

INEE Pocket Guide to Supporting Learners with Disabilities



INEE

The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) is an open global network of representatives from non-governmental organisations, UN agencies, donor agencies, governments, and academic institutions, working together to ensure the right to quality and safe education for all people affected by crisis. To learn more please visit www.ineesite.org.

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Cover photograph: Pupils in a lesson at Kodra School in Jebel Awlia IDP camp, Khartoum, Sudan (Felicia Webb)

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1. Introduction

1.1. Why was this guide produced?

All children and young people have the right to good quality education.* In all regions of the world, children and young people with disabilities are starting to be included in schools and other non-formal places of learning. They are participating actively and successfully in learning and they are achieving.

However, many learners with disabilities are still denied their rights to quality education, and do not get the support they need to learn and develop. This includes the thousands of children and young people who are injured or affected as a result of a disaster such as an earthquake, cyclone or conflict.

In an emergency situation, teachers or facilitators working with children or young people may feel particularly worried about including those with disabilities in their classes – especially if they did not do this before the emergency. They might feel they face more challenges when key facilities have been destroyed, or when the emergency has impacted on colleagues that they relied on to help them be more inclusive.

However, sometimes emergency education initiatives bring new training, resources and other means of support to teachers and their schools. This offers a chance to change the physical environment and update the practice of teachers or other trained adults working with children or young people in emergency education – encouraging them to be more inclusive in a range of ways.

This guide offers practical ideas for including children and young people with disabilities in education before, during or after

* This Pocket Guide complements the *INEE Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery*, which articulate this right to education for those affected by crisis. Inclusion is a theme throughout the *INEE Minimum Standards*. They state explicitly that no individual should be denied access to and full participation in education and learning opportunities because of discrimination based on disability. For more information see: www.ineesite.org/standards.

a crisis. Although we use the words 'school' and 'classroom', the advice can be applied to other child-friendly spaces or non-formal learning centres.

The guide will help strengthen the efforts of anyone working with teachers or facilitators in a crisis context, whether as part of the formal education system or a non-governmental programme.

If you are a teacher trainer or someone involved in designing teacher training programmes, you should find it easy to adapt and incorporate the advice into your existing teacher training approaches or materials.

Local or national education managers, or project/programme managers for humanitarian agencies or NGOs, should find the guide contains useful ideas that can be incorporated into teacher capacity-building projects.

If you are a teacher or facilitator wanting to improve your practice, you will also hopefully find the advice useful.

Please note, however, that this guide should not be given to new or less confident teachers with the expectation that they will be able to implement the suggested changes alone. Many teachers working in emergency or crisis settings require substantial training and mentoring support to work effectively. The advice in this guide should ideally be used as a component of that support.

Uses for the advice provided in this guide include:

Users	Uses for the advice
Teacher trainers	Integrate the advice into training activities and when providing motivation and professional development to trained teachers
School inspectors / supervisors	Give teachers suggestions and support them in improving their practice; get ideas for monitoring classes
NGO advisers / managers	Pass on the advice when recruiting and supporting new staff, local teaching assistants or safe space facilitators
Teachers or facilitators who are able to do self-study	Refer to different sections of the guide to help find ideas for working together to include all learners, particularly those with disabilities.

This guide is not a comprehensive manual on inclusive education for learners with disabilities. Other documents already offer such guidance (see the ‘useful resources’ section). This guide is intended to be a short and accessible introduction to some of the ways in which teachers working in crisis or emergency settings can include and support children and young people with disabilities.

The guide outlines some of the common challenges that children and young people with disabilities might face with education in or after an emergency. It also discusses some constraints or concerns that teachers might have with supporting their learning in these circumstances. The guide offers practical ways in which teachers can tackle these issues and welcome learners with disabilities into their classes.

Inclusive education and quality education

This guide focuses on including children and young people with disabilities in education, in or after emergency or crisis situations. Children and young people with disabilities are often those with physical, sensory and intellectual impairments. However, the changes we make to education to include these learners are often the same, or very similar to, the changes we need to make to ensure that everyone receives a better quality education.

It is often not possible to draw definite lines between the work we do to improve education for children and young people with and without disabilities. For this reason, we encourage readers to think about all children and young people when considering the suggestions offered here.

Readers should also think about learners with behavioural and emotional problems* and those experiencing the effects of stress caused by the emergency; those experiencing temporary or ongoing learning difficulties; and those affected by mental illness. They may not be considered 'learners with disabilities' but they may face many of the same challenges.

This guide accompanies the *INEE Pocket Guide to Inclusive Education*, which provides more general information about inclusive education in practice. You can find a copy on INEE's website: www.ineesite.org/inclusion.

* See Appendix for an explanation of how we are using the terms 'disability', 'learning difficulty' and 'behavioural problem' in this guide.

1.2. How to use this guide

The guide looks first at inclusive principles that trainers and the teachers or facilitators they work with need to be aware of (**Chapter 2**).

The guide then looks at: how to help children and young people with disabilities get to and from school (**Chapter 3**); how to recognise when children and young people need more support to take part in learning (**Chapter 4**); and how to organise the school day and arrange a teaching and learning space so that learners with disabilities, and those who are experiencing difficulties with learning, can participate as much as possible (**Chapters 5 and 6**).

The guide moves on to provide advice on planning and delivering teaching and learning activities, and assessing learning (**Chapters 7 and 8**).

The advice provided in the guide is arranged as follows:

Common arguments against the inclusion of children and young people with disabilities are highlighted in a box at the start of each chapter (3-8). These are the kind of concerns that teachers might express to trainers. Each chapter offers ideas for addressing these concerns.

Barriers to inclusion are discussed, particularly when the crisis context may have made it more difficult for children or young people with disabilities to access education. The guide suggests some common barriers, but trainers should encourage teachers to identify and discuss the **actual** barriers within their own unique situation.

Solutions to try are then suggested in each chapter. Advice is given for the **general messages** that should be conveyed to teachers. These are key arguments that can help motivate teachers to think positively about solving barriers to inclusion. Further

suggestions are then given for **specific changes** that teachers can make, in consultation with other stakeholders and after adapting the ideas to their own context.

Examples are given to show how some of these solutions have been used in emergency or crisis settings.

Advice for all teachers and for more confident teachers

In a crisis, education may be delivered by volunteers, newly trained teachers, or more experienced teachers who are working in unfamiliar conditions. Some ideas in this guide may be more appropriate for experienced or senior teachers. Other ideas are simple enough to be tried by a wider range of teachers, assistants or volunteers, with support from trainers or supervisors. Some of the strategies offer a great starting point for all teachers. More experienced or confident teachers can then be encouraged to try the more complex or demanding suggestions.

Guide to symbols used in the text



The advice should be useful for all teachers or facilitators, as part of a continuing programme of training or mentoring.



The advice may be suitable only for more confident or experienced teachers.

Taking steps to better practice

Not every solution suggested in this guide will be relevant or possible in every situation. The guide offers ideas to help teachers get started and to build their confidence. Even if just one idea is implemented initially, teachers will still be moving towards more inclusive education practices.

Trainers and supervisors can:

1. Talk to teachers (as a group or individually) about their concerns regarding including children and young people with disabilities in their classes.
2. Reassure them that they are not expected to solve all problems at once.
3. With teachers, decide in which order they want to tackle the five key areas listed below (we have used colours to help you find the relevant chapters more quickly).

Find out which of these areas cause them most or least concern:

-  helping children and young people with disabilities get to and from school or another learning space
-  recognising when children and young people need more support to take part in learning
-  managing the school day so that it is more inclusive
-  organising teaching and learning spaces so that they are inclusive of all learners
-  planning and delivering teaching and learning activities that are suitable for children and young people with and without disabilities
-  monitoring and assessing learners' progress and achievements in an inclusive way.

4. Present the content from the chapter that matches teachers' or facilitators' top priority area (or teachers can read the chapter content themselves if they prefer).
5. Use the poster that supports this guide to help you present the key messages.

6. Ask teachers or facilitators to think about or discuss which **one** solution they want to try. Encourage them to try one of the more basic solutions to start with (labelled for 'all teachers').
7. Discuss how they think they might adapt this solution in their own class – or encourage them to discuss with each other.
8. Display the poster in the school or learning space, so that teachers or facilitators are reminded to keep trying their chosen solution.
9. If possible, have a follow-up discussion with or between teachers or facilitators after a few days, weeks or months to see if they tried the solution. What were the results? Celebrate achievements, discuss improvements.
10. If teachers are ready, repeat the above steps with other solutions, or a new chapter from the guide.
11. Whenever training or improved approaches are being introduced, make sure that school principals or supervisors agree that teachers can have extra time to think about, plan and practise their ideas. In some settings, for instance, the principal might teach some lessons while teachers plan and prepare, or the school timetable might be divided differently. Any teachers who are trying new things should get plenty of praise and recognition.



Photo: Mats Lignell/Save the Children

Student at a school for hearing impaired children in Kabul, Afghanistan

2. Basic principles

Working towards making education more inclusive helps us fulfil everyone's rights to education and build a more equal future for everyone. Inclusive education is not just about education for people with disabilities, as the following definition illustrates.

Defining inclusive education

All children have a right to education. Inclusive education ensures the presence, participation and achievement of all students in schooling. (This may be in formal schools, or in non-formal places of learning.) It often involves restructuring the culture, policies and practices in schools so that they can respond to the diversity of students in their locality.

Inclusive education:

- acknowledges that all children can learn
- acknowledges and respects differences in children: age, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, HIV and TB status, etc.
- enables education structures, systems and methodologies to meet the needs of all children
- is part of a wider strategy to promote an inclusive society
- is a dynamic process that is constantly evolving.

Inclusive education is essential to achieving quality education for all.

Source: Save the Children UK (2008) *Making Schools Inclusive: How change can happen*. Save the Children's experience

Anyone supervising, training or supporting teachers or facilitators in crisis situations should promote the following ideas:

- Making progress on inclusive education is not too difficult in a crisis situation. Some of the biggest changes needed for inclusive education involve how people behave towards one another, rather than equipment or money.
- Teachers should accept all children and young people into their class and be welcoming towards everyone.
- Thinking about how to make it easier for all children and young people to take part in learning and interact with others is a key part of being a good teacher.
- Teachers should be encouraged to find out who is excluded from education. This means knowing not just who is or is not **attending** school, but also who is or is not **participating** and **achieving** while at school.
- Building teachers' confidence in their own capacity to tackle barriers to inclusion is vital. It is better to take small steps now than to postpone thinking about inclusion until there are more resources available.
- It is important to encourage flexibility and self-reliance among teachers.
- The achievements and progress of all learners should be celebrated.
- The challenges of exclusion cannot be tackled by individual people working in isolation. Teachers should be encouraged to share experiences and ask each other for advice. They should be supported to consult and share with other teachers, parents, learners, community members, and education officials.

Teachers or facilitators can be encouraged to ask these questions to help them become more inclusive:

- Which children, young people or adults are currently not taking part in learning?
- What are the barriers to their participation and achievement in learning?
- What can I do first to help take away some of these barriers?
- And then, what can I do next?
- How can I celebrate my successes and the progress of all learners in my class?
- How can I share my experience with colleagues and others in my community?



Photo: Menaca Calyaneratne/Save the Children

A story-telling activity with displaced children in a temporary school in Vavuniya, Sri Lanka

3. Helping children and young people with disabilities get to and from school

Common arguments we need to challenge

- “Children with disabilities cannot physically get to school.”
- “It is not safe for children with disabilities to travel to school.”
- “We can protect our children better if we keep them at home.”

3.1. Barriers to inclusion

In emergency situations, travelling any distance may become difficult for everyone. For children, young people and adults with certain disabilities the problems of travelling – even short distances – may be greater. These challenges may have existed before the emergency but have now become worse.

Distance

- A lack of schools, due to closures or damage during the emergency, may leave many children and young people travelling long distances and facing more obstacles or difficulties on their journey. This affects everyone – especially when there are poor roads or weather conditions – but will be particularly difficult for those who face mobility challenges or who cannot travel alone.

Rough surfaces and dangerous roads

- Roads and pathways may be pot-holed, stony, sandy, or slippery, lined by deep ditches etc., making them impassable for people who use crutches, wheelchairs or other mobility aids, and unsafe for people who have vision difficulties.
- Key routes may become rougher, partially blocked or too dangerous to use, due to landmines, landslides, rockfalls, floods and so on.

Increased danger on school sites

- During emergencies, particularly after natural disasters, the school environment is often full of hazards such as debris, unstable structures and dangerous material (such as glass, cement blocks, bricks, fallen trees, broken cars, rock falls and so on).

Personal safety

- Ongoing violence may put travellers at risk of physical or sexual abuse.
- Children and young people with disabilities, especially girls, may feel much less safe. Their parents or guardians may believe it is safer to keep them at home or in the area where the family is based.

Unavailable or inaccessible means of transport

- Transport systems (buses, taxis, etc.) may not exist, especially in remote rural areas.
- Where there do exist, they are often disrupted, cease to work, or become unaffordable during times of crisis.
- Vehicles are often inaccessible to passengers using wheelchairs, crutches or other mobility aids, and may be overcrowded so that proper seating is not possible.
- Local or traditional means of transport, such as bicycle, cart, car or donkey may be needed for other tasks as communities rebuild, reconstruct or relocate their homes. Such assets may also have been lost, damaged or destroyed, presenting a challenge for people with disabilities who had previously relied on them.

Displacement

- An emergency may mean that a community moves to another place with a new school or learning space, or the community's school may be temporarily or permanently moved to a safer area. For children and young people who experience mobility, vision, hearing or other difficulties, an unfamiliar route to school and around a new school site may cause extra difficulties. Those with intellectual impairments may not know how to deal with any strangers they encounter. Parents may keep their children at home, worried that they will get lost.

The impact of having a new disability

- In many natural disasters or conflicts large numbers of children and young people suddenly become disabled as a result of the emergency. Earthquakes in particular lead to massive increases in the numbers of children with short or long-term disabilities. These children and their families must face the challenges outlined above, without having had time to develop strategies to manage their new disability. This, combined with the immediate effects of injury, means that most newly disabled children and young people remain at home when their peers return to school.

3.2. Solutions

3.2.1. Key messages to convey to teachers

“Addressing mobility and transport challenges is important for inclusive education”

Mobility, transport and safety problems often affect the whole community during and after an emergency. Yet if a community is to rebuild itself, people must be able to move around – to buy/grow food, find work, or attend school. This means finding innovative transport and mobility solutions for everyone.

All members of society need to play their part in rebuilding their community and country. ‘Protecting’ certain community members (children with disabilities, girls, etc.) by keeping them at home could deprive society of the potential future benefits these individuals can bring, if they are educated and enabled to be productive.

“We all need to get involved in mobility and transport issues because we are all affected in some way.”

“Helping people with disabilities to move around and get to school can help everyone.”

Explain to teachers that by thinking about, and taking small steps to address transport/mobility problems for children and young people with disabilities, they contribute to the development of solutions that can help the whole community.

All teachers and parents can be encouraged to take an interest in the safety of **all** children on their journeys to and from school. The following activity can help teachers (or parents) engage with this issue:

- Ask teachers to list the common problems they think the local community is facing with transport and mobility.
- Ask them to think about which members of the community are more or less affected by each problem.
- Encourage them to think as broadly as possible about the community – men, women, elderly people, young children, those living in extreme poverty, people with disabilities, people who run businesses, local decision-makers/leaders, etc.
- Teachers should begin to see that different groups of people face similar transport and mobility problems. If they do not notice this, help them to look for commonalities. For instance, the risk of sexual abuse makes a girl with disabilities too scared to walk to school. But it may also deter a female trader from taking her goods to market to earn an income for her family.

Ask teachers to think about the ways in which they could help children and young people with disabilities to overcome any transport and mobility problems they are facing. Ask them to think of ways in which they could do these things throughout the school year, so that learners coming back to school later than others can also be supported.

Alternatively, if teachers are not yet able to think of solutions, offer a few possible ideas for discussion and adaptation (see below).

All
teachers

3.2.2. Ideas for solutions that teachers can discuss and adapt

Making the school site safer

Teachers, particularly head teachers, need to work with local authorities, NGOs and the community to make arrangements as soon as possible for clearance and cleaning in and around the school site. This helps ensure safer routes and access for all children and minimises dangers. Clearance should involve cordoning off dangerous areas.

While parents and others in the community often make attempts at demolition and land clearance, **knowledge and expertise from specialists in this area** (sometimes organised by UN or government bodies), **should be sought wherever possible**.

All
teachers

Buddy and escort systems

When a community is using a new school or learning space, or their school has moved to a new site, groups of learners can be supervised and supported to practise the journey to and from school, and to explore the new school site. Extra sessions can be added to help children and young people with disabilities to practise the journey to school. They can practise with adults or older children without disabilities.

Children or young people with disabilities should be helped to make the journey to and from school for as long as they, or their families,

feel they need it. Teachers or school principals can discuss and arrange this with parents, community authorities and older children or young people.

If parents feel that safety concerns cannot be fully addressed simply by students helping each other on the trip to school, then teachers could work with parents and other adults to develop **an escort system**. For instance, parents or other adult relatives can take it in turns to escort children with disabilities, and any other children who need support, to school.

More
confident
teachers

After escort systems have been set up and are operating, the practice of pairing children or young people with and without disabilities to help each other get to school and stay there could be tried. This is often known as **a buddy system** (see Section 5.2.2. for more details).

Teachers or facilitators can encourage learners without disabilities to help their peers with disabilities in the following ways:

- push wheelchairs or other wheeled mobility devices
- carry bags/books, fetch drinking water, help with getting to the toilet, etc.
- guide blind or visually impaired learners across rough ground or along crowded streets
- walk with friends who are finding it difficult to learn the new route to school
- where buses are used to travel to school, help learners with disabilities to get onto, find a seat, and get off the bus.

Stress to teachers and supervisors that buddy and escort systems are worth trying, although they can require detailed planning and supervision. Once established they can be expanded to help other learners and community members. They can also help the teachers themselves, by increasing the number of people looking out for learners who might need assistance. Expansion ideas include:

- pairing or grouping older with younger pupils
- pairing or grouping girls to reduce the risk of being abused or attacked
- arranging for female teachers to travel together or be escorted by trusted male colleagues or relatives.

More confident teachers

Transport and movement within the community

Teachers should be reassured that they are not expected to tackle large-scale transport problems in their community. However, in relation to learners in their class, teachers may be able to take some simple steps that do not require much time or prior knowledge of disability.

Raise community awareness

- If a teacher takes a bus to work each day, talk to the driver and/or fellow passengers. Encourage them to offer assistance to any children with disabilities travelling on a bus in the future. This requires minimal input from the teacher, but could help, gradually, to change other people's views so that they become more supportive of children and others with disabilities in their community.
- Ask a parent-teacher association (PTA) or school management committee meeting to discuss and find a solution.
- Form or mobilise women's groups to help and protect each other and children when travelling to school, the market, clinic, etc.

Map the problems

- More confident teachers could do a mapping activity with children (those with and without disabilities). They could do it with parents or other community members as well, if they feel able to.
- The map could show where the main transport and movement problems are in the community, e.g.,
 - where buses are or are not available, affordable or accessible
 - where roads/paths are not useable or too rough/dangerous
 - where children and adults, male and female, feel they are not safe.

- Such an activity could be used as part of a regular lesson plan (maths, geography, civic/social studies, art, etc.) so it does not have to be too much extra work for the teacher.
- If paper and pens are not available, learners can still make a map on the floor using locally available materials (sticks, string, leaves, stones, bottle tops, etc.).

Teachers or facilitators could use this map:

- to help them advise learners with disabilities and buddy pairs or groups (and even fellow teachers) on the safest and smoothest routes to school
- to inform parents and other adults about the transport/movement barriers that learners are facing, to encourage them to join in an escort system
- to show to local leaders, government agencies and NGOs, to encourage them to take action on infrastructure, road safety and personal safety on routes to and from the school.

More
confident
teachers

Mobility aids

Teachers may feel that they do not have the knowledge to deal with the mobility needs of learners with disabilities. However, even without such knowledge, as a first step they can talk to the children or young people and their parents. They can try to find out whether particular learners need – and have access to – mobility aids. Children, young people and parents may have their own ideas for mobility solutions that do not need much input from teachers – just the encouragement to act on their ideas.

Some other steps that teachers could take include:

- Ask colleagues, friends, local leaders, etc., if they know about any disability organisations or adults with disabilities in the area who could advise on and support the mobility needs of learners with disabilities. Teachers may then feel that they are not trying to tackle these challenges alone.

- If an opportunity arises, mention to a local NGO or government worker that a particular child has mobility difficulties. The official may be able to find funding or support for mobility advice and aids that parents were not aware of.
- Ask a local craftsman to join in a discussion with learners and parents to see if there are any affordable options for making mobility and access equipment. In some emergencies there may be skilled adults who cannot currently work, who might be willing to make equipment for people with disabilities.
- Check whether local government, social services or medical facilities can offer any support to children and young people with disabilities – are they able to get resources or equipment?



Home learning and outreach

- Ask or support teachers to find out how many school-aged children in their area are at home, and why. In many cases the simplest approach is to ask children in the teacher's class to say who they know who is not coming to school. In other contexts this information can be found by asking the head teacher, a local NGO, or parents. Learners, or other community members, should never be expected to provide information that might put them at risk, and the information they give should be considered confidential.
- If a learner is facing big difficulties getting to school, or will be spending time at home recovering from injury, teachers could try to prepare some work that they could do at home. Older siblings or other learners could take the work to them and bring it back to the teacher. Some teachers may be able to make occasional home visits to check on learners' progress.
- At the same time, teachers or school principals should be encouraged to plan when and how to bring learners who are at home into school, especially when children or young people have been injured in the emergency. In the short term this will mean being flexible about enrolment dates, and deciding which class is most appropriate.

- In some contexts, principals or teachers may need support to get permission from the local education authorities for supporting injured learners to return to school at varied times.

Shaker, a nine-year-old Palestinian boy with a physical disability, was affected by the crisis in Gaza. When his wheelchair broke it was very difficult for him to attend school. Shaker's family lives on the fourth floor, so he had to crawl up and down the stairs every day. Save the Children UK, in partnership with Jabalia Rehabilitation Society, provided elbow crutches and a new wheelchair. Shaker now goes back and forth to school easily.



A teacher with disabilities in an informal afternoon school, Kroo Bay, Freetown, Sierra Leone

4. Recognising when children and young people need more support to take part in learning

Common arguments we need to challenge

- “Only medical personnel should identify children with disabilities.”
- “Identifying children with disabilities or who are experiencing difficulties with learning takes up too much of a teacher’s time.”
- “There’s no point identifying these children – we can’t teach them in our school anyway.”
- “We don’t need to think about this, aren’t all children with disabilities easy to spot because of their obvious physical differences?”

4.1. Barriers to inclusion

Physical, intellectual or sensory issues which affect children’s learning needs can often go unnoticed. Younger children in particular might not be able to express what is affecting them. When teachers are working in difficult circumstances or under high levels of stress – such as during or following an emergency – learners with disabilities may be even more likely to be overlooked.

Teachers may believe that identifying a child’s possible disability and working out if and how this affects their learning needs, is a specialist task that can only be done by medical personnel or specially trained teachers. They may lack the confidence to take action themselves, leaving many children and young people excluded.

4.2. Solutions

Specialist or medical knowledge may be needed if we are attempting to diagnose a specific condition and prescribe treatments or plan rehabilitation. However, at the classroom level, teachers are not expected to become directly involved in medical interventions. Their role is to notice whether children and young people are experiencing particular difficulties – with learning, communicating, moving around, etc. Then they need to act alongside parents and other professionals to find ways in which the learner can more easily participate and achieve in education.

4.2.1. Key messages to convey to teachers

“Teachers need to do their best to be good teachers.”

A good teacher is always observing the children and young people in his/her class to see who is coping or experiencing difficulties. They adjust lesson plans and teaching methods so that they can help anyone who is struggling.

Teachers need to notice if learners are experiencing difficulties in class or around the school. They are not expected to make a specialist, medical diagnosis. Looking out for anyone who is struggling to learn is a part of a good teacher's day-to-day work. It is not an extra duty (see Section 4.2.2. for specific ideas),

“Teachers will be much more effective if they frequently observe and think about the learners in their class.”

To help teachers understand more about observing children, try this activity:

Ask teachers to brainstorm the different ways in which they observe, get to know or assess children. Then ask them what sorts of differences in children's characteristics, behaviour or performance they notice when they make these observations.

Well trained or experienced teachers might give answers such as:

- We closely watch learners' behaviour in the class.
- We ask learners questions to see if they understand the lessons.
- We set short tests or activities to show if learners have understood.

Teachers may say that when they make these observations they notice:

- quick or slow learners
- children who concentrate and behave well, or those who have difficulty focusing after a short time and disrupt lessons
- those who have friends, or those who seem to be alone
- children who are particularly active and mobile
- children who do not move around the class or school grounds very much
- children who are less co-ordinated or have trouble making the shapes for drawing and writing
- children who always seem to participate and volunteer answers, and those who are usually silent in class
- children who do not seem to listen or watch attentively
- children who seem to struggle to speak.

These are observations that a good teacher makes in order to understand and manage their class and develop quality learning.

Using these skills, a teacher may identify learners who are struggling to take part in educational activities. Some of these learners may need support because of a disability, but in many communities affected by emergencies or long-term crises, a large proportion of the class may be having difficulties. While it may not be possible for a teacher to 'fix' all the challenges learners experience, identifying who is struggling most, and thinking about what could be done to support them, is extremely useful.

“Talk to others about learners’ situations”

Teachers should try not to think of some children and young people as ‘good learners’ and ‘well behaved’, while others are ‘disorganised’ or ‘disruptive’. Instead, a good teacher looks at how the learners in their class behave. It can sometimes be helpful to write down these observations and thoughts about learners’ behaviour.

It is not necessary for a teacher to identify what the cause of a child’s behaviour is, particularly as they are unlikely to have the medical skills to diagnose a physical or psychological condition. But it is helpful for a teacher to pass on what they have observed to others who might be able to offer advice or support.

Once a teacher has identified that some learners may need support with aspects of learning and participating in education, they can discuss this with other teachers, their school principal, or any other supportive people available (e.g. parent-teacher association, school management committee or child club members, school supervisors or mentors, social workers or healthcare professionals).

“Keep trying to observe learners, even when you are working in difficult circumstances”

In an emergency situation teachers may not have had time to get to know the children or young people in their class. The behaviour of children and young people may have changed as a result of the emergency. Class sizes may be very large. But the same principles apply – teachers will be doing a good job if they can:

- observe everyone in the class as much as possible
- think about whether anyone is finding it difficult to take part in the learning activities
- discuss ideas for making learning easier with others.

4.2.2. Ideas for solutions that teachers can discuss and adapt

Ask other people

Teachers do not have to work on their own to observe and identify learners who need support. They can:

- discuss their observations with other teachers, parents or key people in a learner's life – this can be helpful and reassuring
- ask if the parents or colleagues have observed similar or different behaviour to what the teacher has seen – different people see different aspects of the learner's life
- combine different people's observations and reflections to build a clearer picture of the things learners are good at, and the things they can do with assistance from others
- contact staff from a local clinic (if there is one) and tell them what they have observed about the behaviour of learners who may need help. Medical professionals may then be able to assess the learners and get them appropriate medical or rehabilitation support
- tell a NGO support worker what they have observed about children and young people in their class. The NGO worker may then organise psychological or practical support if necessary.

Once a teacher has observed a particular behaviour and discussed it with others, they can begin to plan the next steps for supporting more learners' participation. They could:

- make simple and bold basic learning materials from locally available objects (e.g. using bottle tops to help learners with visual or intellectual impairments to count) or adapt existing materials so that learners with disabilities can use them more easily
- keep asking for ideas from parents, learners, fellow teachers, etc. – somewhere in the school or local community there will be someone who has helpful ideas

- keep asking for advice and support from other teachers, trainers, principals, school supervisors and NGOs, to take gradual steps towards making learning easier for all children or young people in the class who are showing signs of difficulty
- continue, if possible, to link up with someone who has specific experience, such as a community-based rehabilitation worker, or a local government or NGO worker, who may offer a wider range of support to learners with disabilities and their families.

In an NRC programme in Burundi, 14 Inclusive Education Resource Persons give on-the-job support to mainstream school teachers, helping them to adapt education processes to the needs of children with disabilities.

The Resource Persons regularly visit classrooms to follow up on the development and well-being of the children. They also:

- provide supportive learning and teaching tools, such as Braille books and styluses, sign language books, picture cards and mathematics resources
- give advice on how to make the school and classroom environment more inclusive and accessible for all children
- train teachers in sign language; how to organise group work, peer support and extra instruction; and creating a child-friendly classroom.

Most children with disabilities involved in the NRC programme study a regular shift in the mainstream school. They receive extra support from a Community Rehabilitation and Development Centre around three times a week, where they can practise lessons and get more detailed instruction if needed.

Child-to-child approaches

Often the children in a class know more about each other than their teachers do. They may notice when a fellow learner is having a difficult time. Teachers can:

- ask learners to help them identify children with particular support or learning needs (whether related to the psychological consequences of the emergency, physical issues, or any other reason)
- plan carefully, and discuss with learners, so that any identification activities become part of a supportive process, not an opportunity to tell tales on each other.

Education in emergencies through to recovery may have a strong focus on teaching about reconciliation, tolerance and rebuilding communities through co-operation. Teachers can use this to help them identify any children who are struggling to attend school or join in lessons. They can:

- encourage learners to help each other, e.g., by working in small groups where faster learners help slower learners, or where older learners help younger ones, etc. Older or faster learners can then tell the teacher if they notice other learners who are struggling
- develop buddy systems involving every learner, so that everyone has at least one friend they can ask for practical help, or who can help tell the teacher about their problems with learning. This way, helping and assisting becomes the norm, and does not single out learners experiencing difficulties (see Section 5.2.2)
- do fun yet educational activities with the class, such as making a map or doing surveys to help identify any children who are not coming to school. This activity may be better suited to more experienced or confident teachers who have successfully completed the previous two tasks and want to try something more complex
- mobilize any existing child club members to support children and young people with disabilities.

Child-to-child approaches help teachers to **identify** learners who are experiencing difficulties. As we will see in Chapter 7, they also help teachers with **teaching** these learners, especially in large classes where the teacher cannot help every child individually all the time.



Photo: Save the Children

Displaced children in a temporary school supported by Save the Children, Sri Lanka

More
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teachers

Consult learners

Teachers can:

- ask children and young people what they find easy and difficult about the classroom and being at school. In small groups, ask them what they like and don't like about their classroom or learning space. Encourage them to draw their perfect classroom and explain what is in the drawing and why they put it there
- discuss with groups of learners whether some of them find anything about the classroom particularly difficult. The teacher can explain that they want to help make the classroom and school better for everyone
- ask if there is anyone who cannot see or hear easily, or anyone who does not always understand what is being said. Ask children if everyone can use the toilet safely; whether there is enough

light for everyone to see what is written on the board; whether everyone has a comfortable place to sit

- record which learners have difficulties with different aspects of the learning environment. Think about what could be done to make being in the classroom and the learning process easier for them.

More confident teachers

Observation and reflection notebook

Writing things down can help teachers to reflect on and remember what they have observed about a particular learner. Teachers can:

- keep a small notebook in which they write their observations and reflections about learners'
 - physical skills – such as walking, running or carrying/holding items
 - social skills – such as talking, listening, sharing or playing together
 - daily living skills – such as eating or using the toilet
 - cognitive skills – such as speaking in sentences, being able to draw a specific object, or showing creativity in a game
- write down in a factual way anything that they think may be of concern or particular interest in relation to a learner who is having particular difficulties with taking part in school life. (Try not to compare learners directly. Every learner develops at a different speed, so direct comparisons between learners will not help the teacher to identify difficulties that particular learners are having as a result of a disability)
- try to do this for everyone in the class, at least once a year – it is a valuable part of a teacher's job, not just an extra task to help assess learners with disabilities.

5. Managing the school day

Common arguments we need to challenge

- “It’s too difficult to organise the school day to suit a diverse range of children.”
- “We don’t have time to supervise and help learners with disabilities throughout the day.”
- “We cannot manage everyone’s different eating and toileting needs.”

A school or a learning space is often at the centre of a community. Most children and young people spend a lot of time at school. During and following an emergency, getting them back to school as quickly as possible and into a learning environment, however temporary, re-establishes a daily structure in their lives. School, whether in a government building or an emergency safe space, can provide a safe place for all children and young people to socialise with their peers. It is somewhere for them to begin to rebuild their confidence and self-esteem, and generates a feeling of routine in what could otherwise be a very chaotic environment.

5.1. Barriers to inclusion

Unstructured school day

Working in difficult circumstances, teachers may struggle to provide a ‘routine’ school day. Children with disabilities, learning difficulties and behavioural problems may, at times, need help or learning resources that teachers feel are different from the norm or are more time-consuming. Teachers may feel this puts them under pressure, i.e., that they do not have enough time in the day or enough staff to include these children.

However, the way the school day is organised may actually be the main barrier here. In any school, if the day is not well structured, if lessons are not well planned, and if staff and resources are not employed effectively, learners will notice the chaos. Some will deal with this better than others. Children experiencing learning difficulties or behavioural problems may find it particularly difficult to participate and achieve in a disorganised environment. They may get increasingly distracted or disruptive in class. Teachers may feel that such behaviour requires specialist inputs, but instead basic changes to the organisation of the school day may help to tackle this problem and enable these learners to be included.

In an emergency response there are often plenty of opportunities to restructure the time learners spend in school or a child-friendly space in ways that are different from a traditional school day.

Long session times

How long should the school sessions be? Most adults find it difficult to concentrate for more than 40 minutes, yet many schools provide lessons lasting an hour or more. Most children find this challenging. Children and young people with learning difficulties and behavioural problems may have very short attention spans. Those with physical, intellectual, hearing or visual impairments may get tired more quickly because of the additional efforts required for mobility or communication. Teachers may feel that specialist input is required to engage these learners in lessons, but simple changes to the timetable may actually be more effective.

Poor access to food

Following an emergency, food may be scarce and learners may come to school hungry. This affects their concentration and energy levels. Lack of food or poorly organised meal arrangements create a barrier to participation and achievement and may deter some from coming to school at all. Food arrangements may present particularly significant barriers for learners who have health needs affecting the food they can eat.

Lack of access to water and toilets

Providing safe drinking water and appropriate toilet facilities are basic first steps in the creation of a healthy, learner-friendly environment. In an emergency situation these facilities may be damaged or scarce. This creates organisational challenges for teachers when children and young people need to use the toilet, wash their hands or simply have a drink. Some learners with disabilities may need to make more regular toilet breaks or require help going to the toilet. Other children and young people may experience changed toileting needs, as a result of changed diets, locations, water supplies, fear, or other experiences during the emergency. If teachers can help to organise water and toilet needs, more children and young people might be able to take part in school.

5.2. Solutions

There is no universal formula for managing the school day effectively. Every school organises the day differently, depending on the number of daylight hours, seasonal weather conditions, routine domestic/agricultural chores that teachers and/or children and young people need to perform, transport options, and so on. This means every school has a different starting point when it comes to reorganising the way the school day is structured and managed. This chapter outlines the benefits of reorganising the day to make it more inclusive for learners with disabilities, and suggests possible actions for teachers to take or adapt.

5.2.1. Key messages to convey to teachers and school managers

“An emergency offers a chance to make useful changes to the school day”

Before the emergency, there were probably particular start and finish times. Days were divided into sessions for different subjects, and the school year was divided into terms of similar lengths. During

and following an emergency, the arrangement of the school day and school year may be rethought. Can or should a similar schedule be revived? Do learners now need time to do other important things within the family or community? When and for how long should children and young people go to school? When can learners who have been ill or injured be admitted to school?

If it is possible to ask these questions, principals, teachers and the community can think about the impact that the school's organisation has on all learners, especially those with disabilities, learning difficulties and behavioural problems. This is a good chance to reorganise the school day to help more learners attend, participate and achieve.

“Changing the school day benefits teachers as well as learners”

A well-organised school day benefits all learners, not just those with disabilities or behavioural problems. But it also benefits the teachers. It may take a little effort to reorganise the school day so that it is more inclusive for all learners, but once this is done teachers should find their jobs become easier. If everyone – learners, teachers and parents – knows what to expect and when, this can be very reassuring in a time of disruption.

A clearly organised day can enable learners to become more self-sufficient or supportive of each other in school. They may need less guidance or instruction from the teacher if they do not have to navigate through a chaotic day. Involving learners in designing how to reorganise the school day so that it suits everyone can further promote tolerance and empathy – a key goal of many emergency education programmes.

“An organised school can deal with interruptions more easily”

Unexpected changes will still happen, especially in an ongoing emergency. However, if teachers and school managers have worked out a clear vision for how to organise the school day to be inclusive, and if children also understand this arrangement, they can more quickly and effectively deal with any interruptions, adapt what they are doing and return their classes to the routine.

5.2.2. Ideas for solutions that teachers can discuss and adapt

All teachers

Build on the familiar

While an emergency may offer a great opportunity for changing the way education is managed, teachers should not throw out everything of the ‘old way’. Elements of familiarity will help learners to cope and feel included. Try to discuss with other teachers and whoever is managing the school about how to best structure the school day. Base at least some of the new school day arrangements on subjects or daily events with which everyone is familiar. Choose those elements that work well for children and young people and change those that do not.

More confident teachers

Ask other people

Consult learners, parents and community members when making decisions about the organisation of the school day.

- If new start and finish times are being suggested, check whether transport or escort arrangements (see Chapter 3) are still possible at these new times (especially when learners live far from school or face mobility challenges).
- Check whether learners will be travelling at the safest times (e.g., in daylight or when the roads are less busy).
- Ask learners (e.g., through a school council) how they would like staff to organise break times or before/after-school clubs.

- Ask parents about offering separate start or finish times for certain children with disabilities, learning difficulties or behavioural problems. This may be one way to ensure their attendance and participation.

In conflict-affected areas of Nepal, World Vision helped to organise discussions in local school management committees to change schooling hours to make it easier for everyone to get to school. It was agreed that in winter classes would start later in the morning and earlier in the afternoon. During summer, schools operated a morning shift.

All teachers

Learner-friendly timetabling

Shorter lessons (e.g. 30 minutes) will help more learners – with and without disabilities or behavioural problems – to participate and achieve. Teachers can:

- discuss with the school principal about timetabling shorter lessons
- ask to timetable frequent breaks throughout the day. This will ensure that rest, toilet and food needs are met for most learners
- use these breaks to rest themselves – it takes a lot of energy and concentration to teach well
- use longer ‘double’ sessions for active lessons like sport, where relevant.

All teachers

Avoid surprise changes

Routines are important for most children, especially those who have learning difficulties or who have experienced distressing events.

Teachers can:

- remember that some children will find it difficult to adapt to changes with timetables and activities
- tell children about the changes in a clear and calm way, so that they understand what is happening and do not get stressed. This may reduce the risk of disruptive behaviour, so that the teacher can manage their class more effectively.

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Plan to bring children into school at flexible times

Where children or young people have been out of school because of illness, recent injury or long-term disability, the teacher or school principal will need to talk to the child's family and agree the best time for them to come back to school. This may be some time after other children have returned to school following an emergency. It might be important for the learner to initially spend a shorter time in school every day and gradually increase this time, particularly if they have been ill or their physical condition means they tire quickly.

Being flexible in this way is essential to ensure everyone's right to education. It will also be important for the teacher and any local officials, supervisors or NGO staff to work out a plan to help the child catch up with the learning that they have missed.

Where children or young people have missed out on years of education, it may be possible to get them into a local accelerated learning programme, if one is available. Alternatively, it may be possible to arrange catch-up classes at the school.

All
teachers

Keep children active

Outdoor play, drama and other recreational activities and sport need to be given plenty of space in the timetable. They can help learners build their confidence with their friends. Enabling children to use their physical energies safely and creatively can be particularly important after an emergency when pent-up feelings may affect everyone, particularly those facing the greatest mental or physical challenges. Some structured and enjoyable physical activity should take place every day, but learners who do not feel able to take part should not be criticised.

During physical activities, do not allow learners to criticise each other for lack of ability. Encourage praise, both for those who do well at the task and those who try to take part to the best of their abilities. Encourage learners to help each other with the tasks.



Photo: Rebecca Janes/Save the Children

Children sing songs at Cejecodem School in Martissant, Haiti

More confident teachers

Some learners may find it more difficult to express their feelings. Teachers can:

- use physical activities, singing, drawing, discussions and creative writing to help children and young people express their emotions
- focus more time on these activities (and less on formal academic learning) for learners who have been most affected by the emergency or have difficulty expressing themselves
- encourage groups of children and young people to produce cultural street shows or dramas in the safe space areas. Try to give everyone a useful task to carry out, and vary the performers
- ask parents or local volunteers to get involved in organising physical or musical activities.

More confident teachers

Learner-friendly toilet arrangements

All children will have different toilet needs and these should be met. Teachers can work with each other and school principals to:

- relax any previous school rules on who is allowed to use the toilet and at what times
- create a set of learner-friendly 'use of toilet' rules that will benefit everyone, so that learners do not disrupt each other too much

- ask students to suggest their own rules and decide on which they will follow – based on thinking about everyone’s different needs. Such an activity can encourage even the youngest children to make decisions and empathise with their friends’ needs
- ask learners to discuss the issue through a school council (if one exists), or set up separate groups of boys and girls to discuss it, facilitated by adults or older children

Teachers may have to do less work to maintain discipline when learners have made the rules about using the toilet. Learners may respect the rules more and/or ensure that their friends stick to the rules.

Some learners with physical, intellectual or visual impairments may need help with getting to and/or using the toilet, especially if the facilities are not very accessible. Teachers can:

- talk to the learner and their family to find out what help they need and how often, and how they are managing at the moment (at home and school)
- invite a trusted family member to come into school to help at regular times, if this is possible
- find out if the student has a friend in class whom they trust and who could be taught how to help them.



Further adaptation of timetables

Building on the initial actions to make timetables more learner-friendly, teachers can:

- observe which learners might be struggling and need extra breaks
- discuss with the learner how they can be supported. If a learner is falling asleep, seems bored or unable to keep up with the teaching, ask if changing the pace or speed of the lesson would help
- discuss with other teachers about which learners might need extra breaks, and how this can best be managed

- be flexible and arrange other ‘breaks’ **within** sessions for some children. This might involve a five minute break in a quiet corner away from the rest of the class, or outside the class with a support assistant or buddy, for children who are becoming tired or distracted due to their disability or learning difficulty
- work with school managers to provide flexibility within the school day/timetable for learners to get assistance from counsellors or health personnel, if available
- try to make sure that children with disabilities or health problems get a good rest (or even sleep) during breaks if they need it, particularly if they experience pain.



Use support assistants

During or following an emergency, there may not be enough trained staff to run a school or learning space. Voluntary or paid support can be sought from existing parent-teacher associations, school governing bodies or neighbouring communities. Support assistants can help to improve the education available to all children and strengthen school-community links. Assistants might include:

- educated people who are now unemployed and looking for something to do
- community members who have been displaced from their usual work and have skills that can be used in the classroom.

Working with school managers, teachers can look for:

- male and female assistants
- assistants from families of children with disabilities, learning difficulties or behavioural problems who can share their knowledge of supporting these children
- anyone in the community who knows sign language. These assistants can interpret for the teacher/deaf learners and/or teach sign language to other learners so that they can buddy with deaf learners.

Classroom assistants can help the teacher by:

- helping children to go to the toilet
- helping learners with disabilities during break times, with their meals, while moving around the school, and during recreation time and sports activities
- supporting children who want to talk about issues that are troubling them, and liaising with appropriate people who can provide counselling, etc.
- encouraging children with disabilities to communicate and interact as much as possible with other children and adults (not just with the assistant) and to be as active as possible.

More
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teachers

Develop buddy systems

A buddy system can help teachers to manage the school day in the following ways:

- Buddies can help learners with disabilities, learning difficulties or behavioural problems to understand and remember the structure of the day, or to move themselves to the right place at the right time.
- All learners can help each other with school work (especially when the class is very large and/or made up of diverse age groups).
- They can help each other with daily challenges, like fetching drinking water, or cleaning the classroom.
- Buddies can relieve some of the pressure from the teacher, especially when there is a large class to manage.
- Buddy systems should encourage all children to talk, play and eat together.
- At school level, child club members could be encouraged to set up buddy activities.
- PTAs or school management committees could be encouraged to support buddy activities.

A buddying approach can be started with a teacher or PTA member asking for one or two learners to volunteer to work with a learner who has a disability. For younger buddies, giving a few simple and clear suggestions for how they can help a fellow learner will be useful. For older learners, set up a meeting with the volunteer(s) and the learner(s) with disabilities. Ask the latter what they would like help with. Both should be asked to suggest ways in which they can work together.

Teacher trainers or mentors will need to support teachers to help them work out how to introduce a buddying approach in a positive way, and how to keep it going. For example, the arrangement can be explained to the rest of the class by emphasising that everyone can take part in education, and we all need different things to help us learn well. Buddy pairs should not be seated separately from the rest of the class, or isolated from the class.



Photo: Ibrahim Bangura

*School children helping each other
at the SOS Village School, Freetown,
Sierra Leone*

The teacher should regularly observe how learners with disabilities and volunteers appear to be working together. Teachers should be encouraged to think about how they can tell if the buddy system is going well, and what they can do to improve arrangements. Lessons learned from the first attempt can be used to expand the approach to other learners with disabilities. Teachers and supervisors will need to work together regularly to do this, but the long-term effects can be very positive.

More confident teachers

Improve children's access to food at school

There is a link between the provision of healthy food (and clean water and good sanitation) during school and an increase in attendance and retention of learning. Such efforts can help maintain children's concentration and energy levels, which can help teachers manage the class throughout the day.

If there are school or community-based school feeding programmes, teachers can work with school or NGO managers and parents' groups to:

- develop carefully and flexibly timetabled meal breaks, which help learners to eat at appropriate times and at achievable speeds
- plan for the needs of children and young people with disabilities who require help eating
- ensure that meal and break times help learners to strengthen their social ties and skills. They can be encouraged to develop supportive relationships through helping each other with food
- encourage buddies or support assistants to help learners who need assistance with collecting their food, eating it and tidying up afterwards
- give extra time to those who take longer to eat, by ensuring they get their food first.

6. Teaching spaces

Common arguments we need to challenge

- “We are struggling to provide safe teaching spaces for learners without disabilities first, before we can focus on facilities for those with disabilities.”
- “Our funding is limited, we cannot afford to make adaptations for learners with disabilities.”
- “The situation is still unstable. Any changes we make to the school this week may be undone next week due to factors beyond our control.”
- “Not enough staff are available to supervise the safety of learners with disabilities.”

6.1. Barriers to inclusion

Every emergency or crisis situation is different. However, some common barriers relating to teaching spaces in many settings include:

- **lack of or overcrowded classrooms** – difficult for learners with physical or visual impairments to move around
- **lack of or unsuitable furniture** – desks and chairs are at the wrong height for some learners; all-in-one bench desks are difficult for some learners with physical disabilities to use, as is sitting on the floor when no desks are available
- **poorly lit classrooms/spaces** (no electricity, small/shuttered or non-existent windows) – difficult for learners with visual impairments to see the board and books; and for those with hearing impairments to see the teachers’ facial expressions and lip read
- **inaccessible rooms or toilets** (steps, or uneven floors) – difficult for some children to enter the room, or risks of tripping when moving around

- **temporary classrooms/structures** – may be too cold/hot, unstable, not weatherproof; teachers may not want to make classroom layout changes or decorate the walls if the structure could soon be gone or changed
- **noisy classrooms** (if overcrowded or more than one class being held in each room; if buildings/walls are damaged or thin, and noise travels between classes or from outside) – will be distracting for all learners, but may present particular barriers to those with hearing or intellectual impairments or other learning difficulties
- **lack of safe play areas for recreation and sport** – areas may be unsafe for all children (e.g. risk of violence or landmines) or may be particularly inaccessible to those with physical or visual impairments (e.g. uneven surfaces, no fencing to mark boundaries, etc.)
- **unfamiliar layout and environment** – some learners may find it very challenging to get to know a new school environment. This may be a particular challenge if they need to feel their way around, or are used to holding on at certain points for support
- **temperature** – classrooms can be too hot or cold, due to overcrowding or climate conditions. This can make it difficult for learners and teachers to concentrate.

6.2. Solutions

The solutions necessary or possible in each situation will be different, depending on the nature and stage of the emergency, the resources available, etc. However, many of the barriers that learners with disabilities face in the classroom can in some way be overcome or reduced with a little creativity and collaboration.

6.2.1. Key messages to convey to teachers

“Improving accessibility helps everyone”

Classrooms/schools will probably need improvements to make them more welcoming for everyone, not just learners with disabilities. Improving the classroom for learners with disabilities often improves it for every learner, and even for the teacher.

“Improvements do not have to be big”

Teachers are not expected to make large changes or infrastructure improvements. They just need to try out some simple ideas within their capacity, using locally available resources. Many useful changes focus simply on making the teaching space **feel** more welcoming and comfortable, so that learners want to come to school and participate.

“Work with others”

Teachers, parents and pupils can work together to solve some of the classroom challenges. Teachers should not feel they are working alone. This collaborative working can form part of wider activities around reconciliation, community building, or post-disaster rehabilitation.

6.2.2. Ideas for solutions that teachers can discuss and adapt

More
confident
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Identifying the problems

Teachers should ideally not work alone to decide what changes they need to make in their classrooms. They can:

- discuss with fellow teachers (during staff meetings or break times) about how their teaching spaces are set up. Is there anything that particularly helps the participation of learners with physical, intellectual, hearing or visual impairments?

- observe each other's classrooms for a short period each week/month, to look out for new ideas or to give feedback to each other on how to improve the classroom set-up
- involve learners with and without disabilities in identifying what makes the school/classroom comfortable/uncomfortable, accessible/inaccessible, easy/difficult to learn in. This could be done by:
 - holding a simple discussion, either in class or during a school council meeting
 - asking pupils to work in pairs or small groups to discuss the issue or make a drawing or map of the school/classroom showing good and bad elements. This could form part of a regular lesson (e.g. art, maths, etc.).
 - offering anonymous feedback options, such as a suggestions box located somewhere 'safe' in the school, e.g. not right outside the head teacher's office. The school council, a group of learners, or a teacher could review the suggestions regularly. They could discuss with learners which suggestions to prioritise each week or month. This could provide an opportunity for learners to feed back on a much wider range of inclusion issues, not just classroom/facilities issues.

In a post-emergency school improvement session in Tamil Nadu, India, learners were asked to draw a picture of 'my ideal classroom'. One young child drew a picture of a classroom with two doors. When asked why, he said that at the end of the day the bigger children crushed the smaller ones when trying to get out of the door. He thought the younger children should have their own door. When the teachers realised what the problem was, they developed a system for leaving the classroom – smaller children were allowed to leave first. A similar system could be used to help learners with disabilities leave the classroom safely and comfortably.

Common changes to teaching and learning spaces

The following suggestions might give teachers some ideas for making their teaching spaces more welcoming and inclusive. They will not be suitable or possible in every situation.

All teachers

Lighting

Teachers are not expected to solve electricity or window construction problems. In poorly lit classrooms or spaces they can:

- think carefully about which areas of the room are used for which purpose or by which learners, (e.g. learners with visual impairments may benefit from sitting near a window; a dark corner could be used for storing materials)
- ask pupils for their ideas about how to arrange the desks so that everyone benefits from the available light
- discuss with learners about setting up a rotation system so that learners (without visual impairments) take it in turns to sit in darker or lighter areas of the room
- make use of outdoor spaces if the weather and natural light is good and the security situation permits.

All teachers

Desks and chairs

Where there are not enough desks and chairs for everyone, teachers should think about how to ensure this does not lead to learners dropping out:

- Ensure that learners with disabilities always have access to any available furniture if it is suitable for their needs, especially if sitting on the floor is very difficult for them.
- Set up a rotation system so that learners take it in turns to sit at a desk or on the floor.

More confident teachers

Where desks and chairs are not a suitable height or design for particular learners, teachers can:

- shorten table legs by cutting off some of the wood, or lengthen them by placing them on blocks of wood

- ask whether any vocational training or livelihoods programmes nearby are focusing on woodwork – they might be happy to have a furniture building/adaptation project for their students.

More confident teachers

Rows or groups

In overcrowded classrooms, arranging seating in rows may seem like the only way to fit everyone in. However, where possible, working in small groups can help teachers to manage large classes of learners with diverse abilities. Teachers can:

- reorganise the class into groups for at least some of their lessons
- use child-to-child approaches in groups so that learners with disabilities or those experiencing learning difficulties feel more supported
- make the task of rearranging desks (or floor seating positions) part of a regular lesson. For instance, in a maths lesson, learners could count the number of people and desks. They could even take measurements and draw diagrams illustrating possible layouts for the room that give all learners more space of comfort.

More confident teachers

Noisy classrooms

Temporary classrooms – e.g. tents, prefabricated buildings, or buildings originally designed for other purposes – may not be very soundproof. Learners and teachers will struggle to talk and listen if there is a constant background noise. This may be an even greater barrier to learning and participation for those with hearing or intellectual impairments or learning difficulties.

Teachers are not expected to find new school premises or improve classroom structures, but they could try the following:

- Plan lesson schedules with other teachers, so that there are agreed quiet and noisy periods. For instance, neighbouring classes could have quiet reading periods at the same time, or noisy interactive lessons could happen when the neighbouring class is outside doing sports.

- Discuss with the learners, parents and other teachers before making decisions about the best place for learners with hearing impairments to sit. They may prefer to sit close to the teacher so they can hear a little. They may need the teacher to sit/stand in a place where they can lip read easily. Or they may prefer to sit with a buddy who writes notes or repeats what they teacher has said.
- Help learners who experience difficulties with learning or who have a behavioural problem to concentrate or refocus by:
 - allowing them to take a five-minute break outside the room with a buddy or support assistant in a quiet place
 - finding them a toy or book to play with or read in a corner of the room for a few minutes, away from the main activity
 - using fun warm-up activities, games or songs with the whole class.



Photo: Save the Children

Children making a house image using plastic bottle tops, China

Decorating the teaching space

Even when resources are limited, teachers can:

- make teaching and learning materials (posters, models, etc.), from locally available resources. These can be easily packed up and moved if they need to move classrooms or buildings
- give learners a sense of stability by using these materials to make any room they use feel like ‘their’ classroom. This may particularly help anyone experiencing learning difficulties or behavioural problems who might be struggling to cope with constant changes
- encourage learners to make basic materials to decorate their classroom, which they can take with them to a new classroom
- get older pupils or those who are learning faster to make materials or games to help younger or slower learners with their learning
- display and use tactile natural materials such as stone, mud and plants.

In Bagh, Pakistan, teachers supported by USAID’s ENGAGE programme used simple and available materials to make lessons more visual or tactile for students.

Teachers often asked students to bring supplies from home to use in lessons, such as dried foods, empty boxes, bottle caps, or buttons. Teachers used dried beans/corn to teach number concepts. Ten beans glued on a small stick became a “10- stick” which was useful for teaching place values.

When posters or flashcards were made, teachers outlined the letters, numbers, or objects with yarn so that children with visual disabilities could feel them.

7. Planning and delivering teaching and learning activities

Common arguments we need to challenge

- “It takes too long to plan lessons that suit learners with and without disabilities.”
- “Learners with disabilities and those with behavioural problems don’t understand instructions, can’t take part in regular lessons, and disrupt the class for everyone.”
- “I don’t have the time to teach learners with disabilities and the rest of the class.”
- “We do not have enough resources and teaching skills to plan our teaching to suit children with a diverse range of abilities and behavioural problems.”

7.1. Barriers to inclusion

During or following an emergency, schools may not have enough teachers, or enough teaching and learning materials, or an appropriate learning environment.

Teachers who are available may have received little or no training, particularly around inclusion or working with children and young people with disabilities, learning difficulties and behavioural problems. They may not feel ready to work in an inclusive school. Those who have been trained may not want to work outside the ‘comfort zone’ they developed as trainees or newly qualified teachers.

Isolation is a key barrier. Teachers are often working alone, or without support from staff within the education authorities. They may feel burdened by having to solve problems on their own, especially if they were used to having itinerant teachers or a resource centre to

help them in the past. Teachers' confidence may also decline when they are working in a strange location, with unfamiliar colleagues and/or a different group of learners.

No matter how well prepared a teacher is, the conditions they face in the classroom – in an emergency or post-emergency situation – may still seem overwhelming. Even if they were used to working with limited resources and/or large class sizes, the situation may have got worse. This can affect the way they deliver lessons. Teachers need regular support and time to discuss these challenges and help each other find ways forward.

7.2. Solutions

To create a learner-friendly, inclusive school, the way teachers teach and the teaching and learning materials they use during lessons must all be learner-friendly and inclusive. Teachers need to recognise diversity and nurture learners with different backgrounds, abilities and learning styles. Teaching and learning materials must be stimulating, participatory and relevant to all children's learning needs and abilities if **all** children are to participate and achieve their full potential.

7.2.1. Key messages to convey to teachers

“Inclusive education is quality education for all.”

There is no concrete dividing line between the things teachers need to do to include learners with disabilities or other marginalised learners, and the things they should be doing to deliver quality education to their class in general.

Teachers do not need to plan and deliver totally separate and additional activities for learners with disabilities. They need to change their overall approach to planning and delivering teaching for **every** child. This will benefit those with and without disabilities.

“Create a learner-friendly atmosphere in class”

Try to create an atmosphere where all learners feel welcome, comfortable and are inspired to learn. Promote openness and tolerance to ensure that learners accept and include each other in their lesson activities and group work. Aim for an atmosphere where learners feel happy to volunteer to become buddies to help others who need support with learning or daily living activities.

“Two heads are better than one”

Teachers who work together (and with support assistants) to discuss how to plan their lessons and make them more learner-centred and inclusive, find that the challenge becomes less daunting. They can reduce the isolation they feel and can build each other’s confidence to tackle new problems.

“It’s OK to try something different”

It is acceptable to try new approaches to managing the classroom or communicating with learners during a lesson – even if that is not what teachers learned at college or in a teacher training programme. The teacher training college probably did not foresee its teachers having to work in an emergency, so it did not prepare them for their current situation. This is a new and/or unique situation, so teachers need to think beyond their training to create new or unique solutions.

7.2.2. Ideas for solutions that teachers can discuss and adapt

All teachers

Research

Learn from other people’s experiences

Research into other people’s experiences does not have to be complicated and formal. When teachers are planning how to include children and young people with disabilities, learning difficulties and behavioural problems in their regular lessons, they can:

- try to find out what ideas have already been tried in the local community or by their colleagues
- talk to parents, community members/leaders, NGO staff, etc. Listen for any bits of useful information. In an emergency, different people with different backgrounds and ideas may now be living close by. They might have ideas that could help make a classroom more inclusive
- feel confident about asking other people for ideas for how to plan and manage lessons that include learners with disabilities. Good teachers learn from other people's experiences and never feel embarrassed about doing this
- ask the school principal/supervisor if it is possible to arrange an hour each week/month when teachers (and support assistants) can sit together informally to chat about challenges of including particular children.

In Afghanistan, the International Rescue Committee's inclusive education programme focused on enabling children with visual and hearing impairments to be educated in their community schools. At first there was resistance from teachers who felt it was not possible for them to teach the children with sensory impairments. The IRC team let them use training sessions as a chance to talk about how they felt about the trainings. The IRC team also went to the community schools, and taught demonstration lessons in the classrooms. Teachers were provided with ideas for how they could teach children with sensory impairments.

More confident teachers

Plan, learn and investigate with colleagues

When planning lessons, teachers (and support assistants) can:

- make a list of all learners, describing their characteristics and needs, and try to find out and record out what they wish to learn, what type of activities they engage in with most enthusiasm, and

- who are their closest friends. This will be helpful in thinking about how you can make learning easier for all children and young people
- tell other teachers what happens in their classes, e.g., what barriers to learning they have found and what solutions they have tried
 - discuss problems/barriers and solutions they developed in previous years or in other schools
 - look for and share any documents about practical advice or any policy and guidance documents that may be available on the issue of inclusion
 - develop on-going action research activities within the school and involving learners and parents. This involves identifying barriers to learning and discussing them, testing ideas, and sharing information about solutions.



All teachers

Thinking about lessons

Plan to use different activities during the lesson

Each lesson that a teacher plans usually has a clear learning objective. This is something that the teacher wants learners to achieve by the end of the lesson. It is normal for every learner in the class – those with and without disabilities – to take a slightly different route towards achieving that objective.

For instance, if the lesson objective is to teach multiplication, one child might learn multiplication tables through verbally repeating them; another may learn by putting quantities of objects together; while another may learn best by practising written multiplication exercises. All three ways of learning are acceptable. Some children may benefit from all these approaches; others may only cope well with one. It makes sense to use different ways of teaching as much as possible.

Just because a learner has a disability, does not mean they will automatically learn differently or more slowly than the others. But the teacher needs to be prepared in case some children and young people do learn differently. For example, a child with hearing

difficulties may not learn well with the first method (verbal repetition), but may find the second (using objects) very useful. Teachers can:

- think about the main activity they want to use to teach a particular lesson or piece of learning
- then think about how they could use slightly different activities to help particular learners who seem to be struggling with the lesson. For instance, if the main activity is to read something from the board/book or listen to the teacher reading something, try to think of an alternative activity that involves:
 - looking at a **drawing** instead of just looking at/listening to words. Perhaps even one of the learners could do the drawing on the board, on paper, or on the floor
 - touching an **object** that relates to the words they are reading/hearing
 - the teacher writing on the board and then **explaining the most difficult words** from the text that everyone is reading/hearing
 - working in pairs or **small groups** so that learners can help each other.

It may seem difficult to start with – one activity per lesson is often enough at first. But gradually teachers will find it easier to think of different activities to use in one lesson.

Using different activities during each lesson will also help the teacher when they have children and young people of different ages (as well as abilities) in the same classroom. Older learners and those without disabilities can even help the teacher by thinking of different activities to use with their classmates. They could do drawings

This may help teachers to remember what they need to do:

“A good teacher always **DOES** plan to use different activities during each lesson”

D – drawings

O – objects

E – explain difficult words

S – small groups

for the teacher to use, find objects to use in a lesson, and explain difficult words to other learners who are struggling to understand.

More
confident
teachers

Structure lessons to suit thinkers and doers

Some children and young people will get tired or distracted more easily than others. Teachers need to plan each lesson to include time for ‘thinking’ activities and time for ‘doing’ activities.

Children with physical disabilities may get physically tired quickly, maybe even just from writing or holding a book. (Children may also be experiencing pain, which causes tiredness or loss of attention.) Teachers can plan the lesson so that there is:

- time for ‘doing’ something (e.g. writing, holding a book or objects)
- time for ‘thinking’ without moving (e.g. five minutes of quiet time to think about the answer to a question).

Children with visual, hearing or learning impairments may get mentally tired more quickly, because they have to concentrate hard to understand or communicate. Teachers can plan the lesson so that there is:

- time for thinking and communicating (e.g. reading, writing, listening, answering questions)
- time for doing actions or resting without thinking or communicating (e.g. running around outside, playing quietly with a toy or object).

“It is sometimes hard work to plan these different activities, but it makes the lesson less boring – for the students and the teacher!”

More experienced teachers can:

- work together to create a collection of different short activities that can be used to give learners a ‘thinking’ or a ‘doing’ break during any lesson. Each teacher could create just one activity

which they tell their colleagues about, to build up a shared collection of activities

- use support assistants or buddies to lead these short activities or to think of other activities.

More confident teachers

Plan which teaching and learning resources to use

The teaching and learning materials that teachers use in their lessons should be suitable for **all** learners. However, during emergencies materials are often lost, stolen or damaged. There may be no chalkboards, writing materials, textbooks or exercise books. There may be limited space in which to work, relax, play with friends or play sports.

When teachers are planning the different activities they will do in each lesson (see above) they should think about what materials they could use. Where materials are limited, teachers can:

- work out in advance how to divide up or use the available materials in a lesson
- divide the class into small groups so that learners can share materials
- make teaching and learning materials (e.g. posters, models or mobiles). This has always been part of a teacher's job, but may require a little more creativity to make use of any local resources and even materials thrown away as rubbish
- ask other teachers, support assistants, buddies, learners and adults with disabilities for ideas on how to adapt materials for use by children with particular disabilities. Some ideas include:
 - *Tactile images*: Stick string to the outline of a map (printed or hand-drawn). Stick bottle tops next to city names. Learners with visual impairments can feel the country outline and location of the cities. This can be done with other drawings as well.
 - *Easy to handle objects*: Select large rather than small stones when making a counting game, so that children with certain physical disabilities or poor co-ordination can more easily pick them up, and visually impaired children can more easily see/feel them.

- *Noisy objects*: Place a small bell or other items that rattle into the centre of a homemade ball (e.g., a ball made by rolling up old plastic bags and tied with string). The noisy ball will enable children with visual impairments or those who have trouble concentrating to follow its movements during a game.

More
confident
teachers

Choosing teaching content

Every emergency situation will be different in terms of how closely the remaining or new schools follow a national curriculum. Emergencies can, however, offer opportunities to make useful local adaptations to the curriculum. Teachers (with support from school principals, supervisors, etc.) might be able to bring the following topics into lessons in their school:

- *Peace and reconciliation (where relevant), tolerance and diversity*: These aspects of the curriculum offer teachers a chance to encourage learners to accept and support their peers with disabilities, learning difficulties or behavioural problems. This can help to strengthen inclusive approaches in the school and help teachers with developing a buddy system.
- *Food security, eating healthily, good hygiene practices*: Teachers may find they can use these subjects to discuss the particular needs of learners with disabilities, and discuss solutions with them, their families and/or their friends in school.
- *Keeping safe*: Teachers may again find they can use this subject to find out about (and try to solve) any safety problems that are stopping learners with disabilities, girls, etc., from coming to school.
- *Life skills useful for the local community*: Learning practical skills is often missing from children's education, but is very important for them and their families. Adults from the local community can be encouraged to share their knowledge and skills with children and young people, linked by the teacher to relevant parts of the formal curriculum. Focusing on practical or vocational skills can allow children who are less strong on academic skills to achieve well.



Children playing in a Child Friendly Space, Kenya

All
teachers

Non-academic activities *Outdoor activities/recreation/drama/sports*

Physical exercise and other structured recreational activities are part of ensuring the well-being of all learners. Teachers need to make sure these activities are accessible to learners with disabilities. They can:

- adapt activities to use available resources that suit different disabilities, learning difficulties and behavioural problems (e.g. using the noisy ball mentioned above)
- make lessons shorter or use a mixture of lively and restful activities within a lesson (e.g. in a sports lesson, quietly discuss rules or tactics, as well as playing the game; in a drama lesson, quietly discuss the script and where actors could stand, as well as doing the energetic acting)
- group learners together so that they help each other with activities (e.g. a learner with visual impairment could hold a friend's hand when they run; a child who is struggling to learn the rules of a game could be paired with someone who reminds them of the rules).

More
confident
teachers

Extra-curricular activities

All learners – including those with disabilities, learning difficulties and behavioural problems – should be given a chance to take part in extra-curricular activities. Teachers can:

- encourage and support these learners to participate in any school councils that exist – their views and ideas are as important as any other learner's. School council representatives with disabilities could be allowed to bring a buddy to the meetings if they need help with moving, writing or communicating
- make sure that pre-school and after-school clubs involve activities that are accessible to learners with disabilities, and happen in places and at times that all learners can manage
- develop clubs for maintaining and improving the school environment (e.g. removing rubbish, cutting grass or bushes, making smooth paths, etc.). This might be a useful way for learners who have physical but not academic skills to play an active and valued role in their school.

Teachers and school managers can also try to make sure that there is time for children and young people to receive counselling and/or psychosocial support as an extra-curricular activity. Those who receive this assistance have been shown to thrive better in the school environment.

Managing the class

Communication techniques

Use a variety of different ways to communicate with children in class, not just spoken words, especially if the class includes children with disabilities and those experiencing learning difficulties or problems controlling their behaviour.

All
teachers

Body language

The way the teacher stands and moves can help learners who have trouble seeing or hearing the teacher clearly or understanding

complex language. This ‘body language’ can help to reduce anxiety and keep learners engaged. Teachers can:

- smile frequently
- use gestures and body movements to emphasise or give clues to the meaning of what they are saying
- use clear but pleasant facial expressions, which can help students realise when the teacher wants them to answer a question or take an action.

All teachers

Clear speech and writing

Speaking clearly helps every child to understand what you are saying. It particularly helps:

- children who have hearing difficulties – they may be more able to hear what you say, or to read your lips
- children with intellectual impairments who may find it harder to understand what is said, especially if the words are not clear
- children with visual impairments who rely on listening to words because they cannot see what is written on the board or notice the speaker’s body language.

Teachers can also help all learners, particularly those with intellectual and communication difficulties, by:

- using the learners’ mother tongue or local language whenever possible
- using large clear handwriting on the board or in exercise books
- using simple vocabulary.

All teachers

Hand signals

Clear hand signals can reinforce instructions. This can help to keep learners’ attention, particularly if they are easily distracted or experience other communication difficulties. A hand signal can help the teacher to establish communication, for instance, if a learner did not notice that the teacher had started speaking or was asking a question.



Photo: Karin Beate Nosterud/Save the Children

Learning sign language, Afghanistan

Even if teachers do not speak sign language, simple clear hand signals can help learners with hearing impairments to understand more of what is being said. This is not ideal, but it may help teachers to start communicating with learners with hearing impairments while they look for more help with sign language. Hand signals also help if the teacher is having to speak a different language from the child's mother tongue.

More
confident
teachers

'Traffic light' system

This involves using coloured cards (or pieces of cloth) to communicate with learners or to give instructions. For instance:

- a green card held up by the teacher might mean “start the activity” or “you may leave the classroom”
- an orange card might mean “you have 5 minutes left to finish the activity”
- a red card could mean “stop what you are doing”.

This technique often makes it easier for the whole class to quickly notice what the teacher wants them to do. At the same time, it can be vital for children who have limited vision or learning difficulties.

Children or young people who cannot easily speak can use similar cards or pieces of cloth to communicate with their friends, teacher or support assistant. For example:

- green could mean “I am OK and I do not need help”
- orange could mean “I am unsure of something and I need help”
- red could mean “please leave me as I am angry/upset and need some time to myself”.

Learners will need time to practise the different meanings. To help visually impaired learners, teachers can use different shapes of card/cloth as well as different colours.

More
confident
teachers

Repetition

Repeating and revisiting the main learning points from a lesson can help learners (especially those experiencing learning difficulties and behavioural problems) to pick up on things they did not notice or understand before. When repeating, teachers:

- should not just present the information in exactly the same way as before
- should find a different way to convey that information, e.g., using a picture rather than words, or using a different example
- can divide information into several smaller points
- can try moving to a different part of the room to maintain learners’ attention (so long as this doesn’t confuse learners with visual and hearing impairments).

More
confident
teachers

Maintaining interest

A good teacher always tries to help all the learners in their class to do the best they can. One important way of doing this is to make sure everyone stays engaged in the lesson. Teachers can:

- try to **keep the lesson plan simple**. Do not try to achieve lots of learning objectives at once. Children and young people with learning difficulties may get confused if they receive many different instructions or new information at once. Those with hearing or

visual impairments may not follow the lesson if there are too many different messages or instructions given. Simple lesson plans help every learner, but if teachers don't stick to a clear, simple plan they risk completely blocking some learners from learning

- **use clear language** and explain difficult words. This will help every learner, not just those with learning or communication difficulties
- **use a mixture of 'thinking and doing' activities** in each lesson (see above for ideas)
- **observe each other's lessons.** Teachers can give feedback to colleagues on whether they found their lessons interesting and lively. They can suggest ways to make the lessons more engaging
- encourage democracy in the classroom by **asking learners to vote on how interesting a lesson was.** Learners could draw a happy, neutral or sad face on the board, or place a stone in a 'happy' or 'sad' pile on the floor as they leave the lesson. This can show the teacher whether they understood/enjoyed the lesson or not, and teachers can learn which activities the learners prefer
- use plenty of **revision and consolidation** of points covered in earlier lessons, related to the current topic. This helps everyone make good progress, but is essential for those who missed out on previous lessons.

All teachers

Tips for all teachers on inclusive class management

- Be friendly and calm, and smile.
- Learn the names of everyone in your class, and try to call them by the names they prefer.
- Notice who is active in school and in class, and who is not. Tell your supervisors and colleagues about children who do not seem to be doing well, and ask for ideas on how to help them.
- Tell learners you will be proud of them if they help others in school.
- If you meet parents of children with disabilities, encourage them to send their children to school.
- Give your class a variety of activities to do every day – e.g. reading, answering questions, discussing questions in pairs, drawing, active games, singing, dancing.
- Ask more responsible and confident learners to tell you if others need help.
- Ask learners to get together with a group of friends and come up with ideas for how they can support other children in class. Discuss their ideas and decide which they can try. Praise and recognise their efforts.

More confident teachers

Using support assistants in teaching

Support assistants can play different roles in the classroom. Teachers can ask support assistants to:

- assist a particular learner with a disability, learning difficulty or behavioural problem by helping them to read, write, communicate, understand the teacher's instructions, move around or pick things up
- assist all learners and allow the teacher more time to help those with disabilities, learning difficulties or behavioural problems during the lesson

- give one-to-one support to particular learners, or work with a small group of learners who are having difficulties
- help these learners for a while, then go back later to see how they are getting on
- join the teacher in a role play that explains the activity the class will be doing next
- work with the teacher to plan activities for the day or week, decide on learning objectives and how they will divide up their roles in each lesson.

More
confident
teachers

Classroom organisation for inclusive learning

When planning and delivering lessons, teachers should think about how the classroom is organised. Detailed advice on making the teaching space more accessible is given in Chapter 6. Teachers may also want to:

- allow learners with disabilities to sit wherever they can best see, hear, find the most comfortable space, or be next to their learning buddy
- rearrange, or encourage children to rearrange, any furniture to allow those with physical and visual impairments to move around safely and easily
- sit children and young people who have difficulty concentrating away from the doors or windows so that they do not get distracted by what is happening outside
- sit children and young people with behavioural problems where the teacher can see them easily.

8. Assessing learning

Common arguments we need to challenge:

- “There is no point assessing students with disabilities; they don’t learn anything.”
- “Learners with disabilities will take longer to complete a test – I do not have time to wait for them.”
- “There are no mechanisms for supporting learners with disabilities during their exams.”

8.1. Barriers to inclusion

Continual assessment (e.g., marking, testing, giving feedback) and taking national examinations gives learners a familiar routine in school. It sets standards that measure their progress in each subject. This helps teachers to monitor achievement and keep helping learners to achieve.

Any monitoring and assessment approach should:

- appraise the effectiveness and efficiency of the teaching, and
- assess the learning that is taking place.

Emergencies often deny learners the chance to take crucial examinations needed to progress to higher levels.

In the aftermath of an emergency, and particularly in a temporary school environment, teachers may lack confidence in developing or managing their own ongoing assessment processes if previously available support from their district education authority is weak or non-existent.

Teachers may feel particularly unable to support learners with disabilities, learning difficulties and behavioural problems through an ongoing assessment process or preparations for a national examination.

More
confident
teachers

Simplify complex assessment processes

In emergency situations, the monitoring and assessment process may involve developing simplified ways of collecting and updating data on children's progress. Teachers can:

- work together to collect and share assessment information across the school or group of schools/learning spaces
- develop self-assessment and peer-assessment processes for learners to use. This may help teachers to gather information on learners' progress even in large, diverse classes. Learners work together to develop class 'rules' for what constitutes good work, performance or behaviour and build self-reliance. This can build on existing buddy systems. It can be a good way of helping learners with disabilities, learning difficulties or behavioural problems to take part in assessments
- ask learners to think about what makes it difficult for some (e.g., those with disabilities or who experience learning difficulties for any reason) to do well in tests. Ask them to come up with ideas for making tests and assessment activities more inclusive.

More
confident
teachers

Be flexible with timings

Some learners with disabilities or who experience learning difficulties or behavioural problems get tired or distracted easily. Teachers can:

- think about the best time of day to do assessments (e.g. probably in the morning) and how long the assessment session should last (not so long that learners get tired or bored)
- make sure that everyone gets a drink and has had something to eat before a big exam, if possible
- use ongoing observation of their class to identify the best time of day for examinations/assessments
- allow learners with physical or intellectual impairments or learning difficulties additional time during assessment and exam activities, if this is permitted by the authorities. They may read or write more slowly and may not be able to complete a test in the same time as others.

8.2. Solutions

8.2.1. Key messages to convey to teachers

Children and young people are still being taught and are still learning, so monitoring and assessment of their progress is still needed.

As part of an emergency response, arrangements should be made to enable all learners to take key examinations. Even if official tests are not planned, teachers should try to monitor learners' progress and, where possible, keep records of their achievements. Teachers should be supported to use assessment to find out if their teaching approaches are successful, and they still need to celebrate learners' achievements. Assessment is particularly important to find out whether anyone has specific learning difficulties.

Trainers, managers or supervisors may need to support teachers to think through the reasonable adjustments that can and should be made in these conditions to ensure that ongoing assessment and any formal exams can continue. For testing, teachers may need particular help with working out how to make assessment and exams more accessible for learners with disabilities. They can be encouraged to use ideas that are already being used in the classroom – such as using support assistants or buddies to help learners with disabilities record their answers.

Alternatively, if assessment systems were not in place before the emergency, there may be opportunities to encourage teachers to think about how they know what progress children and young people are making, and to start recording their progress.

8.2.2. Ideas for solutions that teachers can discuss and adapt

Where paper is available, the simple step of asking learners' permission to put graded or reviewed drawings and writing on the wall can be a starting point for teachers in practising assessment.



All teachers

More confident teachers

Make the assessment or test method more accessible

Not everyone is able to read or understand the questions that might be set in a test or exam, but that does not mean they can't provide good answers. Teachers can do the following to help learners provide answers to the best of their ability:

- Support assistants, buddies or older learners who are not taking the same exam could read the questions to learners with visual impairments (if Braille papers are not available).
- These helpers could support learners who cannot write well or quickly by writing down the answers that they speak aloud.
- Ask learners to demonstrate their knowledge in practical ways, even if they cannot read questions or write answers. For example, asking a learner to build something to demonstrate their mathematical or scientific knowledge can reveal strong understanding.
- School principals can request to the exam authorities that adjustments are made for learners with disabilities during formal exams. Even if this was not previously possible, the system may have changed as a result of an emergency or crisis, so it is worth asking.

More confident teachers

Organise examination/test spaces

Children and young people who have very short attention spans or get tired easily may need to take short breaks during tests or exams. Some may need to use the toilet more often. Some learners (e.g. those with intellectual disabilities or experiencing learning difficulties) find themselves distracted by what is going on around them. Others read and write better if they can speak aloud. Teachers can:

- try to find a separate room or space that can be used by these learners so as not to disturb others
- seat learners near the door if they are likely to need to take a (supervised) break during a test or exam.

Useful resources

Overviews

Inclusive education

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Appendix: Use of terminology in this guide

Disability

Learners may have physical, sensory and/or intellectual impairments, and these are usually long-term conditions. An impairment may, to varying degrees, affect a learner's ability to fulfil daily tasks at home or in school (e.g. they may find it difficult to move, see, hear, communicate, etc). However, the extent to which a learner's impairment actually disables them depends on how accessible and supportive the environment and other people are. It is important to remember that children with impairments do not automatically experience difficulties with learning.

Learning difficulty

Around the world this term is interpreted to mean anything from an intellectual impairment (such as Down's syndrome) to a short-term problem with learning during a specific lesson. Often the term covers conditions such as dyslexia or autism. However, not everyone who experiences learning difficulties has an intellectual, sensory or physical impairment, or a recognised condition such as dyslexia. Anyone can, at some point in their life, experience a long-term or short-term difficulty with learning.

Behavioural problem

Behavioural problems are often related to the context within which learners are living. This might be, for instance, experiencing the stress of a crisis/emergency, experiencing abuse, witnessing violence, being separated from their family, etc. Learners' reactions may be reflected in their behaviour, whether by becoming quiet and withdrawn, or disruptive, aggressive or violent. Children with disabilities or learning difficulties may also experience behavioural problems, but not all children who experience behavioural problems have a disability or learning difficulty.

INEE Pocket Guide to Supporting Learners with Disabilities

All children and young people have the right to quality and safe education. In all regions of the world, children and young people with disabilities are starting to be included in schools and other non-formal places of learning. They are participating actively and successfully in learning and they are achieving. However, many learners with disabilities are still denied their rights to quality education, and do not get the support they need to learn and develop, particularly in crisis contexts.

This guide outlines some of the common challenges that children and young people with disabilities affected by crisis might face with education. It discusses some constraints or concerns that teachers might have with supporting their learning in these circumstances. The guide will help strengthen the efforts of anyone working with teachers or facilitators in a crisis context, offering practical ways to tackle these issues and welcome learners with disabilities into education programming, whether as part of the formal education system or a non-formal programme.

The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) is an open global network of representatives from non-governmental organisations, UN agencies, donor agencies, governments, and academic institutions, working together to ensure the right to quality and safe education for all people affected by crisis. To learn more please visit: www.ineesite.org.

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