



Towards Inclusive Education Initiatives from the Pacific Region



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IE in the Pacific

The Pacific region is making real efforts towards Education for All, and yet little is known about it. This booklet shares examples of positive efforts made in inclusive education (IE) by Pacific countries to provide all students with the opportunity to participate in their educational systems - both formal and non-formal. This booklet shares approaches to involve the community and ways to adapt materials, and offers techniques to include a wide range of students.

Many of the examples focus on students with disabilities because they are often excluded from school. These examples, however, can also be relevant to children who might be excluded because they are poor, work, live in isolated areas, etc.

The vignettes in this booklet represent the first steps of what is an on-going journey. By sharing these examples, it is hoped that inspiration and motivation will be provided to all who work towards realising the goal of Education for All.

We hope you enjoy the booklet!

What is Inclusive Education?

An inclusive education system welcomes and educates ALL children regardless of their gender, abilities or disabilities, economic situation, race or religious beliefs. Inclusive education is based on the following key principles:

1. A belief that all children can learn.
2. At the core of inclusive education is the right to education.
3. Regular school systems should be able to educate all learners with appropriate support mechanisms.
4. As improvements are realized, all benefit from a better quality education.
5. The process is on-going and involves children, their families, teachers, school communities and the local community.

Including Children with Individual Learning Needs

Many children, especially those with disabilities, are often presumed to not benefit from school. There is also the concern that students with special learning needs will take all of the teacher's time, and the other students will miss out and not achieve. Many teachers in the Pacific are learning to include students with special learning needs. They report that the other students learn how to communicate and problem-solve, achieve better and are more accepting of differences in society. Teachers have to learn new ways of teaching, and report that this is exciting and positive for them, too.

Samoa: Getting Junior to School

Junior uses a wheelchair. Although he lives close to his local school, the road is too bumpy for his mother to get him to school. When the principal heard about Junior, she organized a roster of the boys



on the rugby team to go to his house each day. One boy carried Junior and another boy carried his wheelchair. If Junior did not come to school, there was no rugby practice that day! Everyone got to know Junior as a smart boy – he was in the top 10 of his class.

Cook Islands – A Whole School Approach

Te Uki Ou School has developed their own Special Education Policy. It has made a commitment to have one student with special learning needs in every class. The school has worked hard to fundraise for teacher aides and volunteers to assist them. They have accepted a wide range of students, including individuals with autism, cerebral palsy, and multiple disabilities. They report that all of the students are learning to their abilities, and that the school atmosphere is positive and rewarding.



Students with special learning needs and their helpers



Getting started in Savii!

Merging a NGO “Special School” with a Primary School in Samoa

A primary school in Samoa and a non-governmental organization (NGO) that provides education to children with special learning needs

are merging together. The primary school has adopted an “inclusive” approach, and has begun to include the students from the NGO “Special School.” At the moment, the students from the NGO are making regular visits to their new



All students playing together

school, the teachers are undergoing more training and administrators are addressing accessibility issues.

Supporting Students in Solomon Islands

The teachers at the Red Cross Special Development Centre attended a seminar on inclusive education. They were very inspired and decided to make a positive change. In the past, if a student was having difficulty at school, the teacher would send them to the Red Cross Centre. Now, every Friday, two of the teachers go out to the schools that have students with special learning needs and assist the classroom teachers. In this way, the students can remain within their regular class and community. This also means that teachers get support to learn new ways of teaching. Everyone wins!



Resources

Lack of resources is one of the most often cited reasons why teachers and schools feel they cannot include all children. This includes specialized materials, adaptation of curriculum and people

to help. Some good ideas have been initiated to show just what can be done to create resources and thereby ensure that all students can be part of their school community.

Resources for a Visually Impaired Student in Kiribati

The class of a student with a visual impairment took a field trip to collect shells and small rocks to make braille materials. Everyone



was involved, which meant the teacher did not have to do all of the work, the other students got to learn about the braille alphabet and the visually impaired student now has materials and caring classmates to help her learn.

Using the UNESCO Toolkit in Samoa



Four primary schools are using the *UNESCO Toolkit for Creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments* to develop their inclusive practices. Each school is looking at how to involve their community, how to address the barriers that prevent children from attending school and ways to develop more inclusive classroom practices. Each

school has set their own goals and objectives. They are receiving support from the Ministry of Education, Sport & Culture and from the Special Needs Education Advisory Committee. Following the results and lessons learned from these four schools, Samoa is going to adapt and translate the Toolkit, and implement this process with every school in the country!

And Another Example in Samoa...



This girl has written work prepared for her each day by her peers. It is in big letters to help her see better. Her peers get extra practice by writing her work in big letters for her and, once again, the teacher has utilized a wonderful resource – other students!

Cooperative Learning in Fiji

Cooperative learning is a way of utilizing the combined skills of a group of students in order to achieve an outcome. This photo shows a group of students learning to plant taro. Some of the students are disabled. This means that some students who are strong can do the digging, some can do the counting and calculations



of how deep to dig, some do the planting and one student who has a mental disability takes care of the shovels. He is called the “equipment manager,” and his role is a valued part of the team effort.

Posters in Vanuatu

This young boy and his family are part of a poster campaign to promote the right to education for all children, as well as other



human rights. Many families do not understand that ALL children have the same rights. Although this young boy has a physical disability, his parents support his going to school. They are very positive role models for their community.

Utilising the Community

Inclusive education recognizes that the whole community needs to be involved in order to ensure that ALL children receive the education that is their basic human right. This means that we have to think about who is in our communities and how they can support the process of inclusive education.

In the Pacific region, most school communities include the following as part of their community:

- Parents and family members
- Teachers, principals, school boards, school review officers

- Local leaders – church, community leaders, women’s committees, youth groups, etc.
- Local health workers
- Local business – shopkeepers, bus drivers
- Local sports groups
- Local parent groups and disabled people’s organisations

Schools can use their community to assist by helping with fund-raising, providing parent-to-parent support, helping with transport, counselling, being an assistant/helper to the teacher, teaching cultural skills (weaving, cooking), helping identify students not in school, promoting public awareness, and helping with school supplies. Churches can include ALL children in Sunday school and youth groups. Nurses/health workers provide parents with knowledge, and can help find children who do not attend school. Members of disability-related organizations can give talks to schools, raise public awareness and suggest ways to include children.



Tonga School Sports Day

This is a big community event that allows each school to showcase its students. In 2004, for the first time, this event included students

with disabilities from the NGO School for the Disabled. The disabled students were assigned to various schools, and trained for the event with their peers. On the big day, they marched alongside one another and competed together.



Training together

The message was a very positive one: The many people who attended this event were able to see that students with disabilities are able to learn and participate together with their fellow students.



Marching together



Enjoying the event together

Kiribati's Te Toa Matoa

Te Toa Matoa (TTM) is the Disabled People's Organisation that aims to promote disability awareness in all communities of Kiribati. In 2003, it was commissioned to produce and deliver a play to illustrate some of the issues that adults and children with disabilities face

daily. These included issues of prejudice, lack of opportunities for education, work and others. Their play “But What About Jane?” was taken to many of the islands and communities in Kiribati, and has helped the community to become more aware of the rights of those with disabilities. This has meant that schooling is now seen as an important issue for ALL children.



TTM performing in a village maneaba



*Disability awareness play “But What About Jane?”
performed in the village*

Samoa - Parents As Helpers and Teacher’s Aides

Many times teachers feel they cannot manage a classroom of students without some additional support. In Samoa, some schools are recruiting parent volunteers to assist specific students in the classroom setting. The parents perform a valuable role, learn more skills and, most importantly, help children stay in school, learn and achieve. They also bring a positive message to their communities by showing that they are committed to assisting children who might typically be excluded from school.



Parent helping student with Down's Syndrome



Parent and child learning sign language

Surveys in the Pacific

In the past five years, many Pacific countries have conducted surveys to help identify all those with a disability. This has meant that many children not attending school have also been identified. Many community members have been active in this work. This includes parents of children with disabilities, disabled people, and community members such as teachers, nurses and pastors. The surveys have provided many opportunities for communities to learn about the issues facing those who are excluded from normal experiences like school.



Surveys in the Solomon Islands identified many children who are not attending school

Surveys have been or are being conducted in Samoa, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Tokelau, Tonga, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.



*People with disabilities
educate village
communities in Samoa*



Identifying children in Vanuatu

Parent Support Groups and Networks

In some countries, parents of children who are excluded from school are beginning to get together to learn about their children's needs and rights to an education. These parent groups help the families learn more about their children, as well as about ways to advocate for their right to an education. Some of these groups have been working with their governments to ensure that ALL children are educated.



Parent support groups in Kiribati and Samoa



And some more examples.....

- One of the fieldworkers in Vanuatu is working with other NGOs to help schools in outer islands include all of the children in their village.
- Year 8 Night School, Auala Primary School in Samoa offers night classes for students who have to work during the day. The classes focus on preparing for the year-end national school exam.
- Sign language community classes every Wednesday afternoon. The class is offered to all members of the community of Auala and the District of Asau in Samoa. The goal of this programme is to educate villagers in sign language to facilitate communication with the community's hearing impaired members.
- Auala Literacy Volunteer Programme. In the Auala Primary School in Samoa, parents of students and members of the village volunteer with a literacy programme. The volunteers read with the children daily. They work on reading comprehension, pronunciation, and other reading skills.
- In the Cook Islands, the College of Education assisted with the production of a number of TV buildings, schools and streets are in the community.
- In Kiribati, the NGO Te Toa Matoi is providing a programme for young women with disabilities to learn literacy skills. Some of these have continued their studies in other subjects, such as learning computer skills.
- The National University of Samoa has made compulsory for all students training to become teachers to complete an introductory course on inclusive education. In addition, it offers five more courses in teaching and supporting children with special education needs.

- The Loto Taumafai Early Intervention Programme is a new development in Samoa (about one year old now). It aims to identify and support children who have disabilities or are at risk in other ways. They provide support/home visits/interventions and promote the rights of all children. Their team includes parents and several people who are deaf so that they can relate directly and with credibility to the families they meet. An inclusive team with an inclusive approach!
- In 2003, a manual to help teachers in regular schools to include children with disabilities was produced in Samoa. With permission from the Ministry of Education, Inclusion International has made this into a generic manual and distributed it widely throughout the Pacific. The manual is called *Including Children with Special Learning Needs in Village Schools: A Teacher's Manual*.

What will you do to help ensure ALL children in your community have access to schooling?

