

Inclusive Education in post-war instability

Iraq (Iraqi Region of Kurdistan) / Ministry of Education, and UNICEF: Inclusive Education Programme

The Inclusive Education Programme of Iraq's Region of Kurdistan demonstrates that with the help of inclusive learning materials and staff training, early intervention and Inclusive Education are possible within post-war instability and dire economic conditions.

IN BRIEF

To roll-out its early intervention and Inclusive Education practices piloted since 2004, the Iraqi-Kurdistan Ministry of Education developed the Inclusive Education Programme of 2007, with financial and technical support from UNICEF. The programme involves replicating Inclusive Education and early intervention across the region, opening early intervention centres, developing materials, and training staff. Since 2007 considerable steps towards Inclusive Education have been made.

FACTS & FIGURES

- The initial programme has expanded to Dohuk, Hawler, Sulaimany, Kirkuk, and Koya.
- While in 2007 the programme reached 316 children through 42 schools and 62 teachers, by 2010 the figures increased to 2,051 children, 318 schools, and 400 teachers.
- In 2010 seven awareness-raising seminars were implemented as well as a school campaign.
- Six early intervention centres have been opened.
- The programme's training manual and curriculum have been modified, illustrated, and translated.

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS

Best use of limited resources

The programme effectively uses existing resources (for example, overstaffing in schools) combined with additional support or with minor modifications to facilitate access to education for children with disabilities.

Involving disability advocates

The participation of parents and disabled people's organizations has played a major role in awareness-raising.

Interregional cooperation

While most of Iraq is still very unstable, the Region of Kurdistan is comparatively secure, which allows representatives from the south and central areas of the country to visit and attend training courses there.

CONTEXT

Traditionally, Iraqi children with disabilities have been offered education in special schools, and were routinely denied access to mainstream schools. Furthermore, due to two decades of war and instability, Iraq's education system was greatly diminished. In 2004 the Ministry of Education of the Region of Kurdistan developed a pilot programme on early intervention and Inclusive education, which was implemented in the city of Sulaimany. In 2007 the pilot programme was expanded and received funding and technical support from UNICEF and other partners. While Inclusive Education programmes were also implemented in other regions of Iraq, the most promising results were achieved in Iraqi-Kurdistan.

QUOTE

Our beauty is greater with knowledge, learning shoulder to shoulder. Let education benefit all of us, from generation to generation. —Bekhal Jawdat, Kurdish singer/songwriter and disability advocate

KEY FEATURES

The Inclusive Education Programme of Iraqi-Kurdistan of 2007 is a regional, non legally-binding policy. Policies, processes, and guidelines were developed to support structures within the regional Ministry of Education and the general directorates of the region in implementing the programme. Early intervention programmes were developed with families. A comprehensive curriculum for teachers, including a variety of modules and a workshop, was also developed. Monitored by UNICEF, this training benefited from the expertise of local disabled people's organizations, which, for instance, helped teachers to practice sign language. Teaching support staff and supervisors received training on how to provide the necessary support to children with disabilities in schools. The programme primarily operates within existing school budgets. Additional activities require a specific request for funding through the general budget or via UNICEF. Occasionally, organizations assist with specific needs.

OUTCOME, IMPACT, AND EFFECTIVENESS

- The complete ownership of the programme by the Ministry of Education has meant that there have been few issues with sustainability, with local ownership, with integration into existing parallel initiatives, and with rolling-out the programme.
- Modelling of inclusion and early intervention in local contexts has fostered resourcefulness and innovation among teachers.

TRANSFERABILITY, SCALABILITY, AND COST-EFFICIENCY

The programme has the potential to be implemented in the rest of Iraq and in other countries in the Middle East. Notably, it was mentioned in the 2011 Alborz study (see below), which recommended that the Iraqi Council of Ministers should draw lessons from this experience.

CONTACT

Dr. Karen CHESTERTON KHAYAT

Education Consultant

krchesterton@gmail.com

POLICY

Inclusive Education Programme of 2007 by the Ministry of Education, Iraqi-Kurdistan, Iraq

SOURCES

Alison Alborz, Establishing the foundations for an inclusive education system in Iraq, 2009:

<http://bit.ly/1ipc4aZ> - 2011: <http://bit.ly/20fuBc4>

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