

A social and behaviour change agenda for inclusion and equity in education



About this brief

This brief highlights findings from the 2015 UNICEF Global C4D in Education review and other research that puts forward a strong case for the application of Communication for Development (C4D) principles and processes to meet the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of inclusive, equitable and quality education for all. In doing so, the brief identifies policy and programming implications for education and offers recommendations to inform policy makers and programmers alike in support of the 2030 development agenda targets.

What is Communication for Development?

Communication for Development (C4D) is an approach that uses research to identify existing barriers and opportunities in knowledge, attitudes, perceptions and socio-cultural practices and norms. Using this evidence, C4D facilitates interpersonal dialogue and different media to stimulate positive individual, family, community, institutional, policy and political change.

Inclusion and equity in education

According to the World Education Forum Declaration, *equity* in education refers to fairness in education policy, provision and outcome. Three factors affecting equity have been identified by the Global Evidence Review of C4D in Support of Inclusive and Quality Education: (a) *Fixed factors*, such as age, gender, disability and first language; (b) *Circumstantial factors*, such as family income, relative community affluence, geographic location, religion, level of parental education, past academic performance, distance from school and school facilities; and (c) *Behavioural and social factors*, such as perceived intellectual ability, discrimination, self-esteem, social norms and perceptions of the relevance of education. This third set of factors, until now, have received little attention in the education sector programming and form the specific focus of this brief.

Inclusion in education is about meeting the needs of all learners, with a specific focus on those who are “vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion” (Waisbord, 2015).¹ In Malawi, for example, only 34 per cent of girls pass from primary to secondary

school. Girls in particular face many barriers to education, including: gender-based violence, particularly on the way to and from school and in school; lack of menstrual hygiene management in schools, which affects attendance; a lack of female role models, particularly in teaching and management roles in the school system; and educational content which can reinforce negative gender norms such as girls’ exclusion. The concept of ‘silent exclusion’ is also explored, which refers to children who are enrolled but who learn little and remain at risk of dropout.

Background

Global snapshot

Globally, since the Education for All and Millennium Development Goals (MDG) were introduced in 2000, significant achievements have been made in increasing access to education for children. Despite this, several gaps remain. The risk of dropout at primary school, for example, remains extremely high. In 32 countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, at least 20 per cent of children who are enrolled in primary school are unlikely to complete this cycle of education.² Additionally, only 60 per cent of countries had achieved gender parity by 2011, largely at the expense of girls. Inequality persists, particularly at secondary level where glaring socio-economic and gender differences persist.

As many as 250 million children globally are unable to read, write or count well, even after having spent at least four years in school,³ a fact which has shifted international focus from access alone to access, quality and learning outcomes. The new 2030 development agenda highlights the importance of perceived relevance of education, both overall and for specific marginalized groups, such as pastoralists and children of indigenous groups.

Regional snapshot

In sub-Saharan Africa, many children experience many barriers to education. In Kenya, for example, girls from nomadic communities often experience multiple deprivations due to their gender, livelihoods and the nomadic nature of

1 In addition, The Salamanca Statement, adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994) states that “schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and This includes working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups.

2 Education for All Global Monitoring Report, UNESCO, 2015.

3 Education for All Global Monitoring Report, UNESCO, 2012.

their communities (Outhred, 2013). In 2012, in the eastern and southern Africa region, 11.5 million children of primary school age and 8.5 million children of secondary school age were out of school⁴. Access to early childhood education (ECE), critical for preparation for primary school, is low in many countries in the region; for example, in Malawi, only 38 per cent of children were enrolled in ECE. Primary school completion rates were also low in a number of countries: 21.9 per cent in Mozambique, 24 per cent in Angola, 27 per cent in Uganda and 33.3 per cent in Madagascar.

A number of barriers to quality and inclusive education have been identified across the region. On the supply side, barriers include lack of qualified teachers, low education budgets, insufficient text books, poor educational policies and inadequate facilities in school. On the demand side, barriers include negative parental attitudes towards education, poor community understanding of the importance of education, violence against girls in school, early pregnancies and early marriage.

Sustainable Development Goal 4: Inclusive and equitable quality education

SDG 4, in the new 2030 development agenda, aims for “inclusive and equitable quality education” and to “promote life-long learning opportunities for all”. According to the World Education Forum, “No education target should be considered met unless met by all” and this requires “making the necessary changes in education policies and focusing our efforts on the most disadvantaged... to ensure that no one is left behind”.⁵

The emphasis on inclusion, equity and quality in education is inspired by and based on human rights as well as shared responsibility and accountability for the provision of education, including for the most marginalized and vulnerable. The goal challenges us to apply innovative approaches to address these gaps in education.

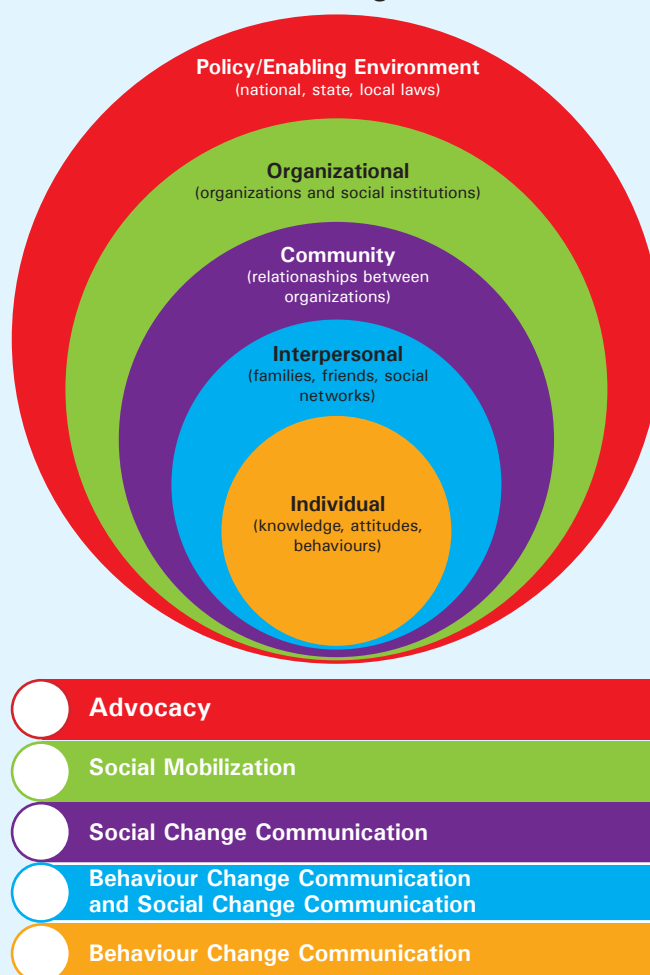
In terms of innovation and identifying additional ways to strengthen existing efforts, C4D promises a new, exciting window of opportunity for bringing more attention and support to advancing the agenda of inclusion, equity and quality in education. The world’s leading development organizations, including the World Bank (see

World Development Report, 2015), stress that behavioural and social determinants are critical to the success of development programmes.⁶ Given the magnitude of the Education For All (EFA) 2030 agenda, investment in behaviour and social change communication should be used as a central strategy. So far, its potential has been untapped. Yet it can significantly contribute to addressing education priorities and help achieve results for children, especially the most marginalized.

Conceptual approach

The Socio-ecological Model (SEM) provides a conceptual framework for C4D in education. It shows how problems in learning for children are the results of many individual and social factors. Therefore, these factors must be addressed at multiple levels as depicted below:

The Socio-Ecological Model



⁴ Education for All Global Monitoring Report, UNESCO, 2015.

⁵ World Education Forum 2015 Declaration, Paragraph 7.

⁶ World Bank. (2015) *World Development Report: Mind, Society and Behavior*. Washington: World Bank.

The SEM can increase understanding about reasons behind problems as well as suggest possible approaches to address them. The multiple levels identified by the framework are:

1. **Individual/Interpersonal:** Knowledge, attitudes and practices among children, adolescents and families that affect educational decisions and actions;
2. **Community:** Social beliefs and norms, gender norms, social and economic conditions and resources, knowledge and attitudes about education among community members, sense of empowerment and collective efficacy that affect educational choices, decisions and practices;
3. **Institutional:** Institutional conditions of the education system that affect inclusion and quality, including educational media. These conditions include school policy guidelines for inclusive and quality education, access to education services (such as cost), geographical proximity to school, physical infrastructure of local school districts, resource management, teacher capacity and quality, curricula, and safety;⁷
4. **Policy/system:** Policies and governance elements of educational systems that facilitate or discourage inclusive and quality education, as well as positive decisions about education amongst individuals and families.

These are described more fully in the section below along with examples from the review.

What works: a summary of the evidence

Directly influencing children's attitudes, self-efficacy and learning outcomes:

Edutainment mass media programmes and extra-curricular schools, clubs or outreach programmes have enhanced a range of children's skills and competencies, as well as helped improve parental knowledge of positive child-rearing practices.

Examples include UNICEF's landmark Meena communication initiative in South Asia, the Sara communication initiative developed in Africa and culturally-specific series, such as The Magic Journey, an animation series in Kyrgyzstan. They have had an impact on knowledge, awareness, attitudes and practices across a wide range of issues.

The well-known children's television programme Sesame Street, including its adaptation in the low-income countries of Bangladesh, Indonesia and Tanzania, has demonstrated a significant effect on early cognitive skills, school retention rates and a range of non-academic benefits (Mares, 2013, cited in Waisbord & Ahmed, 2015).

Improving parents' self-efficacy and skills: C4D uses many processes, platforms, channels and materials to enhance capacity of parents and primary caregivers to support the learning, development and overall well-being of their children. Additionally, C4D openly celebrates positive parenting by both fathers and mothers and improves parents' self-efficacy. In the Maldives, for example, a comprehensive national initiative on parenting and early childhood achieved important gains in awareness and parenting skills (Acharya et al., 2004, cited in Waisbord & Ahmed, 2015).

Influencing family and community awareness, attitudes and social norms that impact education:

Evidence demonstrates that C4D interventions have helped to stimulate interpersonal conversation amongst social peer networks, facilitated development of shared values and influenced acceptance of and demand for education. Moreover, C4D has fostered positive attitudes and norms in support of marginalized children's education and increased awareness of the education problems, challenges and options that impact on family decisions about schooling their children.

In Zanzibar, for example, a programme focusing on children with disabilities successfully raised awareness about their needs and educational opportunities, changing attitudes among families and teachers and increasing enrolment and retention of children with disabilities (McConkey and Mariga, 2011, cited in Waisbord & Ahmed, 2015). Similarly, the Sada initiative in Afghanistan used solar-powered digital audio players to promote community discussions about girls' education. Family members who participated demonstrated significantly more positive attitudes and decisions about girls' education (Sengupta et al., 2007, cited in Waisbord & Ahmed, 2015).

Increasing community engagement and social support for education:

C4D interventions involving community engagement and mobilization have played an important role in helping local communities to build a sense of solidarity and ownership. Engagement with communities has helped community members to identify appropriate ways

⁷ From Waisbord, S., & Ahmed, M. (2015). Communication for development (C4D) in support of inclusive and quality education: Evidence review and recommendations.

to address challenges in educating their children. These challenges include teen pregnancies, violence in schools, lack of good nutrition, the mother tongue being different from that of the official language taught in schools, menstruation management for girls, and the specific difficulties faced by pastoralist communities. These positive results have helped create an environment more adaptable to children's needs.

In Tanzania, for example, a three-year community participation project is credited for making progress towards inclusive and quality education (Polat, 2011, cited in Waisbord & Ahmed, 2015). Similarly in Malawi, by engaging local communities in a range of activities, a Participatory Action for School Improvement (PASI) project demonstrated positive transformation in school performance (Mayzel, 2015, cited in Waisbord & Ahmed, 2015).

Facilitating definition of needs, participatory decision-making and school governance: Through facilitating community participation in school management, C4D has helped build solidarity and ownership, as well as bolstered participatory decision-making in schools. This is a fundamental requirement for school-based management and is in line with UNICEF's Child Friendly Schools. C4D has also supported participatory action research to help communities identify behavioural and social barriers and opportunities. C4D approaches have facilitated safe spaces where marginalized groups can define their educational needs and contribute ideas regarding education content and delivery.

In Malawi, for example, encouraging community participation in decision-making around budget, curricula and other matters has positively affected student learning (Ginsberg et al., 2014, cited in Waisbord & Ahmed, 2015). Similarly, in Mexico facilitating community participation in school management led to a positive impact on educational opportunities for socially excluded students (Getler et al., 2007, cited in Waisbord & Ahmed, 2015).

Facilitating participatory monitoring, social accountability and advocacy in order to engage with education policies: C4D has a critical role to play in supporting the establishment of social accountability systems in education. This has occurred in community engagement and also through media and use of mobile technologies and information and communication technologies (ICTs). Specific contributions of C4D include

raising parent and community expectations regarding quality of education and translating education policies into user-friendly materials. Additionally, C4D has supported participatory monitoring which has included: joint assessments and crowd-sourcing of real time data; stimulation of community dialogue and public debate on reports on the status of schooling; and promotion of well-performing schools and districts to encourage healthy competition amongst schools and local education authorities. In turn, this has led to community members advocating for identified gaps in their children's education to be addressed at local and national levels, especially for marginalized children.

In Malawi, for example, a community scorecard programme facilitated the participation of young people and their self-definition as citizens rather than clients. This engagement in monitoring and advocacy encouraged responsiveness from the educational system (Porter, 2014, cited in Waisbord & Ahmed, 2015). Similarly, Malawi's Participatory Action for School Improvement (PASI) project promoted accountability and facilitated increased understanding and demands from the community. This ultimately led to improvements in infrastructure, uniforms, teacher development and academic performance (Kendall et al., 2015, cited in Waisbord & Ahmed, 2015).

Influencing teacher attitudes and capacities for effective and child-centred approaches:

At an institutional level, C4D interventions have created opportunities for teachers to enhance communication, interpersonal skills and methodologies. These interventions have focused on effective teaching methods (including psychosocial and motivational learning), appreciative enquiry, positive reinforcement and identity. Moreover, C4D efforts have helped to change teacher attitudes towards children from marginalized groups, helping them to reduce the stigma and discrimination suffered by these groups. This includes a willingness to provide a space in which the concerns of children and families can be heard and addressed accordingly.

In Zambia, for example, teachers who conducted participatory research for the first time with orphans and vulnerable children in low-income communities were more receptive to issues they raised on school improvement and this led to development of a school code (Takayanagi, 2010, cited in Waisbord & Ahmed, 2015).

Recommendations for action

1. Budgeted C4D strategies, targeting all levels of society, should be incorporated in education sector policies and plans, with emphasis on marginalized groups at each tier of the education system (ECD, primary and secondary), and in both formal and non-formal settings, as well as in development and humanitarian contexts.
2. Behavioural and socio-cultural research should be conducted on community beliefs, attitudes, values and perceptions about education and social norms that contribute to education inequity.
3. Innovative and practical ways of engaging with communities should be adopted to overcome common problems of elite bias, tokenism and apathy. Furthermore, more ways to represent the voices of community members and students and advocate on their behalf in policy-making at local and national levels need to be explored.
4. Real time data collection, multi-stakeholder dialogue, and mass media platforms should be facilitated to promote local ownership and collective responsibility of schools. The focus should be on holding education personnel and authorities accountable. Monitoring and evaluation is also important to showcase, promote and reward exceptional teachers, model schools and exemplary local governments.
5. Innovative C4D platforms and interventions should be used to provide learners with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes necessary to improve education quality and learning outcomes. Examples of C4D platforms and interventions include educational media, mobile technologies, and interactive use of the Internet as well as other non-technological innovations.
6. A learning package should be rolled out to equip national and sub-national education managers with basic knowledge on social and behaviour change principles and tools.
7. Partnerships should be made with local and international research institutions to generate evidence on the impact of C4D in education interventions. Also, a set of intermediate indicators for C4D in education should be developed and promoted into administrative data collection by the education system and by those conducting national household surveys in order to feed into education reform.

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