



## Preparing Teachers for Inclusive Education

by CRS Vietnam







# How-to Guide Series

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## *Preparing Teachers for Inclusive Education*

*by CRS Vietnam*

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## How-To Guides:

Child Participation in Education Initiatives, CRS Zimbabwe

Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities, CRS Vietnam

Integrated Community Literacy for Development, CRS Guatemala

Student Dropout Prevention and Response, CRS Kosovo

Child-led School Health Education Programs, CRS Ghana

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## Letter from CRS Education Technical Advisors

Dear friends and colleagues,

We are pleased to present this latest edition in our CRS education “How-to” series, *Preparing Teachers for Inclusive Education*, created by CRS Vietnam.

The “How-to” guide series was created as an opportunity for CRS country programs and their local implementing partners to highlight and share an aspect of their work that has been particularly successful. Instead of presenting a detailed description of their program history and accomplishments, however, the focus of the guides is on the practical steps that CRS country programs and partner organizations can take to adopt similar activities.

The recommendations will need to be interpreted for each particular context, but the topics addressed in each guide are ones that would strengthen and improve any existing program: how to establish child-led school health education programs; how to utilize a cluster approach for capacity-building in schools; how to develop effective school improvement plans.

This guide from CRS Vietnam addresses teacher preparation for inclusive education. It is the second guide produced by CRS Vietnam; the first, *Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities*, provides background and a more general introduction to inclusive education. This guide focuses more specifically on how to prepare teachers to work with children with disabilities. Teachers are a critical component to creating inclusive classrooms that allow children with disabilities to learn and thrive. Careful attention to teacher preparation is therefore a must if we are to continue to ensure that this marginalized group has access to quality education today.

This guide presents many useful suggestions for ways to do this. Some are simple and others require extensive collaboration with national level policy makers. We hope that the lessons provided here will assist you in improving the quality of teacher preparation within your own context.

Best wishes,

Anne Sellers

CRS Education Technical Advisor

Michael Pozniak

Education Consultant

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## Letter from CRS Vietnam Country Representative

Dear friends and colleagues,

CRS Vietnam is pleased to present the second How-to Guide on Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities, concentrating on preparing teachers and improving their overall teaching skills and methods for inclusive education.

CRS Vietnam has been supporting children and youth with disabilities for more than twelve years with continuous assistance from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) via the Leahy War Victims Fund and Displaced Children and Orphans Fund.

One of the key lessons learned from our work on inclusive education in Vietnam has been the importance of involving relevant ministries, universities and education administrators. The involvement of these important actors has helped to ensure that national level policies are enacted which ultimately benefit children with disabilities and their families and teachers. Working closely with local partners, CRS has contributed to a series of Vietnamese government legal documents, including the National Action Plan to Support People with Disabilities 2006-2010, the Inclusive Education Strategy 2006-10 with a Vision to 2015, and a draft Law on Disability (2009), which was officially passed by the National Assembly in 2010.

CRS Vietnam is committed to responding to traditional as well as emerging needs of the country, supporting education, health and HIV-AIDS care, and emergency relief in ten provinces in all three regions. Inclusive education will remain the priority for our education program as people with disabilities and their families comprise one of the largest groups in Vietnamese society who are not yet benefiting significantly from the country's economic growth.

We look forward to working with our partners towards innovative solutions, improved support and full social inclusion of children and youth with disabilities. We also look forward to sharing more lessons learned and best practices with other CRS country programs with similar experiences. Most of all, we look forward to seeing a new generation of successful school graduates who work and study hard to overcome their impediments and bravely embrace new life opportunities despite their disabilities. As one of our students said at her graduation ceremony, "I believe that when you try to live a useful life, happiness will smile with you."

Sincerely,

Sanda Richtmann

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## 1. Introduction: What is this guide about and who is this guide for?

Inclusive education has been internationally recognized as a philosophy for attaining equity, justice and quality education for all children, especially those who have been traditionally excluded from mainstream education for reasons of disability, ethnicity, gender or other characteristics. While inclusive education has been implemented successfully in many countries, other countries are still in the process of achieving this goal. This How-to Guide is the second produced by CRS Vietnam. The first guide, *Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities*, provides background and a more general introduction to inclusive education. This guide aims to help CRS and partner education programs prepare teachers to implement successful models of inclusive education at the school level. It builds upon the previous publication while focusing more specifically on issues relating to teacher training and human resource development. Though the Vietnamese experience may not be universally applicable in all country contexts, it is hoped that the examples provided will serve as a reference of core themes that can be tailored to suit individual country needs.

## 2. Inclusive Education in Developing Countries

Inclusive education is defined by UNESCO as a process of *addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners by increasing participation in learning and reducing exclusion within and from education*<sup>1</sup>. This means that all children have the right to a quality education that caters, to the extent possible, to their individual needs. Some countries have been successful in promoting inclusive education practices and policies that remove barriers and create conditions which enable all children to learn. However, in poorer developing countries, the process of creating an inclusive system is more difficult. Factors such as lack of available funding, administrative and policy level support, and trained personnel pose challenges that can slow down progress. As a result of these difficulties, some countries may choose to begin the process by first focusing on one group of children with the long-term goal of eventually including all excluded groups.



*Inclusive education brings equal opportunities for children with disabilities*

In Vietnam, for example, the inclusive education movement targets children with disabilities,

1 UNESCO. (2005). Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring access to education for all.



a group that has been traditionally excluded from educational opportunities. This involves mainstreaming children with disabilities into regular classroom settings, allowing them to learn together with their non-disabled peers. Ideally, this practice will lay the groundwork for an education of quality for *all* children, including other excluded groups. However, inclusive education in Vietnam and many other developing countries is still a work in progress, and for now, Vietnam continues to focus on inclusion of children with disabilities.

In Vietnam, as well as in other developing countries, the government has recognized the importance of inclusive education in promoting social justice and equity. One major difficulty that Vietnam and other countries face is ensuring that human resource development can support these important initiatives. This guide provides suggestions and best practices for how to create a work force that can support these objectives.



*Inclusive education brings joy and happiness to the life of children with disabilities*

### 3. Three Essential Components for Capacity Building in Inclusive Education

#### Fundamentals for Capacity Building in Inclusive Education

1. Increase Awareness and Attitudinal Change through Advocacy
2. Create a Future of Trained Professionals: Pre-Service Training
3. Build on Existing Human Resources: In-Service Training and Professional Development

When developing human resources to support an inclusive education system three areas must be considered: the attitudes of teachers and education staff, pre-service training programs to help ensure that future generations of teachers enter the profession with the skills and knowledge to work in an inclusive environment, and in-service training to improve

“It is vitally important that teachers, principals and other education stakeholders maintain a positive attitude towards inclusion.”

the capacity of teachers already working in the field. This section provides an overview of these three components, with more detailed descriptions in the following sections.

### 3.1 Attitudinal Changes and Awareness Raising

For inclusive education to succeed, it is vitally important that teachers, principals and other education stakeholders maintain a positive attitude towards inclusion. They must be firmly convinced of the benefits that inclusive practices bring to all children. Even if inclusive education is mandated by law, it will never succeed without the enthusiastic support of its practitioners. Obtaining

such support involves behavior and attitudinal change which is not a quick or easy process. There are a number of ways to accomplish such change, and the following are examples of activities and strategies that have been used successfully in the CRS Vietnam program.

- Organize training workshops for educators and key community members on general inclusive education techniques, especially those which highlight how such techniques can benefit *all* children by improving overall quality of teaching.



Classroom teacher engages non-disabled student in group work with her disabled peer

- Integrate awareness about inclusive education into schools' regular professional development activities.
- Integrate knowledge about the benefits of inclusive education into initial training programs for student teachers in colleges and universities.
- Develop mass media activities and materials that emphasize the value of inclusive education. CRS Vietnam has developed several films that demonstrate the success of children with disabilities in inclusive settings, as well as effective inclusive lessons by teachers in different parts of the country. CRS Vietnam has found that increasing awareness about inclusive education improves the confidence of teachers in their ability to teach students with diverse learning needs.
- Increase awareness of the many benefits of inclusive education through the interaction of educators and key community members with people with disabilities. In Vietnam, CRS has utilized special events such as International Disability Day and invited different members of the community to participate and gain awareness. Inviting members of existing disabled people's organizations to discuss disability issues with teachers is also a good way to change attitudes and provide knowledge. CRS Vietnam has found that increased interaction helps to bring about mutual understanding and respect. People with disabilities should also be encouraged and helped to become trained teachers themselves.



*Child with disability is helped by his non-disabled peer*

### **3.2 Pre-Service Training Programs**

In order to build human resources in the field of education, training must be done both at the pre-service and in-service levels. Pre-service training refers to training individuals before they become teachers. This includes training at teacher training colleges and universities at both the national and provincial levels.

Ideally, inclusive education should be a compulsory subject for all teacher candidates and an integral part of teacher training curricula. Fundamental knowledge and skills of inclusive education, such as understanding needs and abilities of children with special needs and pedagogic skills such as instructional accommodation and activity differentiation, should be provided widely to teacher candidates. Countries with strong track records of implementing inclusive education, such as the United States and

Australia, have adopted this model for a long-time. As a long term goal, countries should work towards promoting inclusive education as a compulsory subject in pre-service training programs.

In countries where such courses are not yet compulsory, developing a teaching module or unit in inclusive education in lieu of changing the entire curriculum can be an effective first step. CRS Vietnam has successfully developed inclusive education modules that are used at some teacher training colleges and universities. At the same time, staff continues to work with the Ministry of Education and Training to advocate for compulsory inclusive education modules in all training curricula as a future goal. Section 4 of this guide provides a more detailed description of how to create change at the pre-service training level.

### 3.3 In-Service Training Programs

In-service training includes professional development for teachers who are already working in the classroom. In addition to developing the skills of professionals before entering the workforce, it is essential that teachers already teaching be provided skills and techniques for inclusive education. Teachers in many countries are required to upgrade their professional skills on an annual or regular basis to enhance their teaching performance. In-service training programs offer a



*Pre-school teachers enjoy thematic training on inclusive education*

particularly effective strategy to improve the quality of an entire educational system for all children regardless of their needs. Inclusive education methods are child-centered, employing active and participative learning techniques that improve teachers' capacity to teach children both with and without disabilities. Collaborative and participative techniques not only enhance learning outcomes, but also reduce prejudice and discrimination among children.

Regardless of whether countries have adopted inclusive education as a national mandate or are still in the pilot stages, this type of training will have a positive impact on all teachers and children in participating schools. In-service training is further discussed in Section 5 of this guide.

## 4. Pre-Service Approaches: Working with Teacher Training Institutions

“*The earlier in life that children with special needs receive educational support, the more successful their schooling will be in later years.*”

### 4.1 Focusing on the Preschool and Primary School Levels

While pre-service teacher training in inclusive education should be available for all levels of education (preschool, primary and secondary), in developing countries where that is not possible it is important to prioritize preschool and primary school levels.

The earlier in life that children with special needs receive educational support, the more successful their schooling will be in later years, and the higher their quality of life as adults. Early intervention for children, including linkages to early childhood health programs and preschool inclusive education programs, should be

a priority in any country context. In reality, however, in many countries these programs are underfunded and poorly staffed, especially where compulsory education in state schools generally begins at the primary level. If possible, inclusive strategies should begin at the preschool level (age 3 to 6) in order to assist children earlier in life. In countries where intervention at the preschool level is not possible, primary schools may offer a more accessible alternative for systemic change towards inclusion.

In addition to the clear benefits of early intervention, preschool and primary school are logical starting points due to feasibility of application and implementation in the field. Usually, preschool and primary school teachers receive general training in the key subjects of language, mathematics, and natural and social sciences, while training for secondary

teachers requires more in-depth specialized knowledge of a variety of specific academic disciplines. Preschool and primary school children are usually taught by a single teacher or a small group of teachers and teaching assistants. Students therefore spend more time with their teacher and have a greater number of interactions with that one instructor. Children at junior and senior secondary levels receive instruction from a much greater variety of teachers. Therefore, in order to have a wider reach, pre-service teacher training programs for inclusive education should target preschool and primary school teachers first before expanding to higher educational levels.



*A primary student with hearing difficulties receives extra support from his teacher*

## 4.2 Targeting Local Needs

When creating teacher training programs or developing curriculum adaptations it is very important to find out about existing national educational guidelines. This allows



*University and college lecturers enjoy doing group work in an inclusive education training*

for the creation of inclusive education modules that complement and integrate into the pre-service curriculum. This can be done by understanding the local context and considering the following questions.

## Questions to Consider When Creating an Inclusive Education Curriculum

- What is the current staff structure of your country's education system?
- Are there built-in supports for teachers integrating children with diverse needs in the classroom?
- Do classroom teachers in your country have the skills and training to teach children with special needs in regular classes?
- Is there a cadre of teachers who are experts in special needs education?
- Who regulates the job requirements of teachers?
- Are teachers required to teach all children regardless of their special needs?
- Do the regular pre-service teacher training curricula provide essential knowledge and skills for student teachers to teach children with diverse needs?
- Are training institutions willing and able to integrate inclusive education into their education programs regardless of government requirements?
- What are the current policies in your country to support both education staff and children with disabilities?

With this information, development practitioners, educators and policy makers can work together to decide on appropriate ways to prepare teachers to teach children with special needs. Different steps can be taken based on the local context and the situation of the national educational legislation.

### *Countries with Strong Educational Support:*

In some countries, the educational system supports inclusive education by providing specialist teachers and/or aides to assist within the regular classroom. These individuals provide support either by working alongside teachers in the classroom, as is the case with teacher assistants, or during “pull out” sessions where the children spend some time out of the classroom to receive specialized services. In these cases, it may be appropriate to develop a separate course in special education at teacher training colleges for these specialist teachers.

However, even when teachers choose to focus on special education training, inclusive education strategies can improve their teaching skills and provide increased opportunities for them to work in a variety of educational settings.

#### *Countries where Classroom Teachers are Responsible for Children with Varying Levels of Needs:*

In countries that lack resources to pay for specialized support staff, regular classroom teachers are responsible for all children with and without disabilities. In this case, promoting inclusive education training modules that can be integrated into the regular teacher training college curriculum would be more appropriate.

### **Inclusive Education Teacher Training in Vietnam**

In Vietnam, there are two options for teacher training at the pre-service level. Individuals who wish to become teachers can study either at four-year universities or at three-year teacher training colleges. Both types of institutions exist at both the national and provincial level. University teacher training programs tend to focus more on theories of education and prepare teachers for education management positions as well as classroom teaching. These programs have a more selective application process. Teacher training colleges focus more on the technical skills of teaching. The different programs for pre-service training in Vietnam vary in terms of whether or not inclusive education is included as a required core course. Some universities and colleges have managed to include inclusive education as a required core course, while others simply offer the course as an optional elective. The courses in inclusive education all include the following components:

- Fundamentals of inclusive education (definition of inclusive education, key concepts, and the history of the inclusive education movement)
- Overview of children with special needs
- How to create an Individual Education Plan
- How to design and adapt activities for children with special needs
- How to assess learning outcomes of children with special needs

While inclusive education is still not a compulsory component of pre-service training for all colleges and universities in Vietnam, there have been great improvements in the number of institutions that do offer some type of inclusive education training. CRS Vietnam, partners and stakeholders continue to advocate for its inclusion as a compulsory subject at all levels.



## CRS Vietnam: Success at the Pre-Service Level

As a result of CRS' advocacy with program partners and education stakeholders, inclusive education is now included as a core required course for all students specifically majoring in Preschool Education at three-year teacher training colleges in Vietnam. Recognizing the importance of early intervention, these institutions ensure that future preschool teachers will be well equipped with skills and strategies to be effective teachers for children with diverse needs. CRS Vietnam and all involved parties continue to advocate for compulsory inclusive education curriculum at all levels of teacher training.

### 4.3 Creating a Network of Key Training Institutions

#### *Create Change through Partnerships with Teacher Training Colleges:*

In countries where inclusive education has not become a compulsory subject in pre-service programs, the development of teacher training modules in inclusive education is best achieved by working in partnership with local teacher training universities and colleges. CRS Vietnam worked with provincial teacher training colleges to modify the existing curriculum to include teacher training modules on early intervention. Through collaboration with these colleges, CRS Vietnam was able to provide preschool teachers with knowledge regarding how to screen and identify children with disabilities from an early age. This, in turn, allowed teachers to provide students with educational support from a very early age.

Working with local training institutions is an effective way of disseminating information both at the pre-service and in-service levels. Schools in Vietnam usually have a close relationship with their provincial teacher training colleges. In Vietnam, as well as many other countries, faculty from teacher training colleges are responsible for training teachers both at the pre-service and in-service level. In Vietnam, teacher trainers at these colleges were able to use inclusive education modules for both teacher trainees and teachers already employed by local schools. This partnership allowed for practical application of inclusive education modules and allowed for subsequent adjustment and adaptations when the need arose.

#### *Identify Key Networks:*

In addition to partnering with local provincial teacher training institutes, in countries where inclusive education is a new idea and not yet an established policy, it is helpful to develop a network of key training institutions which can act as experts on

inclusive education at the national level. The chosen institutions should ideally have some expertise in special education. In Vietnam, seven national level pedagogical institutions (four universities and three colleges) make up the key network for inclusive education pre-service training. These institutions have identified interested faculty members who received intensive training in inclusive techniques, either through CRS or the national government. With this specialized training, the faculty members formed a network of key lecturers/trainers who functioned as expert consultants for other teacher training institutions. This key network has become a national resource for training and support of teachers at the local level.

#### *Provide Inclusive Education Knowledge and Skills:*

Key lecturers/trainers can receive their inclusive education training in a number of ways. In Vietnam, some key lecturers attended a series of in-service training courses offered by international consultants locally as well as overseas. CRS Vietnam provided this key network with several trainings run by experts in inclusive education from Australia and the United States. Other key lecturers obtained formal pre-service training in special education practice locally or overseas. It is important to note that key lecturers receive training with the obligation to share the benefits by replicating their training for their colleagues and students.

## 5. In-Service Approaches: School-Based Teacher Training

“Students with disabilities need strong support from their teachers in order to fully participate in class activities with non-disabled peers.”

### 5.1 Developing a Network of Key Teachers

Students with disabilities need strong support from their teachers in order to fully participate in class activities with non-disabled peers. Inclusive education requires that teachers have additional skills to be able to design inclusive lessons with a variety of activities that cater to diverse student needs. In some countries, classroom teachers are supported by a network of inclusive education coordinators, or specialist teachers, whose only job is to provide special support to both classroom teachers and students with disabilities. They collaborate with regular school staff to provide technical counseling in

lesson planning and provide direct support to students and teachers as well.

However, in many developing countries, this support model is not in place due to lack of funding and appropriately trained personnel. Therefore, it is necessary to



*Key teachers participate in group discussion in thematic training for primary teachers*

explore local adaptations and devise more feasible ways of providing support to classroom teachers and students with disabilities. CRS has piloted a successful and more cost-effective alternative in Vietnam: the development of “key teachers.”

“*The development of a network of key teachers is cost-effective because they are already part of the educational system...*”

### **Who are key teachers?**

The term “key teachers” is used to refer to groups of educators, usually school vice-principals or district education officers, who are selected based on their overall competence and interest in inclusive education. In Vietnam, key teachers were selected by district and provincial education authorities. Although they maintain their regular positions, key teachers gain additional training to provide strong technical support to classroom teachers regarding inclusive education issues. They provide this support in addition to their regular duties. In a few cases exceptional classroom teachers have become key teachers as well; however, in

Vietnam it has proven more effective to use district education officers or school leaders

such as vice-principals. This is because classroom teachers respect their authority, and they are better able to disseminate official regulations regarding inclusive education as well as good practices.

### **Why key teachers?**

The development of a network of key teachers is cost-effective because they are already part of the educational system and not a new set of specialists requiring additional funding. Key teachers are mostly school-based and often part of the local community, making this system more sustainable.

### **How are key teachers selected?**

Criteria for selection can vary depending on the expected role and tasks of the key teachers. The CRS Vietnam program uses the following criteria:

#### **Criteria for Selection of Key Teachers**

Prospective key teachers must:

- Have positive attitudes towards children with disabilities
- Hold good qualifications and pedagogical performance records
- Be confirmed as long-term resources for schools and districts by local education authorities
- Demonstrate good collaboration and communication skills
- Have good skills as a trainer and facilitator
- Have a sound professional reputation
- Possess good counseling skills

### **What do key teachers do?**

Key teachers are the core human resource for inclusive education implementation in the field. Once trained, key teachers are usually assigned to a group of three to five neighboring schools, which they visit on a rotational basis. Their visits usually coincide with the school's regularly scheduled meetings. These meetings take place in the school



*Key teacher facilitates group discussion in an awareness raising training*

once a week, usually for one or two hours. Duties of key teachers may vary according to country context and local needs, but fall into the following general categories:

### *Planning*

- Assist in development of annual plans for inclusive education implementation at school, district and provincial levels.
- Provide guidance to teachers and school leaders on the implementation of inclusive education plans, especially Individual Education Plans.

### *Monitoring and Reporting*

- Conduct field visits to monitor the implementation of inclusive education at the school level, including tracking the progress of students with disabilities, observing lessons and providing feedback to teachers.
- Write reports summarizing the results of field visits, which are then sent to the project office as well as to district and provincial offices of education.
- Make prompt recommendations to improve the learning results of children with disabilities.

### Capacity Building

- Replicate training received from external experts on inclusive education knowledge and skills for the benefit of classroom teachers.
- Organize thematic workshops for classroom teachers on teaching children with specific disabilities.
- Create opportunities for teachers to share their experiences in teaching inclusive classes.
- Coach classroom teachers on an individual or group basis when needed on specific topics or skills.



*Teacher applies what she learned from training in workshop with a student with learning difficulties*

### Technical Advice and Counseling

- Provide technical advice to school principals for inclusive education implementation.
- Provide counseling and advice to teachers on the progress of children with disabilities in their classes.
- Provide counseling and advice to parents of children with disabilities.

As mentioned previously, in Vietnam there are key teachers with both provincial and district level responsibilities. Provincial key teachers are mainly responsible for planning, supervising and capacity building on a large scale, while those at the district level focus on school-based activities by conducting field visits and coaching classroom teachers on a regular basis.

In addition to possessing general knowledge about inclusive education, each key teacher may specialize in a particular disability, such as vision or hearing impairments, learning difficulties, or speech disorders. District education departments, together with schools, usually assign key teachers an area of specialty based on the number of children with disabilities identified in the particular area.

## A Key Teacher Network in Quang Nam Province

After the start of the Inclusion of Vietnamese with Disabilities project in Quang Nam province, a network of 60 key teachers was established: 15 teachers with responsibility for educational activities in the whole province, and 45 with responsibilities in a single district. This group included education officials, school vice-principals, and experienced classroom teachers. The inclusive education responsibilities they took on when joining the project were in addition to their daily work.

The main tasks of these key teachers included:

- Developing Inclusive Education Plans for the schools or districts under their responsibility. Usually, these plans are developed at the beginning of the school year, and cover two semesters with monthly activities in each semester. The plan should be the result of discussions between key teachers and school leaders about students with disabilities in the area and the capacity building needs of the classroom teachers.
- Making regular monitoring trips to schools. Each key teacher is required to make one monitoring trip per week, visiting a different school each week. Thus, a key teacher with four schools would visit each school once per month. During these trips, key teachers observe lessons then give comments and recommendations to classroom teachers. A monitoring report is produced after each visit which is sent afterwards to the district education department and CRS together with other related documents to help CRS follow up on further capacity building needs.
- Facilitating thematic workshops for classroom teachers to gain knowledge and share teaching experiences.



*Teacher encourages disabled child to join a singing activity*

## Encouraging Key Teachers: Non-Financial Incentives

In Vietnam, teachers who work in specialized schools for children with disabilities receive an extra 70% of their salary. However, there are no financial incentives for teachers who work with students with disabilities in regular schools and key teachers are no exception. It is the government's policy that inclusive education should become part of the regular education system, not a special service that requires extra incentives for teachers to do the job. This poses a challenge as it can be difficult to motivate regular classroom teachers to take on additional tasks. Acknowledging the difficulties that key teachers face when taking on inclusive education tasks, the project in Vietnam provides a very small travel allowance for each monitoring trip. Another strategy is to provide creative ways to reward key teachers for their time and effort. Sometimes schools show their gratitude by giving special (non-financial) awards to key teachers, such as a certificate of recognition for their commitment. In addition, becoming a successful key teacher is looked upon favorably by educational authorities and can lead to promotion.



## 5.2 Capacity Building for Key Teachers

Most of the initial training courses for key teachers in Vietnam, such as the network described above in Quang Nam, are conducted by lecturers and trainers from national-level colleges and universities. In order to build capacity, all key teachers receive training in three areas: awareness raising, thematic issues, and the coaching process. Each type of training is described below.

### Awareness Raising

For awareness raising training, key teachers are provided background information and general knowledge about inclusive education and disability issues. Expected outcomes include:

Knowledge	Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Different approaches for educating children with disabilities, such as inclusive education and special education, to highlight the needs of children with disabilities and the benefits of inclusion</li> <li>■ Rights, abilities and potential of children with disabilities</li> <li>■ Theories, rationales and current trends of inclusive education</li> <li>■ Disability related issues such as: the definition and identification of major disability types, the general impact of disabilities on physical and intellectual development of a child, disability laws and rights of people with disabilities (including the right to education)</li> <li>■ Necessary support for the inclusion of children with disabilities at schools and in communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Advocacy skills to promote the inclusion of children with disabilities</li> <li>■ Communication skills to mobilize out-of-school children to attend school</li> <li>■ Assessment skills to monitor children's performance and progress</li> </ul>

## Thematic Issues

Thematic training on specific types of disabilities should be provided to key teachers after the general awareness raising training. Ideally, key teachers should learn about all major types of disabilities so that they can assist teachers in schools where there are children with a variety of disabilities. In reality, however, it can be difficult to mobilize all key teachers to attend all thematic trainings due to budgetary constraints and busy work schedules. A practical solution is that key teachers choose one particular disability so that they become the resource person for their chosen area of focus. For example, within CRS' Inclusion of Vietnamese with Disabilities project, after the awareness raising training, key teachers were asked to choose their area of specialization. Their decision was based on various factors: the prevalence of a particular disability in their schools, the lack of specialists for a certain disability in their region, or personal interest.

For thematic training, expected outcomes include:

Knowledge	Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Needs and abilities of students with specific disabilities</li> <li>■ Different teaching methods to support students with specific disabilities</li> <li>■ How to plan a lesson to include children with disabilities</li> <li>■ How to create Individual Education Plans</li> <li>■ Strategies to assess progress of children with disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Assess abilities and identify needs of children with disabilities</li> <li>■ Develop lesson plans with specific objectives for children with disabilities</li> <li>■ Choose and deliver appropriate teaching methods to help children with disabilities achieve learning objectives</li> <li>■ Write Individual Education Plans</li> </ul>

## The Coaching Process

The third and final aspect of training is the coaching process. This component of the training was provided in response to an expressed need by key teachers themselves. Key teachers receive training as coaches in order to successfully support and mentor classroom teachers. To be an effective mentor, a key teacher must possess good counseling and interpersonal skills. For these types of skills, learning is best imparted through practical hands-on sessions.

“To be an effective mentor, a key teacher must possess good counseling and interpersonal skills.”

The coaching process for key teachers can be described in several steps:

***Step 1: Key teacher and inclusive education expert observe lessons by classroom teachers***

In this initial step, the key teacher and an inclusive education expert observe an inclusive lesson taught by a classroom teacher. These experts are hired by the project to provide training for key teachers. Experts are usually from national universities or colleges of education with which CRS collaborates.

***Step 2: Key teacher observes the coaching process demonstrated by the expert***

After the lesson, the expert coaches the classroom teacher, discussing the lesson plan and appropriateness of the teaching methods used. In addition, the expert helps the classroom teacher to evaluate the students with disabilities using the Individual Education Plan. The key teacher observes the entire process: the lesson and the interaction between the expert and the classroom teacher.

***Step 3: Key teacher observes classroom teacher and practices coaching skills***

Applying what was learned from observing the expert in Step 2, the key teacher observes a lesson delivered by a classroom teacher. The key teacher then offers similar coaching and advice based on the model provided by the expert. The key teacher continues this process of observation and coaching over a period of one or two months, allowing the key teacher to conduct several working sessions with the same classroom teachers and students. This way, both key and classroom teachers can assess students' progress together and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching methods used or adjustments made. The expert observes the key teacher's coaching and provides feedback, pointing out strengths and areas for improvement.

***Step 4: Key teachers and classroom teachers discuss learning***

After key teachers and classroom teachers have worked together on several occasions, a workshop is organized for all participants (key and classroom teachers) within a specific district to share their experiences, identify common problems, and brainstorm potential solutions. This is a forum for key teachers to reflect on what they have learned and to modify approaches if necessary. The coaching process allows key teachers and classroom teachers to be active learners and to have a voice in the type of training they receive.

## Capacity Building for Key Teachers in Vietnam

After conducting a needs assessment, CRS' Inclusion of Vietnamese with Disabilities project provided provincial and district key teachers with the following training courses:

- Training to raise awareness of inclusive education
- Training on identification and classification of disability types
- Training on inclusive education for children with learning difficulties, children with hearing impairment, children with vision impairment, and children with speech disorders
- Training on sign language
- Training on Individual Education Plans, monitoring and counseling

Key teachers reported remarkable improvements in implementing inclusive education as a result of the knowledge gained from the above training courses. However, they still lacked necessary skills to deliver what they learned from training courses to classroom teachers in different contexts. Based on the results of the needs assessment, the project designed a coaching process model to provide key teachers with hands-on experience to support classroom teachers. To prepare for the coaching process, the project coordinated with district education bureaus to select specific cases of children with disabilities at two levels (preschool and primary) with different disability types to pilot this coaching process. Documents related to these children, such as Individual Education Plans, lesson plans, and monitoring reports by key teachers were sent in advance to expert trainers before the coaching process started. From these documents, trainers were able to pinpoint both strengths and areas for improvement in the key teachers' work.

A thematic workshop was organized for each type of disability, in which expert trainers worked with classroom teachers after observing a lesson delivered by the classroom teacher in an inclusive class. Key teachers observed this process, watching how expert trainers worked with classroom teachers. After observing the expert trainers, key teachers worked directly with classroom teachers over a period of two months to monitor both the students' progress and the teachers' interventions. After this period, another workshop was organized at the district level for key teachers and classroom teachers to share and exchange experiences and ideas.



*Teacher supports a student with hearing impairment to join group work*

### **5.3 Using Observation and Reflection as Critical Tools for In-Service Capacity Building**

In countries where inclusive education curriculum has not yet become a part of teacher training programs, on-the-job training is essential for human resource development. Key teachers need to be able to transfer knowledge to classroom teachers as well as provide on-site observation and support. During thematic training sessions and coaching sessions, it is important to emphasize tools such as lesson observation and critical reflection so that key teachers become comfortable using these tools with classroom teachers. Observations are a critical component of what key teachers do, and reflecting on the feedback of experts will help key teachers to improve their own performance, and therefore the performance of classroom teachers as well.

“Teachers in inclusive classes must be adept at adjusting lessons so that children with special needs can participate.”

## 5.4 Monitoring Teachers' Learning and Progress

One of the main responsibilities of key teachers is monitoring the implementation of inclusive education by classroom teachers. Key teachers must pay special attention to the following:

- *Tailoring content and teaching methods to suit students with special needs.* Teachers in inclusive classes must be adept at adjusting lessons so that children with special needs can participate. The teacher must set out specific objectives for each

child according to his/her abilities and needs. This is a delicate process, since adjusting a learning objective too high or too low can hinder learning, and hence inclusion into the class. Key teachers assess this mostly through classroom observation.

- *Ensuring the quality of Individual Education Plans.* Classroom teachers are responsible for developing and keeping education plans of children with disabilities in their classes up to date. Key teachers check the Individual Education Plans to see if appropriate objectives have been entered and to check the progress of the children. In addition, key teachers speak with and observe individual children to verify that the contents of the plans are appropriate and accurate.

Though on-site observations are the primary means of monitoring and mentoring classroom teachers, assessments can also be done through thematic workshops. Facilitated by key teachers, these workshops provide classroom teachers in a specific locale a forum for sharing challenges and finding solutions related to a specific disability. This kind of sharing also allows key teachers to assess the major challenges faced by classroom teachers and how to strategically plan for further mentoring.

“...inclusion requires reforms and innovations at different levels of the education system.”

## 6. Inclusive Education as Systemic Change

Inclusive education is a child-focused approach to education that takes into account children's abilities, potential and diverse needs. This approach to education calls for teachers to develop creative strategies that cater to the needs of their students. Because it is a holistic approach to teaching and learning, inclusion requires reforms and innovations at different levels of

the education system. From planning lessons and objectives to differentiating activities that cater to diverse needs, inclusive education supports children in their school environment. It involves accurate assessments of children and the creation of friendly and collaborative environments for all children. As mentioned previously, inclusive education not only improves learning opportunities for children with disabilities, it also contributes to the facilitation of educational reform for better quality teaching, learning and management. Collaborative learning and task differentiation are two important aspects of inclusive education that should be considered as key tools for achieving educational quality for all children. However, in order for inclusion to be both successful and sustainable, it must be addressed at all levels of the system, from education ministries to local teachers.



*Mother of child with disability happily brings her child to school everyday*

## **6.1 Educational Management and School Initiatives**

The success of inclusive education will be limited if investment is only in classroom teachers. It is important to involve school leadership from the beginning so that they understand the basic concepts of inclusive education and give its implementation their full support. School principals and other management staff should be trained in inclusive education principles and techniques so that they are qualified to develop inclusive education strategies at their schools, and lend support to teachers. School principals have the authority to call regular meetings on the topic and to encourage learning among the teaching staff. However, if they have no background in inclusive techniques and philosophy they could prevent rather than promote successful inclusion.

## **6.2 Role of Ministries in Curriculum Development and Policy Change**

For any countries where policies on inclusive education are new, or have not yet been fully developed, it is very important to involve educational authorities at the highest level. In most countries this would mean the national Ministry of Education. There are a number of ways to involve these officials in inclusive education. CRS Vietnam has had success with the following strategies:

- Providing key policy makers and staff exposure to successful programs and involving them in dialogue with both international and national professionals and experts on inclusive education.

- Involving key Ministry of Education staff in direct activities such as curriculum development and teacher training.
- Increasing the role of policy makers in piloted programs by development agencies such as CRS. This enhances the ownership of the Ministry in facilitating the implementation of inclusive programs and strategies in the long run.
- Exposing officials to inclusive programs in other countries through study tours to observe successful inclusive teacher training models and to promote interaction with international peers.

CRS Vietnam has found that part of its success in inclusive education is due to strong collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Training. Policies on human resource development for inclusive education as well as curriculum development should be facilitated by the Ministry with technical support from CRS.

## 7. Applying Lessons Learned: Inclusive Education in Laos

Having supported education in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR or Laos) for more than ten years with support from the CRS Vietnam office, CRS set up an office in Laos in 2006 and began a project on inclusive education. Funded by USAID and CRS, the *Strengthening Community and School Support for Children with Disabilities in Lao PDR* project builds on the experiences and lessons learned from the Vietnam inclusive education program while adapting to fit the Lao context. This demonstrates that quality programming can have an impact beyond the geographic area in which it is implemented.

The project in Laos can be divided into three main components:

1. *Developing institutional capacity to implement inclusive education in Laos.* Developing capacity within the Ministry of Education, Provincial and District Education Offices and the National Rehabilitation Center.
2. *Training and supporting school staff and managers.* Improving the skills of teachers and school principals to implement inclusive education at school and community levels.
3. *Working with communities.* Strengthening the capacity of communities to support children with special needs, both in and out of school.

CRS Lao PDR has trained every teacher in all 132 primary schools in project locations in three provinces. The project benefits more than 200 children with disabilities and 15,000 students overall.

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“Preparing teachers with essential knowledge and skills for inclusive education...requires the commitment of all actors.”

## 8. Summary

The success of inclusive education in any context depends upon many factors. Teachers themselves are an essential component to ensure the quality of students' inclusion in the school environment. Teachers have direct interaction with students and play a critical role in determining students' experiences in the classroom on a daily basis. Special attention must be paid to ensure that classroom teachers have the skills and support needed to provide quality education to children with diverse learning needs. This requires the collaboration of classroom teachers, key teachers, school principals, education officers and policy makers.

Preparing teachers with essential knowledge and skills for inclusive education also requires the commitment of all actors. When desired policies are not yet in place in a country, these actors should explore different and alternative approaches to achieve the ultimate goal of providing quality education for all children. Preparing teachers does not simply mean providing prospective teachers with inclusive education skills; it is important to provide training and support for existing teachers as well. Building the capacity for inclusive education must include awareness raising activities as well as integrated pre-service and in-service teacher training programs to ensure that teachers are aware, ready and willing to bring inclusive education into action.

CRS Vietnam has had over ten years' experience working with inclusive education and has improved access to education for many children and families. Throughout this process, CRS Vietnam has learned valuable lessons that can be helpful when supporting inclusion in other country contexts. Our hope is that this guide has provided useful information on how to develop human resources to help schools create environments that are accessible to all children. While CRS Vietnam has experienced many successes in the field of inclusive education, there is still much work to be done. CRS will continue to push for change at the policy and local levels to ensure that all children have access to a quality education.

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## Acknowledgments

CRS Vietnam wishes to thank the following people for their direct and indirect support of this guide:

Dinh Thi Nguyet, Inclusive Education Program Manager and Le Thu Ha, CRS Vietnam former Education Program Officer, authors of this guide

Devon Dunsmore, former Social Work Advisor, CRS Vietnam for first editing of this guide

Nguyen Hong Giang, CRS Vietnam for administrative support

Professor Chris Forlin, inclusive teacher education consultant, Head of Department of Special Education & Counseling, Hong Kong Institute of Education

Dr. Le Van Tac, special and inclusive education specialist, Vietnam National Institute of Educational Sciences

Andrew Wells Dang, former Chief of Party, Inclusion of Vietnamese with Disabilities project and former CRS Vietnam Representative

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