechanisms for textbook development in order to ensure that new textbooks were free of ethnic stereotypes and prejudice and reflected the multicultural nature of the country.
- Strengthening the capacities of ministry staff for planning, policy development and monitoring by sharing best practices/research from other countries on types of interventions that have a long-lasting impact on inter-ethnic relations.
- Promoting a system in response to the lack of coordination created by donors and organizations supporting small, short-term and ad hoc activities.
- Promoting joint extra-curricular activities through manuals on multicultural content, taking into account different age groups and curricular outcomes; the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is now scaling up the UNICEF model developed for these activities.

Working at the school level, the sensitization of school stakeholders on child rights, school self-evaluations and action plans, teachers’ professional development and, with some difficulty, explicit activities related to multiculturalism were carried out – initially in pilot schools, through school teams and workshops. In one school, for example, multicultural teams of teachers and students organized workshops and performances focusing on becoming familiar with one another and identifying their differences and similarities; in the same school, ethnic

balance was mandated for student government.

Results

The most important contribution that child-friendly schooling has made for Macedonia is that it has helped articulate a national vision about education, reflected in the law on primary education, and new and revised curricula for primary and secondary education that incorporate CFS principles and standards. When the CFS standards were developed in 2006, other actors, especially the World Bank and USAID, were working on projects for particular parts of the system. UNICEF, however, felt that a more holistic vision about education reform was missing. The CFS platform was therefore used to advocate that vision, mainly through the development of standards for child-friendly schools at the policy level and school-self-evaluation mechanisms at the school level.

The result has been a more system-wide and systematic approach to multiculturalism, the improvement of inter-ethnic relations in education, and the leveraging of other donors' funding for complementary activities. Clear outcomes can be assigned to the promotion of child-friendly education in Macedonia, including the mainstreaming of CFE principles in the national vision for quality reforms in education and in new laws and concepts for primary and secondary education. All primary education subjects and school self-evaluation processes were aligned with CFE standards.

Significant academic impacts were also achieved through a different set of interventions, including the provision of extra instruction to teachers in the early grades in numeracy and literacy. More than half of these teachers have received the training. Increases of at least 10 per cent in test scores were achieved against a baseline score in numeracy and literacy for both early grade teachers and fourth-grade students. In addition, a more systematic approach to education for children with disabilities has been developed.

In relation to the project's focus on multiculturalism, a survey was carried out in 2010/11 in selected pilot schools – some as control schools, some that participated in the multicultural programme – to measure the programme's impact. Questionnaires were designed to measure stereotypes and prejudices about one's 'own group', about the 'other' major group (ethnic Albanians or ethnic Macedonians) and about the Roma. The results indicate that the programme had a positive impact, with a continuous decrease of negative ethnic stereotypes and prejudices, and greater preparedness for interaction between Albanians and Macedonians. In addition, the programme's impact was significant in regard to ethnic groups that were in contact with each other, although it was found to be considerably less effective in changing attitudes towards the Roma, who were not often in direct contact with the respondents.

Remaining challenges

Although the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, on the whole, appears to be seriously committed to promoting child-friendly education, including the sixth dimension related to multiculturalism, many challenges remain. Rapid turnover of ministers of education and many senior staff leads to an ongoing need to introduce new politicians and personnel to the basic principles of the programme. The emphasis on understanding that a

system approach yielding long-term results needs to be accompanied by long-term support in capacity development at all levels:

- Ministry staff lack continuity in understanding previous reforms, and political appointees may have limited expertise in education.
- Teachers receive pre-service training with outdated curricula; in-service teacher training is donor driven, and there is little support for it by the Government. The teaching profession is generally relegated to a low status, and many low-achieving students enter pedagogic studies in hopes of obtaining an ‘easy’ university degree.
- School principals are affected by the frequent turnover of staff and political appointments, which exacerbates the issue of ethnic identity being supported and exploited by political parties.

These challenges have serious implications and manifestations at different levels in the education sector. The most obvious is the lack of commitment and consensus between the political parties to revise sensitive parts of the curriculum.

At the school level, issues include overburdening of school staff in the implementation of planned CFS activities, due to a voluminous syllabus and many curricula; a lack of adequate premises for the implementation of the workshops and other CFS activities; and the apathy of parents due to the expectation that everything should come from the Government.

At the individual level, this translates into a belief and behaviour that could be described as ‘I can not influence or change anything because it does not depend on me’. This attitude is perpetuated by the politicization of the education system, and the de facto situation of schools not giving parents the opportunity to participate in and influence school decision making.

D. A policy of inclusion: Reaching the hard-to-reach in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic²⁶

“Before the school director completed the CFS training, she seemed to have less work to do. Now she is much busier: she asks the Village head to help her prepare the village map showing school attendance and helps the teachers work more closely with Village Education Development Committee to improve school enrolment.” – Researcher reporting on Lak Sip School²⁷

“Schools of Quality (SoQ) is the rights-based, child-friendly approach to improving the quality of education in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic. ... The SoQ approach aims to ensure all children realize their right to a basic education of good quality that prepares them with the life skills required to be healthy, productive members of society, prepared to face the challenges of a fast-changing world.” – UNICEF²⁸

²⁶ Adapted from information provided by the UNICEF Lao People’s Democratic Republic Country Office and staff members Emmanuelle Abrioux and Siamphone Buakhamvongs, in charge of education and Schools of Quality.

²⁷ United Nations Children’s Fund, ‘Schools of Quality in Lao PDR: An evaluation’, UNICEF, Vientiane, 2009, p. 22.

²⁸ McLaughlin, Bob, ‘UNICEF CFS Case Study: Schools of Quality – A case study on rights-based education reform in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic’, United Nations Children’s Fund, New York, March 2011, p. 13.

Introduction

An essential aspect of the child-friendly dimension of inclusion is reaching the hard-to-reach through child-seeking education systems and schools. One example of this is the development of mother-tongue curricula, materials and teaching methods in Belize. But there are many other excluded population groups – most often girls and women, people with disabilities and those living in remote areas (especially those far from roads), people in extreme poverty or members of lower castes, and people affected by HIV and AIDS.

Many countries ignore hard-to-reach children and are satisfied with enrolling a high percentage of the primary school-age cohort, without focusing on the net non-enrolment rate. Others develop multiple programmes aimed to reach particular excluded groups – a programme for girls, another for ethnic minorities, and one on education for learners with disabilities. What is needed, however, is a more general ministry policy on inclusive education for all, reflected in practice in individual schools.

Rather than responding to learners' needs in separate categories, an inclusive school or system responds to the unique characteristics of each learner, especially those at risk of marginalization and underachievement. Its curriculum, pedagogic strategies, physical facilities and services are all part of this response.

This includes the fact that education systems and schools must do more to actively look for and enrol children who are excluded from the system. After these children are enrolled, systems and schools must do more to ensure that learners are provided with an education that meets basic standards, for example, mastering literacy and numeracy and encouraging the desire and ability to learn.

The system and individual schools must also demonstrate greater sensitivity to each learner's needs, more concern for getting the fundamentals of learning 'right', and greater attention to the often difficult transition from one level of schooling to the next. Such a policy of inclusive education, reaching the hard-to-reach, has become the entry point for child-friendly education in the Lao People's Democratic Republic – where a systematic programme of advocacy, situation analyses and pilot projects has led to development of CFE-based national standards and sector development plans. In addition, it has fostered strong partnerships that have helped CFE principles and dimensions become internalized throughout the country's education system.

Context

As one of South-East Asia's smallest and poorest countries, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has moved from seeing itself as a landlocked nation to a 'land-linked' nation, located at the crossroads of the north-south and east-west corridors of a dynamic and rapidly developing region. But with most of the population living as subsistence farmers, the country is highly dependent on foreign aid and has a large trade deficit, with most consumer products imported and exports mainly depending on hydro-electricity and timber.

The population of just over 6 million is diverse and widely dispersed. There are at least 49 ethnic groups and many more languages, and 80 per cent of the population lives in rural, remote and often mountainous areas. Initial enrolment in primary school is increasing, but repetition and drop-out rates are high, especially among girls, children living in remote areas and marginalized ethnic groups.

A major focus of the Ministry of Education and Sports has been on inclusive education, broadly defined to encompass the removal of all barriers to school enrolment and achievement. This is complemented by a specific focus on girls and learners with disabilities, children of very poor families and those living in remote communities, and children who do not speak the language of instruction in school. The comprehensive 'Inclusive Education Policy, Strategy, and Action Plan' outlines expected actions for all relevant actors inside and outside the Ministry in order to reach hard-to-reach children and make sure they are enrolled – and succeeding – in school.

Programme

The Lao version of child-friendly education, through the Schools of Quality programme, covers the essential principles of child-friendliness through a systematic focus on the original five dimensions of a child-friendly school. The Ministry of Education and Sports added a sixth dimension: effective in-school management and leadership. This dimension comprises several components, including:

- A management team that includes a functioning Village Education Development Committee with effective leadership and management skills.
- A principal who can lead by example in encouraging school staff to implement a holistic approach, recognizes the importance of education to socio-economic development, and takes a leading role in promoting education in the broader community.
- Staff with sound knowledge of the Government's and Community Party's policies and the ability to put these into practice during planning for school development.
- A Student Management Information System, including student portfolios that are used by teachers to improve students' learning both at school and at home.
- School improvement plans, implemented with guidance from the Village Education Development Committee and based on student achievement data collected during school self-assessments, and on projected local physical and human resource needs.

This approach to child-friendly education encompasses several options for reaching groups that are typically excluded. First, it encourages schools and communities to track children who are not in school by listing all children eligible for school, based on a local family registry. It also seeks to build the capacities of schools and Village Education Development Committees to collect and analyse statistics, conduct child-seeking activities, and use these statistics to create long-term school development plans, as well as annual school improvement actions and targets.

Enabling children to stay in school has also been an important part of Schools of Quality, and has resulted in establishment of a remedial education programme for children with learning

difficulties such as delayed literacy. The community and school staff conduct regular monitoring of student attendance to identify those at risk of dropping out and take necessary actions to help them stay in school.

The inclusion of girls is also a priority. As noted in the UNICEF case study: “Gender sensitivity is mainstreamed and integrated throughout the Schools of Quality, raising awareness of the particular needs of girls and issues related to ensuring they are able to exercise their right to education. Activities to promote inclusion seek to reach out-of-school girls; training on classroom management and teaching techniques emphasise equal participation of boys and girls; and water and sanitation improvement is geared towards providing appropriate facilities for girls.”²⁹

In terms of a focus on those living in poverty, an important strategy at the beginning of the programme was targeting the majority of CFE resources at the national level. This was aimed to support the Government’s poverty reduction strategy, and focused on schools in a large number of the country’s 72 impoverished and priority districts.

Of greater system-wide and long-term impact for child-friendly education, the development of national Education Quality Standards were based on and expanded from the School of Quality minimum standards. Typically, in order to ensure widespread input into and ownership of these standards, they were developed by a committee with members from the Education Standard Quality Assurance Center, the Department of Pre-School and Primary Education, the Department of Secondary Education and the Department of Teacher Education. Technical staff from the Research Institute of Education Sciences, the Department of Organization and Personnel, the Department of Finance, the Inclusive Education Center and the Faculty of Education of National University of Laos were also part of the process.

An important focus of these standards has been on the need to provide opportunities for all children to complete their primary education through learning that does not discriminate by gender, ethnicity, religion, social status or disabilities. To accomplish this, schools coordinate closely with village authorities to collect information on the enrolment of school-aged children. All school-aged children are encouraged and supported to complete their primary education, and schools promote gender equality and seek to protect students from violence, both physical and emotional.

The standards also hope to ensure that students become ‘good people’ who comply with school rules and national laws; respect and show concern for their friends, elders, their hometown and their country; help preserve national arts and culture; and recognize the value of hard work. Other outcomes are linked to learning and teaching (including a focus on children with disabilities), the school environment, learning and teaching equipment, management and administration, and community participation. An important point in this regard is that these standards are used as the basis for a school self-assessment tool, as well as for the entire school-based planning and management process.

²⁹ McLaughlin, Bob, ‘UNICEF CFS Case Study: Schools of Quality – A case study on rights-based education reform in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic’, United Nations Children’s Fund, New York, March 2011, p. 19.

The Education Quality Standards have firmly embedded child-friendly education as the underlying policy of the Ministry – and many of these standards and their related indicators link directly, while others more indirectly, to equity outcomes. A School of Quality must have:

- Annual targets for increases in the net enrolment ratio and decreases in drop-out and repetition rates, especially for children from poor families.
- A list of school-aged children enrolled and not enrolled in school (and if not, why not), collected by the school and village authorities – and disaggregated by sex, ethnicity and special needs. A ‘child-seeking’ school map showing where each child lives should be included, along with school and community encouragement for all students to enrol.
- Systematic monitoring of at-risk students until they complete primary education, for example, the families of students who are absent from classes receive counselling and assistance from the Village Education Development Committee.
- A focus on remediation, with schools conducting remedial classes for all students who have poor learning outcomes – and without any discrimination regarding their family’s social status.
- Teachers who are able to understand students’ individual needs, especially for children with disabilities and for learners who require specific remedial assistance.
- Accessible latrines for learners with disabilities.
- Equal participation of girls and boys in activities both inside and outside the classroom, and equal representation in classroom administration systems and decision making at the school and classroom levels – providing equal opportunities for male and female students to express their opinions, ideas and comments.

Results

In general, the CFS approach in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic has shown many positive impacts on the schools where the programme has been implemented, and on a larger set of policies and practices throughout the Ministry.

One evaluation investigated the perceptions of children who were attending the child-friendly schools. Noted improvements included an enhanced school infrastructure, with functioning toilets; more enjoyable classes, with more books and other learning materials; school snacks; and a better and cleaner school environment and playground. In addition, parents have a better understanding of the school; are more active in school affairs; and think that their children have greater self-confidence, increased pride, better behaviour, more energy, better health and higher motivation to go to school. This has led to higher attendance, better learning outcomes and more responsible, motivated teachers.³⁰

Of greatest interest to this paper, the various approaches to reaching the hard-to-reach have had considerable success. As of 2011, more than 1,600 schools were implementing the SoQ approach just within the UNICEF programme, and therefore not counting other schools doing the same without UNICEF support. This means that Schools of Quality is reaching at least 20

³⁰ UNICEF Vientiane Office, ‘Schools of Quality in Lao PDR: An evaluation’, United Nations Children’s Fund, 2009.

per cent of the primary schools in Laos.³¹

In terms of the CFE principle of inclusion, the programme's child-tracking/mapping system has made community members more aware of their responsibility to ensure access to education for all children. As a result, data comparing 2007 to 2008 in Oudômxai Province showed marked improvements in enrolment, attendance and retention rates.³²

A 2011 evaluation of Schools of Quality in southern Laos reported that virtually all target schools had dramatically increased both the net intake rate and the net enrolment ratio from 2007/08 to 2010/11, in some cases by more than 20 per cent. Most schools also reported reduced drop-out and repetition rates, but not as much as hoped, perhaps because the large rise in the net intake rate and the net enrolment ratio affected the quality of education provided. The introduction of a preparatory preschool year in many child-friendly schools, as part of the process of enhancing school readiness, has also helped in regard to inclusion.³³

Once in school, the remedial education programme to identify and assist children at risk of failure has been popular. The 2011 SoQ evaluation, for example, indicated that more than 80 per cent of the target schools had implemented this type of programme.³⁴ The more child-friendly school environment – cleaner, healthier, brighter, 'greener' – also makes children feel more included in a welcoming space.

In regard to other aspects of inclusion, gender disparities have decreased, and schools for children with disabilities have been transferred from the Ministry of Social Welfare to the Ministry of Education and Sports, which has slowly been moving towards genuine inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools. Special efforts have been made to enrol children of the many disadvantaged ethnic groups in the country in better-quality schools. Only a small amount of progress, however, has been made in promoting the use of mother-tongue instruction in classrooms. So far, at best, mother-tongue instruction has been spoken, with the intention of increasing students' fluency in Lao, rather than genuine mother-tongue literacy.

³¹ McLaughlin, Bob, 'UNICEF CFS Case Study: Schools of Quality – A case study on rights-based education reform in the Lao People's Democratic Republic', United Nations Children's Fund, New York, March 2011, p. 17.

³² Ibid., p. 21.

³³ Mizuno, K., et al., *Joint Terminal Evaluation Report for Supporting Community Initiatives for Primary Education Development in Southern Provinces (CIED)*, Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2011 (unpublished).

³⁴ Ibid.

Remaining challenges

There are several challenges to advancing implementation of the quality standards for education developed out of the original CFS/Schools of Quality framework in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. As for many other similar innovations, this includes alignment between the standards and the larger goals and objectives of the system and its national policies, and development of systematic strategies for sustainability. Other, challenges that UNICEF is addressing as priorities include:

- Refinement of the standards, for both primary and secondary education, and agreement from all ministry units that use them – establishing, for example, uniform standards, indicators and questionnaire formats.
- All levels of the Ministry, through provincial and district bureaucracies to the school, must be fully aware of and able to implement the standards. Reaching the middle level effectively is often problematic, as there is a push from the top and often demand from the bottom to use the standards, but administrators in the middle are unable or unwilling to provide the necessary support.

Most importantly, all relevant units of the Ministry of Education and Sports – and beyond – need to feel ownership of the standards and actively collaborate in their implementation. This includes not only those involved in their original development, as mentioned above, but also: teacher education institutions, to ensure the standards are fully integrated into both pre-service and in-service education; training programmes for principals and supervisors; the examination unit, to ensure that examinations are appropriate for all children; the budget unit of the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Ministry of Finance, to make sure that any added costs to help schools achieve the standards are provided; and the Ministries of Health and Social Welfare, to support the health, nutrition and protection of schoolchildren.

Despite these challenges, the CFE approach in the Lao People's Democratic Republic is an excellent example of action at both the local level in developing and trying out concepts, strategies and techniques, and the policy level – moving slowly but flexibly and surely towards ownership of the approach at all levels and among all departments of the Ministry of Education and beyond.

Child-friendly education in Laos has also moved from 'a UNICEF project' to full inclusion in the nation's Education Sector Development Framework and endorsement by the Ministry's various development partners. As noted in the UNICEF CFS case study: "Through providing a conceptually accessible framework, Schools of Quality aims to raise awareness of every child's right to a basic education and assists educators and community members in developing coherent and effective strategies to ensure that all children go to school ... And at the macro level, it strives to embed a rights-based approach in the Ministry of Education's policies and programming."³⁵

³⁵ McLaughlin, , Bob, 'UNICEF CFS Case Study: Schools of Quality – A case study on rights-based education reform in the Lao People's Democratic Republic', United Nations Children's Fund, New York, March 2011, p. 26.

E. Policy reform: Decentralized CFE services in Mozambique³⁶

“Jonito José Antonio, Director of Education in Changara district, tells us that the improved access to water, hygiene education and sanitary facilities achieved by the Child-Friendly Schools initiative has had a great impact on the communities. ‘It is not enough to just tell children that they need to take care of their personal hygiene. You also need to provide them with the possibility to learn how to do so’, Mr. Antonio explains. ‘Learning how to wash one’s hands and drink from a clean source is beneficial not only for children, but for the entire community and the whole country. Children pass on their knowledge to their family, and then into the future.’ – UNICEF Mozambique³⁷

Introduction

Two phenomena are becoming more dominant in the field of educational development. The first is a better understanding of the comprehensiveness of the interventions required to increase educational equity and quality. Projects that focus only on one aspect – such as teacher training, textbook production, school health or girls’ enrolment – without taking a broader perspective on the interaction between such interventions or being integrated systematically across the entire education system are more likely to disappear once external support is removed. Programmes promoting child-friendly education are not immune from such a fate, but many are notable because they attempt to encourage change across a wide range of dimensions related to both access and quality.

Many governments are also in the process of decentralizing administrative responsibilities and accountabilities from the national level to lower levels of government, including individual schools. Reasons for this common trend are often political as well as bureaucratic, and there are many ways it can be carried out, with varying degrees of authority transferred from the ‘top’ to the ‘bottom’. The process, however, often fails to meet the proponents’ expectations due to inadequate planning, training or funding.

Given the complexity of the interventions required to increase educational equity and quality, the use of decentralized entities to implement and manage educational change at the local and school level becomes essential. Thus, in a system with a strong policy of decentralization, taking advantage of this process – and also building further capacity for decentralized management of school quality -- becomes an important entry point for child-friendly education.

This is the case in Mozambique, and decentralization of the implementation of child-friendly education is the entry point for this case study. Important mechanisms for CFE implementation in this country include a focus on both ‘upstream’ policy and ‘downstream’ practice; multi-sectoral

³⁶ *Material for this section adapted from the following UNICEF Mozambique publications: ‘Abstract for the End Cycle Evaluation of the Child Friendly Schools’, 2012; ‘UNICEF Mozambique Programme Brief’, 2012; ‘Improving the Quality of Education: Teacher support and pedagogic supervision through lead cluster schools in Mozambique’, 2010; and CFS + Social Mobilisation, Children and Youth Participation, 2012. Additional information was obtained from staff at the UNICEF Mozambique Country Office, including Anjana Mangalagiri, Barbara Atherly and Carlos dos Santos.*

³⁷ UNICEF Mozambique, ‘Child-Friendly Schools: Stories from Mozambique’, Ministry of Education and United Nations Children’s Fund, Maputo, 2012, p. 26.

pilot programmes; social mobilization out to local communities; the development of CFE-based national quality standards; and close partnerships between the central Government and decentralized offices, and in all the relevant sectors of the Government and UNICEF.

Context³⁸

Despite a protracted civil war that lasted 16 years and ended in 1992, Mozambique has made efforts towards achieving universal primary education in response to the Jomtien Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals. Its gross enrolment ratio rose remarkably, from a low of 60 per cent in the 1990s to 97 per cent in 2011, due to significant efforts to increase access to schools through the abolition of school fees and the provision of free textbooks.

But this rate hides wide disparities. There are 750,000 children in the primary school age group (6–12 years old) who are out of school due to factors related to demand (poverty, sociocultural practices, gender discrimination) and supply (the quality of basic education and the learning levels of children).³⁹ In a 2007 subregional assessment, Mozambique was ranked lowest in the region in terms of children’s learning outcomes in language and mathematics.

The net primary school completion rate at the end of Grade 5, as reported in 2011, was 59 per cent for girls and 67 per cent for boys but decreased dramatically to 43 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively, by the end of Grade 7. In addition to the significant gender disparities reflected by these figures, the pupil-to-teacher ratio is high, at 63:1, and there are significant geographical and socio-economic disparities across the country.⁴⁰

Early childhood development programmes cover only 4 per cent of the child population, mostly in urban areas. Children enrol in school without basic health screening or readiness, and with little attention to their health or psychosocial well-being. School learning environments are scarcely enabling. Schools are insufficient in number, and most do not have safe and protective learning spaces. Many schools lack desks, books and other teaching-learning materials, as well as access to water and sanitation facilities.

While the quality of education depends on the synergy of several factors, one of the most crucial is the quality of teachers’ performance in the classroom. In Mozambique, more than 35 per cent of teachers are young people with a Grade 10 general education and little or no professional training. In-service teacher training is not systematic or harmonized among all partners, and it is not relevant to or based on teachers’ needs. The low quality of the one-year, pre-service teacher training programme run by the Ministry of Education produces a weak and

³⁸ *Material adapted from:* UNICEF Mozambique, ‘Brief: Child Friendly Schools’, United Nations Children’s Fund, 2012.

³⁹ In a 2012 draft of a study conducted by the Ministry of Education and UNICEF (‘Out of School Children in Mozambique’), the number of out-of-school children is estimated at 1.2 million for both primary and secondary school-age children, comprising, 23 per cent of the total number of school-aged children.

⁴⁰ Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality, ‘Reports on the Quality of Education: SACMEQ III (2010–11), www.sacmeq.org/reports.htm.

low-skilled teaching work force.⁴¹ There is also inequitable distribution of so-called 'qualified' teachers among provinces. At the same time, far greater numbers of unqualified teachers are found in the northern, more underdeveloped provinces, especially at the lower primary level.

The generally low quality of schooling in Mozambique has particularly serious implications, given that the impact of HIV and AIDS places additional responsibilities on schools, which are forced to take on many of the functions that families have traditionally performed in relation to children's education and care.

Programme

The CFS initiative in Mozambique aims to provide an integrated, multi-sectoral essential package of quality inputs to improve the school and learning environment; increase enrolment and decrease school dropouts; and increase both school completion rates and actual learning achievement in basic education.

The CFS initiative was implemented in districts that are among the most disadvantaged, in order to support Mozambique's national sector strategic plan and its commitment to achieving MDGs 2 and 3, and in accordance with the principles of a human rights-based approach to development. The focus has been to address equity from a supply-side perspective in order to establish evidence that when schools address children's rights from a holistic perspective of education, health and protection, this has the potential to offset demand-side barriers to education. At the same time, the objective has been to 'upstream' and mainstream best practices into both national policy and in implementation of the CFE strategy at decentralized levels.

The CFS package was implemented in all primary schools in seven model districts in seven provinces, from 2006–2011.⁴² The districts were chosen on the basis of low rates of enrolment and completion and high gender disparity in schools. The aim was to provide an enabling learning environment for all children through child-friendly approaches in the following areas:

- More effective teaching and learning in well-managed classrooms through training for Cluster School Coordinators in strategies and methods for continuous pedagogic supervision and support of the cluster's schools; cluster-level training for teachers on child-centred teaching-learning methods and for school directors on supervision and basic school management.
- Provision of 'learner kits' to all children in Grades 1 and 3, and provision of double desks (one desk for two students) for Grades 1 and 2.
- A stronger school health programme, including training for teachers on how to identify health problems and use eye charts; provision of first aid kits and immunization programmes; and development of information, education and communication materials to support health-promotion activities.

⁴¹ In 2011, the Ministry of Education initiated a reform of the pre-service teacher training curriculum, shifting from a one-year training course to a three-year course. This is being piloted in 6 of the 24 provincial teacher training institutes.

⁴² The CFS strategy has entered its second phase, for 2012–2015, with a greater focus on strengthening and monitoring pedagogic supervision and support at decentralized levels (school clusters), as well as learners' achievement.

- Improved water and sanitation facilities for girls and boys through construction of water points and rainwater harvesting systems; separate sanitation facilities for boys and girls; and promotion of hygiene education through child-to-child sanitation committees.
- Rehabilitation and construction of classrooms.
- Training for teachers on physical education and sports, and provision of sports kits and manuals.
- Life skills education through school clubs, with a focus on HIV and AIDS, violence prevention and gender parity.
- Mechanisms to prevent violence and sexual abuse especially of girls; the identification of orphans and other vulnerable children and their enrolment in school; and the sensitization of teachers on protecting children against violence.
- A social mobilization component utilizing mobile communication strategies and community radio and intended to attract new learners as well as encourage retention among those already attending school by expanding community awareness of children's rights and sensitization about cultural practices that harm children's right to development.

UNICEF's programmes in education; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); health; child protection; and communication and planning manage implementation of the CFS components with their respective national and decentralized partners through designated CFS focal points. The Mozambique Country Office has established an internal CFS working group to coordinate planning, review and monitoring of the multi-sectoral interventions.

The role of district authorities is especially noteworthy in this process. District education departments are responsible for implementing all of the education-related components. The planning and implementation of the components for school health, water and sanitation, support to orphans and vulnerable children, and community social mobilization are conducted by other sectoral authorities but coordinated by the district education departments under the Ministry of Education.

The education departments hold monthly planning and review meetings with other sectors' focal points for the implementation of child-friendly schools. Capacity development for planners at the district level on multi-sectoral planning of services in education, and the monitoring of school quality standards through community scorecards, have been particularly important in the promotion of decentralized authority.⁴³

All districts in Mozambique participate in the development of a strategic five-year plan in which the districts indicate their priorities in a matrix format. The five-year plan is operationalized yearly and translated into an economic and social plan that includes budget formulation.

The CFS planning process is coordinated with the national Government's planning cycle. This takes place through the multi-sectoral district planning team in consultation meetings with communities (and in light of the available budget) and through the relevant national ministries, in coordination with the UNICEF sections involved in the initiative. The planning process aims

⁴³ The intervention on monitoring school quality standards through community scorecards was introduced in 2012 in two of the seven CFS districts.

to analyse and identify a minimum package for each district during the following year.

In each district, the distinct sector – education, health, social action, public works, etc. – also develops its own plan. The district planning team evaluates the relevance of the planned activities and ensures that CFS activities are integrated into each sector plan. The district planning team further harmonizes the sector plans and consolidates them into a single district administration plan.

This implementation phase involves a good deal of coordination among the different sectors and stakeholders, and a reporting process is one of the major requirements at all levels, including the districts. Provincial- and central-level officials are responsible for monitoring and making sure that the activities being implemented are in line with the budget agreed to initially. Finally, all aspects of the reporting are combined for discussion during an annual joint review meeting, which includes participation of the district and provincial CFS focal points, as well as national representatives. In sum, the decentralization of much of the CFS planning and implementation process is an essential part of the programme's success.

Results

The programme in Mozambique was gradually scaled up, during a period of three years, to cover all primary schools in seven districts – reaching around 400,000 children in 800 schools. It is continuing to be implemented, albeit with a more refined strategy based on recommendations from the annual assessments, and a greater focus on children's learning levels and support for teachers.

Specific achievements include indications that CFS best practices and principles are being embedded into national policies and plans. To expand the scope of basic services to schools, institutional capacity development in decentralized educational planning and multi-sectoral coordination at the district level has been established. The CFS programme has supported the Ministry's commitment to a multi-sectoral approach to school improvement, incorporating such elements as gender equality, WASH, school health, school safety and violence prevention.

There is a positive impact in terms of children attending school and staying for a full primary cycle. Fewer children are out of school or dropping out. Net enrolment is greater than 90 per cent in four of the seven CFS districts and more than 77 per cent in the other three CFS districts. In three districts, girls' enrolment increased considerably, in the best case, from 60 per cent to nearly 90 per cent. Six of the CFS districts have pass rates higher than the provincial average, ranging from 88.5 per cent up to 93.7 per cent. Ministry data on pass rates show that, on average, schools in six of the seven CFS districts are performing at a similar level or slightly better than schools in non-CFS districts. This may be, in part, because these districts are getting support from many other partners.

CFS strategies are reflected in the Ministry of Education's Sector Strategic Plan, 2012–2016, which calls for promoting 'safe and secure schools' and highlights the significance of school health, school water, and the protection of girls against sexual abuse and violence. The role of the lead cluster schools as centres for supporting pedagogic supervision and teachers' development in a continuous manner – and promoted through child-friendly schools – has also

been incorporated into the sector plan for national replication. The education sector plan emphasizes the significance of promoting life skills for the prevention of violence, and HIV and AIDS and other diseases, through school clubs. Evidence shows that children in CFS-supported schools have a generally high level of awareness of how to prevent disease and HIV infection, the purpose of vaccines and practices to ensure basic hygiene.

The revision of the pre-service teacher training curriculum in 2011 included a focus on children's right to health, water and sanitation; protection against violence; and the promotion of life skills in the teacher competencies framework. UNICEF is part of the reference group for the pre-service pilot and is called upon to orient trainers from the teacher training institutions on child rights and life skills. In addition, the scope of the CFS model is being expanded to include the promotion of inclusive education for children with disabilities, and plans are being made to introduce activity-based teaching/learning methods in classrooms to improve learners' achievement.

The CFS programme has inspired and contributed to the development of national school quality standards by the Ministry of Education. Based on emerging lessons from the multi-sectoral CFS model, UNICEF built consensus through the sector-wide approach to programming and leveraged this to increase the impact of the national standards. As a result, the Ministry opened a 'Directorate on Management and the Guarantee of Quality', which mandates the development and monitoring of quality standards across all of the Ministry's directorates. A strategy for implementing the national school quality standards is being piloted in partnership with school councils, and will involve school self-assessments and the use of community scorecards by the councils.

In terms of decentralization, which has been so important in implementing the CFS programme in Mozambique, several achievements are notable:

- While district education authorities maintain data on the implementation of the multi-sectoral interventions in primary schools, a comprehensive system of monitoring the progress of multi-sectoral indicators at decentralized levels is also being developed.
- Capacity building for decentralized planning through the CFS platform has improved the district planning teams' abilities to develop district plans. Their experience with child-friendly schools has sensitized district planning teams on the need to prioritize children's issues and has encouraged them to integrate CFS activities into their plans.
- The integration of CFS principles and practices into district plans has promoted the use of evidence-based planning, founded on statistical data, to address and prioritize the areas that require the most attention. The plans now present disaggregated information that makes it possible to identify children by vulnerable groups and gender.
- The process built ownership of the CFS plans by the district planning teams to ensure that the plans integrated all the activities taking place at the district level. More partners/donors working in the community were called on to contribute to this process.

Remaining challenges

There are high levels of cost variation in CFS expenditure across districts in Mozambique; thus, improved targeting in resource deployment is crucial. Needs-based targeting is required at the district level to support mainstreaming and upscaling and contribute to reducing

implementation costs. A school benchmarking framework is important to ensure better targeting for implementation of school quality standards, as well as resource allocation.

The impact of the CFS programme has been variable, given the different physical and social conditions of the schools that participated. Some of the more remote districts, for example, are more in need of capacity-building interventions. The CFS programme requires continued and enhanced support from donors, but the capacity of each participating district to provide relevant inputs without donor support must eventually be assessed and promoted. The gaps that are identified in the district capacity assessment should inform future donor funding for CFS-oriented activities.

Multi-sectoral programme management must be strengthened. District health officials, for example, should take responsibility for administering assessments of children's health-related attitudes and knowledge, and the Ministry of Health needs to develop an effective strategy to ensure the replenishment of first aid kits. Along with capacity building to strengthen the management of the multi-sectoral approach at the district level, better-quality training for teachers, school directors and school council members is required. A benchmarking framework should be developed to determine the quality and level of training that is needed.

School-based needs assessments should be promoted to prioritize CFS inputs. Since more classrooms are needed, lessons learned in the pilot about the modular construction methodology, though relatively expensive, should inform future construction strategies. This should include expanded provision of water sources and toilets in schools.

F. Comprehensive child-friendly reform: Sri Lanka⁴⁴

“A unique convergence of opportunities laid down the groundwork for moving CFS from a project-based programme to a national strategy. The positive experience with CFS, significant progress in schools scattered across the country and the network of human resources associated with the first phase of the programme established a foundation of familiarity with the concept and practical experience with its implementation. In addition, much creativity and innovation at the local level in CFS activities could be capitalized upon. [A goal was set] of mainstreaming or institutionalizing CFS ... by creating and building capacity from within the education system to plan, implement and monitor positive change for children.”⁴⁵

“Lacamb Sinhala School is located in Hatton town in the Central Province. In 2009 the school had poor learning achievements and low attendance of students and was selected to be included under the BESP [Basic Education Support Programme]. Under the BESP, all teachers have participated in the school-based Child Friendly Approach training. Following this

⁴⁴ *Most of the information in this case study is adapted from:* UNICEF Sri Lanka, ‘Basic Education Support Programme (BESP): Activity completion report, 24 February 2009–31 December 2012’ United Nations Children’s Fund, 2012; and UNICEF Sri Lanka Country Office, ‘CFS Case Study: Mainstreaming child-friendly schools In Sri Lanka’, United Nations Children’s Fund, New York, January 2009. *Additional information was provided by UNICEF Sri Lanka staff, especially Sara Poehlman and Katrina Stringer.*

⁴⁵ UNICEF Sri Lanka Country Office, ‘CFS Case Study: Mainstreaming child-friendly schools In Sri Lanka’, United Nations Children’s Fund, New York, January 2009, p. 17.

training, the school initiated a School Attendance Committee (SAC) made up of parents, teachers and students. The SAC introduced the following activities at the school: home visits for students with low attendance; a classroom-based attendance promotion initiative; and 'awareness meetings' with parents on the importance of education, child rights and school attendance. The improved involvement of the community in the school activities is reflected in the improved attendance and performance in the grade 5 scholarship exams."⁴⁶

Context

Sri Lanka's protracted inter-ethnic/inter-religious civil war ended in May 2009, and the country progressed from conflict to peace – although the ethnic and religious tensions that led to the conflict remained. At the same time, it gained lower middle-income country status and has continued a strong growth rate, recorded as 8 per cent in 2011. With a population of around 21 million, Sri Lanka has historically had very high levels of educational access and completion, as well as gender parity, with the exception of some disparities against girls in tea estate areas.

Education quality, however, remains a major concern, both in terms of untrained/unqualified teachers (almost 20 per cent of the total teacher population) and low learning outcomes, particularly in mathematics and English. Even more worrying are large gaps between the highest- and lowest-performing provinces and between Sinhala and Tamil language schools. Outcomes are particularly low for formerly and still displaced/resettled students in Northern and Eastern Provinces and in tea plantation districts, which are among the most disadvantaged areas in Sri Lanka in terms of poverty and social development indicators, including education.

Facing the challenges of achieving increased access for marginalized populations and enhanced quality throughout the education system required a comprehensive approach to education reform. This eventually became the CFE entry point. In the education reform process, a full range of approaches was required, including a common understanding of child-friendly education; situation analyses and pilot projects; the development of standards and indicators; advocacy; and an education sector plan linked to child-friendly education.

Programme

UNICEF initiated work to promote child-friendly schools in 2002, starting on a small scale. The Ministry of Education took a leadership role in 2008 to upscale this approach, and from 2009, with funding from the Australian Government Overseas Aid Program (AusAID), support was provided to nearly 1,500 schools in Central, Eastern, Northern and Uva Provinces to implement child-friendly schools and support the Ministry in institutionalizing the CFS approach in the education sector plan.

The Sri Lankan version of child-friendly education has six dimensions. As in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the sixth dimension was added to the original five CFS dimensions with the intention of turning the initiative into a system-wide programme. The six dimensions in Sri

⁴⁶ UNICEF Sri Lanka, 'Basic Education Support Programme (BESP): Activity completion report, 24 February 2009–31 December 2012', United Nations Children's Fund, 2012, p. 10.

Lanka outline child-friendly education as:

1. Rights-based and proactively inclusive.
2. Gender-responsive.
3. Promoting quality learning outcomes relevant to children's need for knowledge and skills.
4. Healthy, safe and protective of children.
5. Actively engaged with students, families and communities.
6. Supported by child-friendly systems, policies, practices and regulations.

In Sri Lanka, the CFS programme is known as the 'Child Friendly Approach' (CFA). Support for schools to implement the Child Friendly Approach was expanded to six programme districts, with funding from AusAID in 2009, and an additional five districts in 2011. It has proved to be a good framework for improving the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. In particular, it addresses psychosocial and protection issues in former conflict zones that are struggling to emerge from the war's negative impact and economic deprivation, and to respond to the needs of internally displaced people while attempting to alleviate emerging social problems.

In other areas, such as the plantation/estate sector, the Child Friendly Approach is helping to reach the most vulnerable children and support them to attend school and complete their primary education. In addition, it is being expanded as the framework for quality improvements in primary education, under the Ministry of Education's new national sector plan for education in Sri Lanka. Using the Child Friendly Approach, UNICEF, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, set targets for strategic results related to access and quality:

Access – at least 50 per cent of identified out-of-school children enrolled in appropriate learning programmes. As of 2006, Sri Lanka had achieved a primary school net enrolment rate of 97.5 per cent for both girls and boys, with a completion rate for Grades 1–5 of 99.6 per cent.⁴⁷ But it is still seeking to reach those children who never enrol, as well as the children who are unlikely to reach the last grade of primary education.

Sri Lanka learned that the best way to find and monitor these children was to collect information and take preventive action at the school level. Through the Child Friendly Approach, communities participate in school-based school attendance committees that identify and support children who are out of school or at risk of dropping out. The committees bring principals, teachers, parents, community members and students together, encouraging reintegration and regular attendance of students through a series of supportive activities. Teachers are also equipped with classroom management techniques to encourage good attendance. Many classrooms in supported schools, for example, display attendance charts as a tool to promote attendance. In some cases, teachers reward students who record 100 per cent attendance during one month with a 'gold star'.

Community mobilization programmes were also organized by the Non-Formal Education

⁴⁷ Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, *Millennium Development Goals Country Report 2008/09*, IPS, Colombo, Sri Lanka, July 2010, pp. 2, 44.

Branches of the Zonal Departments of Education. This innovative communication approach reaches out to parents and community members and disseminates key messages on primary education through drama, skits, poems, stories, song and dance, as well as face-to-face discussions and home visits.

Alternative education programmes are another important strategy that Sri Lanka has used to promote increased access to education for all children. There are two main interventions supported under the Child Friendly Approach:

1. Basic literacy classes, with the main objective of providing basic literacy and other competencies to out-of-school children who can not be mainstreamed into the formal system immediately because of poor education performance. Basic literacy classes take place outside the school and support children to reach the minimum literacy and numeracy levels required for reintegration into the formal school system.
2. The Accelerated Learning Programme, which was designed as a supplementary education programme, supporting displaced students who are re-entering the formal school system to reach an adequate standard of learning achievement. The intervention takes place inside school classrooms or after school hours, and helps students to catch up and succeed in formal schools.

Quality – at least a 10 per cent increase in the proportion of students who achieve marks over 70 on the Grade 5 Scholarship Examination. The CFA quality component seeks to strengthen the capacity of teachers, principals and the community to promote holistic school development. This encompasses quality learning and a healthy, protective and safe environment for children, as well as the capacity of the education system to support this process. In doing so, it has a three-pronged methodology: (1) strengthening the Child Friendly Approach at the national level; (2) supporting the same approach at the provincial, zonal, divisional and school levels; and (3) supporting teachers' professional development through quality pre-service and in-service education. Specific activities include:

- A national symposium on 'Moving toward Child-Friendly Primary Education', which aimed to raise awareness and institutionalize this approach. The Ministry of Education organized the forum to bring together various levels of stakeholders in education from across the provinces. The Minister presented a strong message that the Child Friendly Approach was the key framework for quality improvements that provinces should integrate into their plans under a sector-wide approach.
- A CFA guidance manual for education officers, which describes the Child Friendly Approach within the Sri Lankan context and serves as a key reference guide to its six dimensions. The manual provides information on the underlying ideology and key CFA principles, and outlines multiple ways in which the model can be used in the school and classroom. It also outlines the framework and indicators for monitoring and evaluating the approach in schools.
- A CFA training manual for education officers, which contains training sessions on child rights and quality learning outcomes and explains the role of the community in a child-friendly school. The manual standardizes CFA indicators and guidance for using the participatory and activity-based methods expected in the classroom.
- An inclusive education toolkit for education officers, principals and teachers to guide

schools in learning how to accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This includes ‘gifted’ children and children with disabilities, children who are living on the street or working, and those from linguistic, ethnic and cultural minorities or living in disadvantaged and marginalized areas. More than 20,000 copies of the manual were printed and disseminated to all primary teachers in all government schools by the end of 2012, and printing is under way of an additional 35,000 copies.

- Teacher training materials, including revisions in the curricula for mathematics and ‘Environment Related Activities and Civic Education’ (in Sinhala and Tamil) in the National Colleges of Education, and in the ‘second-languages’ curriculum for teacher training colleges – each including the principles of inclusion and child-friendly learning as an integral part of new teacher training courses.
- Monitoring, through the review of the CFA criteria and selection of monitoring indicators. This included development, finalization and piloting of the CFA school monitoring and evaluation framework and monitoring tools to measure and record school-level progress across the dimensions and criteria of the Child Friendly Approach. The monitoring tools consist of quantitative and qualitative indicators enabling schools to measure their progress towards achieving child-friendly status.
- School self-assessment and school development plans, through tools involving the participation of schoolteachers, principals, students and community members – and used to assess performance and plan improvements across the six CFA dimensions. The tools have been aligned with the Child Friendly Approach in several areas: children as equal partners in decision making in the school self-assessments; identification of the most vulnerable children in schools; involvement of the community in the teaching-learning process inside classrooms; review or development of the attendance monitoring system at the school; and consideration of protective, safe and clean learning environments.
- The initiation of school-based CFA teacher training programmes. This activity has many advantages: It is less costly, can reach more teachers faster and allows for faster absorption of CFA principles into the school system. As more teachers in a single school become aware of the Child Friendly Approach, they can gain peer support, build networks and share resources.

An important note on the Child Friendly Approach is that it has benefited from close cross-sectoral ties with activities linked to other aspects of UNICEF and government programming. These included activities related to social cohesion, conflict sensitivity and child protection; school health, WASH and disaster risk reduction; and disability, participation, poverty alleviation, and HIV and AIDS.

Results

By 2012, with support from AusAID for scaling up the CFA programme, 1,359 schools in 11 UNICEF-targeted districts received direct support to implement the Child Friendly Approach; this benefited more than 350,000 students. The Ministry of Education has also led programme implementation in 190 nationally managed schools. More than 14 per cent of government schools in Sri Lanka are implementing the Child Friendly Approach with direct support from the programme. Also in 2012, Sri Lanka fully embraced the Child Friendly Approach under its

sector-wide Education Sector Development Framework and Programme II, 2012–2016, which has set a goal of all schools becoming child-friendly by the end of 2016.

Overall, Sri Lanka has strengthened awareness of the Child Friendly Approach by training resource groups, including in-service advisers, directors and other education officers from the divisional level up to the ministry level; the development of the CFA guidance and teacher training manuals; and the development and implementation of monitoring tools.

The Child Friendly Approach has been shown to promote improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. Between 2009 and 2012, CFA training reached more than 40,000 principals, teachers, education officers and community members. Specifically, 13,938 teachers – including 76 per cent of primary teachers in the target schools – received training on the approach and were equipped with skills to implement it at the school level. All schools now have at least one teacher who has received CFA training.

Survey data show that more than 99 per cent of children attending schools that have been supported to implement the Child Friendly Approach are reaching Grade 5, with nearly equal averages for boys and girls, at 99.21 per cent and 99.19 per cent, respectively.

Improved school attendance was prioritized within the approach, and with UNICEF's technical assistance, 96 per cent of the target schools had a functioning school attendance committee by mid-2012. With involvement from the school community, these committees are successfully reintegrating and promoting the good attendance and retention of students, surpassing the 50 per cent target by reintegrating 52 per cent of the 4,149 children who were identified by school attendance committees as having been out of school. The remaining students, the most difficult to reach, are being supported by Non-Formal Education Officers, and some have enrolled in basic literacy classes with a plan to be eventually mainstreamed in formal schools.

Although only 14 per cent of schools nationally received direct support to implement the Child Friendly Approach, the number of out-of-school children integrated in these schools represents 22 per cent of the total out-of-school population that was integrated into schools during 2012.

The percentage of children attending school regularly – that is, attendance above 80 per cent – continued to increase under the Child Friendly Approach as teachers and the school attendance committees implemented improved classroom management strategies that encouraged higher attendance. As a result of the multiple interventions inside schools, 87 per cent of girls and 86 per cent of boys are attending more than 80 per cent of schools days – representing a massive 15-percentage-point increase in only three years.

Between 2009 and 2012, 98 per cent (1,230) of target schools completed a school self-assessment and implemented a school development plan. As a result, both schools and communities better understand the community's role in ensuring that the school is supporting the needs of their children. In 2011, donor funds directly supported 230 schools in implementing their school development plans, with support increased to cover 973 schools in 2012.

Additionally, inclusive education has been incorporated into the draft revised Education Act and is therefore positioned for increased attention at the national level when the act is

presented to Parliament. With continuous awareness raising and policy advocacy in parallel to direct support for implementation, the Child Friendly Approach has been integrated as the quality framework for primary education in the national sector-wide approach. It has also been taken up as an initiative of the Presidential Secretariat to improve primary schools across the country, with the goal of having all schools implementing the Child Friendly Approach by 2016.

Remaining challenges

There is positive evidence that key stakeholders in Sri Lanka have both a commitment to CFA principles and the ability to implement them. The most notable evidence of institutionalized integration of the Child Friendly Approach into the education system at the national and sub-national levels is its inclusion in the national education sectoral development framework for expansion over the next five years.

Difficulties in implementation did occur, however, and challenges do remain. These include inadequate coordination between the sectors whose investment was needed to support holistic change in schools. In many cases, relevant stakeholders such as health, water and sanitation, child protection and disaster management actors at the national and local levels were not aware of or involved in the CFA initiative or they had a narrow perception of the approach. In addition, system constraints within the national treasury impeded the timely flow of designated funds to the sub-national levels for agreed activities.

Different development agency projects involving similar innovations had varying definitions, languages and processes associated with child-friendly schools. This led to confusion at various levels. Teachers and others involved in implementation were sometimes at different stages in their understanding of the Child Friendly Approach, and the frequent turnover of staff in the Ministry of Education – and among provincial, zonal and school leadership – sometimes slowed policy changes and implementation.

In some cases, there was an over-emphasis on the visible and 'easy' CFA dimensions, such as improvements in the physical learning environment – construction/renovation of buildings, improving surrounding environments through gardens, and establishing activity corners and play parks. This led to diminished implementation of the more complex components of a child-friendly school culture, such as addressing corporal punishment, improving learning outcomes through child-centred teaching methodologies, and encouraging community and child participation in school management.

To help overcome all of these challenges, a monitoring and evaluation system that can regularly assess the progress of schools in meeting child-friendly criteria is required – and adequate documentation of lessons learned would provide a foundation for expanding good practices.

IV. Expanding the framework of child-friendly education towards equity

As the case studies in this report illustrate, child-friendly education is an important mechanism for promoting equity in education, through its central focus on inclusion and through all of its various dimensions, however they are defined in a particular country. But in a development context concerned with equity of outcomes – and with any future EFA targets and MDGs likely reflecting this concern – ways must be found to strengthen the link between child-friendly education and equity.

Governments must take the lead in this process, supported by a range of development agencies and international non-governmental organizations, as is currently the case in many countries, and piloting different approaches, then taking the most successful to scale. UNICEF also has an important role to play, both ‘downstream’ in collaborating in the design of pilot programmes for child-friendly education, and ‘upstream’, helping governments develop the conceptual framework and standards that guide CFE policy. To address equity in a comprehensive manner, UNICEF can also support governments in carrying out the ministerial reforms and capacity building that are necessary to implement this policy, and to develop the indicators and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms needed to determine the progress towards, and ultimate success of, the policy.

All of the programmes described in this report have implemented pilots featuring one or more aspects of child-friendly education, and all intend – and many have achieved – much greater replication, with CFE principles and standards becoming an integral part of the ministry’s national education development framework.⁴⁸

Based on the case studies described here, further development of the CFE framework beyond pilot programmes (often too narrowly seen as ‘UNICEF projects’) towards equity requires work at two levels: (1) at the macro/system level of policy/strategy development, through an expanded, enriched conceptual framework and a broadened focus of child-friendliness in individual schools to genuinely rights-based, child-friendly education systems; and (2) at the micro/school level of implementation, through a comprehensive whole-school/community approach focused on achieving equity-based outcomes at the local level. Both of these processes might focus first on a high-priority entry point and then move to ensure that the broader framework of child-friendly education is being implemented.

A. Macro-level action: Towards a rights-based education system

In the context of increasing disparities in education and development in many parts of the world and the subsequent refocusing of attention on equity-based educational outcomes, it is no longer good enough to develop a series of individual child-friendly schools, even if they become embedded in a larger national education sector development framework. ‘Child-friendliness’ must become a new paradigm that governs the vision, structure and strategies of

⁴⁸ See annex 2 for a timeline of the systematic process in Sierra Leone to internalize the CFS framework within the national education system.

the education system as a whole – and an integral, mainstreamed part of national education sector development plans. This can be done in several ways, not all of which have been reflected in the case studies above.

Start early with the development of inclusive, child-friendly early childhood care and development/education programmes (ECCD/E). Good-quality ECCD/E programmes are essential for the well-being of young children, their future learning achievements, and their eventual role as adults. Increasing evidence shows that these programmes lead to better health and nutrition and stronger cognitive development for young children. Those with ECCD/preschool experience are more likely to enrol in primary school, less likely to repeat grades or drop out, and move further up the educational ladder than children without such experience. As adults, they have increased opportunities for better employment, more cohesive families, less dependence on social welfare systems and less involvement in criminal justice systems.

Such programmes are especially important in regard to equity in two ways. First, because of their (preferably) more informal, interactive and child-centred environment, they tend to be innately more welcoming of diversity (language differences, disabilities) and therefore supportive of equity – characteristics not always found in more formal, structured and success-focused primary schools. Secondly, evidence shows that the young children of typically disadvantaged groups benefit the most from ECCD/E programmes – although they usually have the least access to such programmes.

An equity-based approach to early childhood development and education – and thus to child-friendly education – would expand coverage of quality ECCD/E programmes in the widest possible manner, beginning with the most excluded. Among the case studies, this has only been a component of the Schools of Quality initiative in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. There, with support from the Ministry of Education, some schools have established a pre-primary class or, in particularly remote and poor areas, community-based school readiness programmes in order to ensure that all Grade 1 learners have preschool experience.

Strengthen the essential 'child-seeking' nature of child-friendly education. The child-seeking principle of providing greater access has been neglected during recent years in favour of its 'child-centred' principle of achieving higher quality. Yet from an equity perspective, it is essential to maintain the child-friendly school's proactive search for out-of-school children in the surrounding community. The attempts to reach the children who are not in school due to cultural attitudes towards girls' education, extreme poverty, the 'invisibility' of children with disabilities, minority linguistic or ethnic status are essential. Awareness of this principle and acting on it at the school and community level are fundamental to the realization of children's right to education.

Mozambique has carried out social mobilization campaigns to advocate for school enrolment in the community. The Schools of Quality initiative in the Lao People's Democratic Republic has assigned Village Education Development Committees with the responsibility for mapping out-of-school children and encouraging them to enrol. The school attendance committees in Sri Lanka monitor and seek to redress absenteeism.

Make the early grades especially child-friendly. More and more evidence is accumulating

about the crucial period of transition from the home or preschool to the primary school. This underlies the definition of ‘early childhood’ as covering ages 0–8 and highlights the importance of laying a firm foundation for later success in education by ensuring the development of strong literacy and numeracy skills in the early grades.

The transition issue is especially important for children who do not have some kind of organized preschool experience. The early grades must therefore be particularly ‘friendly’ – ready for such children with schools that offer teachers who have specific training in young child development and early literacy/numeracy, a low pupil-to-teacher ratio and child-centred teaching-learning methods. A focus on the early grades does not appear in the case studies, perhaps because the concern for the success of early learning and early reading was not a high priority during the decade-long development and enrichment of child-friendly education – and has not until more recently been a priority for UNICEF.

Promote more targeted affirmative action in regard to excluded learners. This is possible first at the national level, with several examples in the case studies: in Laos, where most of its CFE resources originally supported the Government’s poverty reduction strategy; in the Eastern Caribbean, where particularly demotivated and violent schools were selected; in Belize and Mozambique, with a focus on particularly disadvantaged districts and schools; and in Macedonia, with its concern for the often-excluded Roma population and other marginalized groups. More targeted affirmative action can be achieved in several ways, some of which are included in the case studies:

- Abolish school fees and other costs, such as uniforms and transportation, for some or preferably all students, linked to school grants and school resourcing reforms.
- Provide school food programmes that are targeted to reach the very poor.
- Implement multi-grade teaching for small, remote schools that have too few pupils for a teacher in every grade.
- Recruit and train teachers from marginalized groups, including ethnic/linguistic minorities, women, and sometimes men, and people with disabilities.
- Offer support for teachers to recognize and work with children who have learning disabilities and emotional or behavioural problems.
- Provide teaching aids and other special support, such as ‘assistive’ devices, for children with disabilities.
- Establish a remedial education programme for children with learning difficulties such as delayed literacy.

There is a need to build stronger links with a wide range of social protection measures, such as conditional case transfers, with regular school attendance as a condition for receiving social welfare benefits; providing block grants and other kinds of school support linked to CFE processes such as equity-oriented school improvement plans and annual targets, particularly to schools that serve typically excluded learners; and referring abused children or those at risk to social protection agencies.

More generally, there is the need – as demonstrated in Laos, Mozambique and Sri Lanka – to bring together education sector stakeholders with the sectors related to health and nutrition,

water and sanitation, labour, and women's issues, especially in areas vulnerable to conflict, disaster and extreme poverty.

Ensure that child-friendly schools promote some type of mother tongue-based multilingual education to the fullest extent possible. None of the case studies models the best scenario for such education, which requires initial literacy in the child's mother tongue. Even the initiative in Belize focuses mainly on the oral use of the mother tongue in the early grades to help explain concepts in English. It encourages reading in the mother tongue only in the later grades, treating it more as a 'subject' than as a language of genuine literacy. Combined with the promotion of culturally based school uniforms, the production of local crafts, and the performance of music and dance, this effort may help maintain and even revitalize the local language and culture. But it will not lead to initial literacy in the mother tongue, which is essential to later mastery of the national/official language.

Since the original conceptualization of child-friendly education more than 15 years ago, large strides have been made in understanding the importance of – and how best to implement – mother tongue-based education. As discussed above, there are many practical constraints to the wide-scale use of such education, including the lack of conventional spelling systems, trained teachers who are able to use the mother tongue, appropriate materials and political support for such education. But evidence shows that many of these obstacles can be overcome in order to provide education in the daily language of the child. Evidence increasingly shows that this immediately reduces inequities resulting from the inability of children of minority linguistic groups to follow the curriculum and lessons delivered in the official/national language – and this should be reflected in any new conceptualization of child-friendly education.

Focus pre-service and in-service teacher education – and training for head teachers and administrators, supervisors and district officers – more towards issues of child-friendliness, inclusion and equity. One essential indicator regarding the success of expanding the framework and mainstreaming the practice of child-friendly schooling into a nation's long-term education sector plan is the extent to which teacher trainees study CFE principles and practice CFE approaches in pre-service programmes, as an integrated and comprehensive element of the teacher education curriculum. With the exception of Sri Lanka, where CFE principles have been intentionally inserted into pre-service education institutions, the case studies focus on in-service training for teachers, first in the pilot schools and then in those where the approach is replicated.

In projects sponsored by development agencies, training is often focused on pilot schools and narrowly defined outcomes to achieve cost-effectiveness and immediate impact. Creating change in an entrenched, conservative and inflexible pre-service education subsystem requires much more time, energy and resources. Effective training is not possible when instructors are inexperienced in the appropriate level of education, the curriculum is outdated compared to that taught in classrooms, and there are few links to practical classroom realities. This is even more the case when trying to influence non-existent or very weak training programmes for head teachers and supervisors.

New teachers, who have decades of teaching ahead of them, and professional support staff will only be able to internalize CFE principles and practices if training is current and

comprehensive. Thus, it is important that guidance and training manuals, toolkits and other materials prepared for in-service training are quickly adapted for and inserted in CFE-oriented pre-service education courses.

From an equity perspective, it is important in both in-service and pre-services processes to emphasize the teacher's obligation to seek children not in school and get them enrolled and learning successfully by understanding and responding to their individual differences. They must be able to assess learning differences among their students and then personalize instruction to accommodate these differences. This can mean working in the students' mother tongue, including when more than one language is spoken in a classroom; providing assistance to children with disabilities; and making teaching more gender-responsive.

Extend the CFE framework through lower secondary school and beyond. Promoting graduates of child-friendly primary schools into non-child-friendly secondary schools makes life difficult for both students and teachers. The students may be required to adjust to a more formal, hierarchical, teacher-centred and often harsher learning environment. Teachers may be working with students who are more independent, creative, outspoken and demanding.

Embedding the core principles of child-friendliness in the ministry of education section that is responsible for secondary education – along with planners, curriculum developers and teacher education institutions – is therefore an essential part of developing a child-friendly education system. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, for example, UNICEF is supporting the development of communication materials for the Ministry of Education's roll-out of the national quality standards for secondary schools. And in the Philippines, UNICEF piloted the CFE adaptation at secondary level, beginning with eight high schools characterized by disadvantaged settings. This has since increased to 61 schools, and the Department of Education's Bureau of Secondary Education has incorporated child-friendly education into its development framework and expanded the CFE approach to 60 additional schools.

Raise the awareness and build the capacity of other essential actors in the CFE process, especially its link to equity-based outcomes. In order to expand the CFE framework at the system level, its principles must be internalized and translated into practical results. This requires the involvement of planners and finance specialists in development and budgeting for CFE-based education sector plans, curriculum development and examination units, research institutes, and monitoring and evaluation and quality assurance agencies.

In Macedonia, curriculum and textbook writers have been an essential part of multicultural materials development. In Mozambique, various guidelines, manuals and toolkits have been created to help build capacities in the decentralized, district-level offices that are indispensable in CFE implementation. And In Laos, the new National Policy, Strategy, and Plan of Action on Inclusive Education, in which Schools of Quality have played an important implementing role, assigns to each Ministry unit specific tasks in achieving the policy. Similarly, donor members in education sector working groups need to be familiar with the vital components of child-friendly education and its potential impact on equity and quality, while the core CFE dimensions must be considered in sector planning and review.

Develop national standards for CFE components/dimensions that focus on access and quality.

Such standards, as have been developed in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mozambique and Sri Lanka, can serve as vital guidance for national-level policies in other countries, and as a checklist for school-level self-assessment and improvement plans.

Develop a monitoring and assessment system to measure progress towards more equity-focused CFE outcomes and disseminate examples of good practice. Many systems focus largely on such inputs as teacher-to-student ratios; the availability of textbooks and teachers' guides, classrooms and toilets; processes such as the percentage of teachers who receive annual training and the role of school committees. But they rarely focus on outcomes for learners. This requires an Education Management Information System that is used to:

- Develop indicators for and collect and analyse data concerning disparities, providing information on who is marginalized, where and why.
- Create national standards that define the desired characteristics of child-friendly systems and schools.
- Enable the collection and dissemination of good practices in rights-based, child-friendly education
- Focus on school self-assessments and school improvement plans that centre on children – in and out of school – and what and how they learn.
- Work towards more equity-based, redistributive goals and targets for post-2015 development, in which child-friendly education systems should have an essential role. The decentralized, multi-sectoral five-year plans developed in Mozambique could serve as a model for equity-based CFE programming towards achieving this type of goals and targets.

Ensure that ministries of education construct or renovate all schools to international standards of accessibility, health and disaster risk reduction. Many schools are not designed to serve the diversity of students who are, or should be, attending them. They do not have the ramps, wider doors and toilet facilities required by many learners with disabilities, and sanitation and hygiene issues relevant to girls' education are still neglected. Schools are seldom constructed to withstand the damage that natural disasters such as earthquakes, typhoons and floods can cause. More equity-focused CFE programmes emphasize the need to make all schools accessible, healthy and prepared to mitigate disaster damage. Although the case studies above do not emphasize such standards, the CFE programme in Madagascar has done so, as summarized in annex 1.

B. Micro-level action: Programming for rights-based/child-friendly schools

Comprehensive reform towards an expanded vision of child-friendly education at the school and community levels is essential for creating an equity-focused paradigm for education based on child-friendly schools. For this broad and deep process, a whole-school approach to change is required, involving, at minimum, the actions outlined below.

Implement equity-focused school self-assessment, and develop planning and management processes that lead to more equity-focused school improvement plans. Individual schools – supported by clusters and the local education office, as well as parents, community leaders

and students – should base goals, targets, and identification of gaps to be filled and ways to fill them on the principles of inclusion and equity.

This approach to self-assessment, planning and management empowers local education stakeholders and can lead to greater equity. At the same time, it requires sympathetic and knowledgeable school leadership. Head teachers, principals, supervisors and inspectors must be able to support inclusive, child-friendly teaching and learning practices, as well as understand the philosophy and principles of equity-based outcomes in education.

In the Eastern Caribbean, for example, multi-partner entities assess school discipline problems and develop plans, policies and behaviour models for teachers and students. In Laos, the national education quality standards have become the basis for school self-assessment that links to equity outcomes – including reduced repetition and drop-out rates for girls and boys, and their equal participation in school affairs. These examples, in addition to the innovative bilingual education programme in Belize, require strong commitment from school leaders to make them work.

Other school-level indicators could be even more strongly linked to equity outcomes. Indicators on encouraging pre-primary enrolment and reducing drop-out and repetition rates should be linked to data that are disaggregated by gender, ethnicity and social-economic status. Indicators on community participation in school development activities should ensure that men and women, and people from all the community's ethnic groups and socio-economic strata, are represented in parent-teacher associations, education development committees and other local groups that are involved with schools.

Develop stronger links with local health and nutrition programmes and services, encompassing school feeding, health checks conducted by local health staff, the distribution of anthelmintic drugs, and nutritional supplementation and vitamins. These services should be targeted to reach the most disadvantaged schools, districts and students. The Mozambique case presents an especially close relationship between education and health programmes.

Provide support services and personnel required at the school level to assist in the achievement of greater equity. Additional support, including extra staff, should be sought to assist in implementation of child-friendly education. As in Mozambique, this could involve cluster school coordinators/supervisors who are mandated to focus on equity of inputs and outcomes. It could also include teacher training on education for children with disabilities, based at local resource centres. Para-teachers, teaching assistants and community members could assist in bilingual education programmes, as in Belize, and school counsellors/senior women teachers could support girls' development during adolescence. In addition, outreach teachers could provide education to children who need to learn at home, and remedial teachers, especially in early literacy, could ensure that 'slow' learners receive the support they need.

Help schools develop genuinely local curriculum content. Achieving equity in education is made easier to the extent that the curriculum is relevant to the local context and learners' needs, rather than being standardized to a national and often urban- and elite-biased context. Many education systems mandate that a certain percentage of the curriculum in basic

education can be 'local content', but this is easier said than done.

Adapting curricula to local and more inclusive contexts requires the development of competencies and skills. Building teachers' capacities to be co-developers of such curricula is an important part of the process, as is breaking down the barriers that keep local (but sometimes illiterate) resource persons from entering the classroom to share skills and expertise that is relevant to income generation or livelihoods.

In examples of particular attention to the school context, Belize has promoted school uniforms that reflect traditional clothing, as well as developing local content curriculum that includes indigenous arts, crafts, music, dance and language; and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia developed curricula and materials that cover the history, traditions and cultures of its multicultural population.

Promote community involvement as an integral part of child-friendly schools. Genuinely equitable approaches to education can not be achieved without support and assistance from the local community. This is partly a matter of attitude: If parents do not want children with disabilities, or of different castes or ethnicity, or affected by AIDS in the same classroom with their own children – and the school does nothing to combat this exclusionary attitude, then inclusion and equity will never be achieved.

Communities must be encouraged to support the education of all children living in them; they must 'buy into' the concept of a child-seeking school, whatever the real or perceived consequences might be for their own children. Parents and other community members can also more actively support child-friendly practices, becoming involved, for example, in mapping children not in school, enrolment campaigns, and para-professional support in the classroom for excluded groups of learners, or for mother-tongue teaching and learning. The case studies presented in this report describe some of the ways in which child-friendly schools perform these functions. And experiences in child-friendly education should continue to be systematically studied and shared in order to contribute more to equity-based outcomes.

V. Remaining challenges and possible solutions

As classes are getting larger due to the success of Education for All, promoting child-friendly education becomes more difficult in certain aspects. In many countries, teachers are less motivated, the curricula are more complex, and there is greater competition for good-quality higher education. In addition, there is evidence that many children are learning little despite increased investments in education, leading to a response that promotes teacher-centred, rote learning rather than child-friendly learning. Strengthening the role of child-friendly education in promoting more equitable access and more equitable outcomes – for example, through more heterogeneous classes and personalized instruction for all students, not just those who are already successful – is often even more challenging.

The case studies described in this report, however, show that child-friendly education can work – sometimes in only a few schools in a small project, but increasingly as the basis for a national education framework. To ensure even greater success in this process, it is essential for UNICEF to take into account a number of remaining challenges. This section outlines those challenges, along with possible solutions.

A. Moving beyond small, complicated projects

Child-friendly education remains based on 'boutique' projects involving model schools and often limited to regions of a country assigned to or prioritized by UNICEF. These programmes are frequently identified by national governments, other development agencies and international non-governmental organizations as 'UNICEF projects'. UNICEF's initiatives for quality improvement are often carried out alongside similar projects conducted by other donors in other parts of a country, and the ministry of education does not claim ownership or internalize any of them.

Current projects are often well-financed and complicated, with multiple components. They require physical and human resources beyond the reach of most schools in the education system, especially those serving the marginalized. In addition, they have tenuous links to the core planning and budgeting units of the national ministry of education and/or to local education offices. For all these reasons, they are unlikely to be replicated on a larger scale once funding is exhausted.

Possible solutions

Rather than simply calling an effort 'child-friendly education', it is essential that pilot projects evolve towards less complexity by identifying essential components, principles and standards. The key components of a CFE programme could include, for example, a community-based child-seeking mechanism; essential health interventions, both physical and psychosocial; and training for teachers in personalized instruction and gender responsiveness. Such components should be clearly defined to enable understanding by the ministry of education and to encourage government financing. They should also be the basis for, or at least be easily inserted into, national quality education standards, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and local school assessment processes that can be widely replicated.

Early and strong collaboration with other development agencies involved in similar, though often less comprehensive, innovations is also necessary. UNICEF should evaluate where complementarities lie and eventually gain support from other agencies and organizations for a more system-wide, ministry-owned approach.

The early and strong involvement of the ministry of education, including as many relevant units as possible at all levels of administration, is necessary to ensure that ownership of a programme resides with the ministry, not UNICEF – and is seen so by other development agencies. Special attention might need to be paid to the middle and lower levels of administration, especially in decentralizing or decentralized systems, where genuine support for innovation and reform is essential.

High-level advocacy for the inclusion of CFE principles and practices into future national education sector development programmes, frameworks and plans must be sustained and consistent. This is especially important in education systems with frequent turnover (often for political reasons) in high-level positions, both at the national level (ministers) and locally (district education officers).

B. Expanding the focus beyond quantity

UNICEF and/or the ministry of education often appear to be compelled to focus CFE programming on quantity, for example, the number of schools labelled as ‘child-friendly’. This can preclude an enriched understanding of child-friendliness and impede the mainstreaming of the framework throughout the education system. It may also hinder reform of the system itself to genuinely reflect a rights-based, child-friendly approach to education. This narrow view should be expanded to consider such issues (and questions) as:

- Stagnation in development of the CFE framework and principles when conditions change globally, nationally or locally.
- The rapid push towards the use of information and communication technologies in education. (What happens to child-friendly education when students interact more with machines than with teachers?)
- The increase in natural and human-caused disasters. (How can CFE systems be more resilient in the face of disasters and help students more resilient as well?)
- The continuing weakening of indigenous cultures and the death of their languages. (How can child-friendly education play a greater role in the preservation of diversity for a richer and more sustainable future?)
- The dramatic increase in intercultural and inter-religious conflict, even in countries long known for their multicultural traditions. (How can child-friendly education respond to bias and hatred?)
- The focus on short-term, in-service teacher training (often cascade rather than whole-school in method) that ignores the core (and usually conservative and slow-moving) pre-service education institutions and processes.
- The limitation of child-friendly education to primary schools rather than tackling the more difficult task of creating child-friendly secondary schools, which means that graduates of child-friendly primary schools enter secondary schools that are not child-friendly.

- Poor and inconsistent monitoring and evaluation of child-friendly education, either in individual child-friendly schools or as a more general reform, with unclear and insufficient indicators and inadequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Possible solutions

Continuing analysis by UNICEF global and national staff of the changes in context, educational and otherwise, will require rethinking what child-friendly education means and how it might best be adapted over time. This analysis should include evaluating the characteristics of a child-friendly secondary school, compared to those of a primary school, and the piloting of various models in districts with without child-friendly primary schools, as well as districts where they have already been established.

Engagement with existing monitoring and evaluation/quality assurance units in the ministry of education will also be important. This process should focus on support for the development or amendment of national education quality standards, the indicators and instruments used to assess their achievement, and the formats and checklists used for school self-assessment and improvement planning. In addition, serious attempts should be made to engage pre-service education institutions in revising their curricula and retraining their staff towards understanding CFE principles and applying good practices.

C. Promoting coherent policies and plans

Public discourse with ministries of education and development agencies has intensified the promotion of child-friendly education as a framework/paradigm designed to identify and remove all barriers to achievement of good-quality basic education. Inclusive education, in this sense, extends beyond addressing the needs of children with disabilities and others who have typically been excluded and is broadly defined to include both access (inclusion in the classroom) and quality (inclusion in learning).

A growing number of countries are developing national policies, strategies and action plans for inclusive education, with UNICEF support, for example, in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Pakistan and Timor-Leste. As a result, the CFS framework is 'competing' with an increasing number of national inclusive education policies and plans. Promoting 'child-friendly' schools/education systems in parallel to the development of 'inclusive' schools/education systems is potentially duplicative and counterproductive.

Possible solution

UNICEF should adopt a clearer position regarding the relationship between inclusion and child-friendliness in order to inform the content of its programming and to make the argument that child-friendly education is an essential mechanism for achieving more equitable societies. One way to do this would be to emphasize that, in order to achieve greater social and economic equity, education systems must be more genuinely inclusive in regard to both access and quality – and child-friendly education represents an essential mechanism in the achievement of such equitable and inclusive systems.

VI. Conclusion

From its beginnings in Thailand during the mid-1990s, the framework of child-friendly schools has been piloted, adapted and disseminated in dozens of countries around the world – usually by UNICEF but increasingly by other development actors equally interested in improving access to and the quality of education. In some cases, the pilots have remained limited in scope and impact, i.e., ‘UNICEF projects’. In others, however, they have been integrated into the mainstream of education systems, as described in some of the case studies above.

In the process of the further enrichment of the CFS framework, two important developments have occurred. The first is the expansion of the framework’s scope from individual schools to entire systems – the imperative to ensure that the concept of child-friendliness is both internalized in the vision of the ministry of education and reflected in the operations of all relevant sectors of the ministry, including teacher education, curriculum/textbook development and budget processes. The second is the greater understanding that the two principle aspects of child-friendly education – child-centred and child-seeking – are essential to the achievement of an equitable, inclusive education system, one in which all children have an equal opportunity to achieve an education of good quality and thereby reach their full potential. The strengthening of this outcome of child-friendly education should be a major goal of UNICEF in its future programmes.

Annex 1. Examples of good practices in child-friendly education

Annex 1 offers brief descriptions of a variety of CFE practices that demonstrate ways in which the approach can be used to expand access to and improve the quality of education.

Burkina Faso: Accelerating girls' education through child-friendly education⁴⁹

Fada-N'Gourma, in eastern Burkina Faso, is the eighth largest city in the country. Due to a low school enrolment rate, it ranks among the government-targeted areas for education. Gomore, a community-based bilingual school, provides a real picture of challenges the city's schools confront daily. Boniface Idani, head of the Fada-N'Gourma training school for primary teachers, described the situation at Gomore school: "Before 2002, the school was not equipped with separate latrines, nor a canteen, let alone a borehole." The lack of a school canteen made children's school life miserable as most of them were not living close to the school.

In 2003, UNICEF initiated a project to gradually establish girl-friendly school environment, and Fada-N'Gourma was selected as a pilot area for implementation. As part of this project, the Gomore school was supported in building a canteen, separate latrines and boreholes, as well as creating a garden to help children grow their own food. The canteen helped provide opportunities for most of the children to eat nutritious food, thus enhancing their capacity to learn.

Evidence of this project's positive impact is clearly seen through girls' enthusiasm to learn. One year after the project began, girls' net enrolment came closer to boys', at 42.6 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively. A similar trend was observed at other schools in the programme area. The Fada-N'Gourma school board and UNICEF have entered into a fruitful partnership that is playing a vital role in sustaining the initiative – and paving the way towards greater investment of resources in the initiative to improve the quality of schools and learning.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo: Monitoring school performance for children with disabilities in child-friendly schools⁵⁰

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a recent ministerial decree authorized implementation of Psychosocial Help Groups, known as GAPs, in the educational subdivisions of the Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education. Among other duties, these groups are in charge of monitoring school performance, in particular the identification and monitoring of students with learning difficulties. But given the lack of appropriate staff for these groups, very few schools enjoy the benefits of this service. That is why, within the context of implementing the CFS approach, educational authorities in Bandundu Province established a strategy to expand counselling groups throughout the training for schoolmasters, teachers and parents' committee members to combine their efforts to monitor learners' achievements.

The case of Divine, a student who was registered in a school for children who are deaf, located in the city of Kikwit, is quite revealing about GAP monitoring and communication efforts. During the first two years at this school, Divine regularly studied and attended class, achieving a grade of 65 per cent at the

⁴⁹ UNICEF Burkina Faso, 'Education for All: a comprehensive approach', United Nations Children's Fund

⁵⁰ UNICEF Democratic Republic of the Congo, 'Monitoring of Children with Disabilities: A strategy for the improvement of their performance in child-friendly schools in the Bandundu Province', United Nations Children's Fund, 2012.

end of the second school year. At the end of the first quarter of the third year, however, her grade was only 42 per cent – alerting the GAP to find out the reason for this regression. GAP members – the school principal, his deputy, the teacher and two members of the parents' committee – talked with Divine, her teacher and her parents, especially her father. It became clear that her father did not give her any attention and that she could not communicate with him when she needed to. Her father acknowledged that he gave little attention to Divine because he considered her to be handicapped compared to her brothers and sisters.

Following these interviews, the GAP helped her parents, especially her father, understand the causes of low school performance and stressed the need to communicate with their child, who should enjoy the same rights as other children. The group encouraged her father to give Divine special attention to help her overcome her disability. Divine's father recognized his error and accepted the advice of the GAP: "The school encouraged me to learn some signs in order to communicate. At the beginning, I found it annoying but now I can communicate with my daughter, and so I realize that I was losing something every day because I was not approaching her. I changed my attitude towards my daughter by trying to be more attentive to her."

At the same time, her teacher began to pay special attention to Divine and encouraged her to participate actively in lessons. At the end of the year, the results were quite satisfactory (52 per cent). Divine, as any other student, needs the attention, assurance and support that child-friendly schools can provide for academic success.

The Gambia: Donkey carts for school transport to increase equity of access⁵¹

The Gambia's education system has seen a rapid expansion in access to basic education over the past 10 years, but inequities still remain especially in remote rural regions of the country where schools are mandated to be located within a three kilometre radius of communities where children live. But in some remote rural schools, 26 per cent of children do not fall within this radius and therefore are not able to attend school on a regular basis. This is most acute in the Central River Region and Upper River Region, where net enrolment rates are 57 per cent and 44 per cent, respectively.

To address this issue of access for the poor and marginalized children in the remote rural regions of the country, the Government of the Gambia, through the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, developed an innovative strategy of using donkey carts to transport children to and from school. UNICEF is supporting this innovation as part of its equity approach to improving access and quality in basic education, especially for the vulnerable populations. In its 2012–2016 Country Programme of Cooperation with the Government, UNICEF plans to broaden this equity agenda by contributing to implementation of the Programme for Improved Quality Standards in Schools in 200 schools in the remote rural regions of the country. This programme closely mirrors the CFS initiative that UNICEF was already supporting.

UNICEF's support will cover at least 120 schools located in the remotest areas in the Central River and Upper River Regions, and provide at least five female donkeys with carts for each school. Each of the carts will be able to transport up to 12 children, so an average of 60 children per school will be able to ride in the cart to and from school on a daily basis. The beneficiary communities will identify a custodian within the community who will be responsible for operating the facility and the upkeep of the donkey and

⁵¹ UNICEF Gambia, 'Donkey Cart: An innovative strategy for school transport – Reducing inequity in access', United Nations Children's Fund.

the cart. To foster sustainability, this custodian will not be financially remunerated but will have the incentive of using the donkey in his fields during the farming season, or taking ownership of one donkey for every five foals the mother donkey delivers. In this way, the custodian will be able to sustain himself and his family, as well as provide services for children in the community. It is hoped that this arrangement will promote better community ownership of the initiative and thus ensure sustainability.

The impact of this strategy will be increased access and attendance for at least 7,200 children from the under-populated areas in the remote rural regions. Regular attendance and punctuality for these children will translate into improved learning outcomes for them in the long run. The provision of such a facility will also strengthen community participation and involvement in their children's schooling; empower school management committees to do more for the schools; and encourage increased enrolment, especially for the girls. The intervention is also environmentally friendly because it does not rely on fossil fuel.

Guinea-Bissau: Child-friendly education in unstable contexts through 'catch-up' summer camps⁵²

Following the coup d'état of April 2012, Guinea-Bissau had no functional government for six weeks, resulting in suspension of most primary schools, especially the public ones. This prolonged political crisis, on top of the teacher strikes that had already happened earlier during the same academic year, raised concerns that primary school pupils of Guinea-Bissau might face a 'lost year', potentially causing more children to drop out of school before they complete primary education.

In the rapid assessment conducted by the education sector partners in May 2012, it was found that 62 per cent of the schools – or 93 per cent of public schools and 11 per cent of community schools – were closed. In the most-affected schools, pupils had lost up to 61 class days (or 180 class hours), accounting for almost 35 per cent of the academic year.

The Catch-up Summer Camp, conducted in the framework of child-friendly education, involved 200 primary schools nationwide, about 26 per cent of all public schools and 14 per cent of all primary schools. The goal was to support children to catch up on uncovered content due to school closure, so that they could better prepare for the new school year in the schools most affected by the political crisis and teacher strikes.

After a sensitization campaign in June 2012 to encourage children to come back to school, the Catch-up Summer Camp was rolled out during the school vacation, in August 2012, in 200 schools nationwide. The Summer Camp – with each session running for one week – consisted of an audio class in two principal subjects (mathematics and Portuguese) on the uncovered parts of curriculum; cross-cutting subjects and extra-curricular activities to promote children's well-being, such as health, HIV and AIDS prevention, music and sports; and a pilot early childhood development programme in some schools to provide early learning opportunities and promote school readiness.

The achievements of the Summer Camp in relation to equity were substantial:

- More than 20,000 children who were most affected by school closure were able to catch up on the content they would have otherwise missed.

⁵² UNICEF Guinea-Bissau, 'Promoting Child-Friendly Education Following the Political Crisis in Guinea-Bissau: Catch-Up Summer Camp 2012', United Nations Children's Fund.

- Girls' education was promoted, with female teachers – who account for only 22 per cent of all primary teachers in Guinea-Bissau – conducting special sessions during the Summer Camp to talk to girls as role models.
- Children from poor households could also benefit from the Summer Camp because it offered two meals a day, as well as learning materials.
- The Summer Camp was conducted in both rural and urban areas, without favouring one zone over another, so long as they were affected by the political crisis and teacher strikes.
- Ties were expanded and strengthened with non-governmental organizations, parents and communities in need of support.

Madagascar: Child- and eco-friendly schools as a protective environment⁵³

Over the past several years, UNICEF has become a notable partner in school construction in Madagascar and is today playing an integral role in constructing new classrooms towards fulfilling the Government's Education for All objectives. This large construction challenge carries substantial risks for the environment, especially in a country where clay-fired bricks – which rely on hectares of forest for the firing process – are the most commonly used masonry building material.

Since 2007, UNICEF Madagascar has been exploring and successfully employing environmentally friendly materials and methods in its construction programme. Locally available materials and appropriate construction technologies have been developed and incorporated into bioclimatic designs. As holistic school designs that are both child- and eco-friendly, they adapt to and work with rather than against local climate conditions. This is all part of the process of building the capacities of schools and communities in developing local solutions to local problems with a focus on the child.

This school construction must take into account the fact that destructive cyclones are common, disrupting the education of thousands annually. Fully aware of the threat posed by cyclones in Madagascar, UNICEF is working with the Government to reduce disaster risk in schools and to be prepared to deal with the consequences if and as necessary.

For example, within six weeks of Cyclone Ivan, which destroyed almost 2,000 classrooms and disrupted education for nearly 300,000 children in 2008, UNICEF Madagascar designed and installed 237 tarpaulin tents ensuring the return to school of some 12,000 students. This tent was designed as a low-cost, lightweight alternative to the traditional school tent. And because prevention is the best means to reduce the risks of disaster in schools, UNICEF is working to ensure that new classrooms and the refurbishment of existing classrooms are structurally durable and include anti-cyclone measures.

⁵³ United Nations Children's Fund, 'Constructing Child & Eco-Friendly Schools in Madagascar', UNICEF, Antananarivo, Madagascar, 2010.

Annex 2. National roll-out activities in Sierra Leone⁵⁴

The main objective of the national CFS initiative in Sierra Leone is to provide quality basic education that is equitable, and culturally and gender responsive, in a safe, healthy and protective environment – with a focus on promoting children’s participation at the school and community levels. The roll-out of child-friendly schooling in Sierra Leone offers a good example of the long process required to put in place a carefully designed, logical and compelling pilot project, as illustrated by the following timeline.

2008

The CFS concept was introduced in Sierra Leone.

All categories of district education officers were sensitized to the CFS concept through a series of training workshops.

A team of CFS facilitators completed work on school inspection protocols.

2009

At a CFS workshop organized by UNICEF in Dakar, the Sierra Leone team developed a Country Action Plan for scaling up and mainstreaming child-friendly schools.

The Division of Educational Studies at the Institute of Educational and Extra Mural Studies (INSEEM) was selected as the lead implementing partner in rolling out the CFS project in Sierra Leone, and a CFS committee was formed to coordinate the activities.

A rapid assessment of schools in three pilot districts was carried out to ascertain the level of CFS components in schools.

2010

A draft document on CFS standards was developed in collaboration with education stakeholders.

A training session for CFS trainers was held, and a pilot of the CFS standards in primary schools was initiated.

2011

A CFS focal point at the Ministry of Education was identified, and the ministry took the lead in CFS planning and implementation.

2012

March – an inter-ministerial conference on child-friendly schools was held to strengthen collaboration and coordination.

April – a national consultative conference involving a wide range of stakeholders from across the country was organized by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to engage and share plans for the roll-out. Conference participants reviewed the draft national CFS standards. A national research and planning team, composed of representatives from the University of Sierra Leone (INSEEM at Fourah Bay College, and the Institute of Public Administration and Management) and Njala University, was set up to provide technical support for conducting a CFS baseline assessment in the pilot districts of Tonkolili and Pujehun.

June – the CFS baseline assessment was conducted in June to analyse realities on the ground and to inform development of the national minimum CFS standards.

July – a second consultative conference was organized to review the draft baseline assessment report, and to identify and validate the national minimum standards.

October – Sierra Leone commenced the roll-out of the CFS initiative in 40 pilot schools in two pilot districts: Tonkolili in the north and Pujehun in the south.

⁵⁴ UNICEF Sierra Leone, ‘National Roll-out Activities So Far and Plans for 2012’ (internal document), United Nations Children’s Fund.

Abbreviations

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| AusAID | Australian Government Overseas Aid Program |
| CFA | Child Friendly Approach (Sri Lanka) |
| CFE | child-friendly education |
| CFS | child-friendly schools |
| ECCD/E | early childhood care and development/education |
| GAP | Psychosocial Help Group (the Gambia) |
| IBE | intercultural bilingual education (Belize) |
| INSEEM | Institute of Educational and Extra Mural Studies |
| MDG | Millennium Development Goal |
| SoQ | Schools of Quality (Lao People's Democratic Republic) |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| WASH | water, sanitation and hygiene |