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Evaluation of UNESCO's Programme for the Inclusion of Children from Various Marginalised Groups within Formal Education Programmes
Final report

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Contents

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Glossary

DFU   Dakar Follow-Up Unit

EFA   Education For All

GMR   Global Monitoring Report

GMU   Global Monitoring Unit

IS&CS   Inclusive Schools and Community Support programme

IE   Inclusive Education

NFER   National Foundation for Educational Research

SEN   Special Educational Needs

UNESCO   United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNICEF   United Nations Children's Fund

1 Introduction

In July 1994, the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality, (held in Salamanca, Spain) adopted the principle of 'inclusive education'. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) was mandated to undertake a number of tasks in order to support the development of inclusive education. One aspect of this mandate was to mobilise funds from donors to undertake an Inclusive Schools and Community Support (IS&CS) programme, *'which would enable the launching of pilot projects that showcase new approaches for dissemination, and to develop indicators concerning the need for and provision of special needs education'* (UNESCO, 1995, p. 12). UNESCO's inclusive education (IE) initiatives since 1994 have included capacity building via workshops, seminars, partnerships and networks; the development and dissemination of training materials and publications; and the development of policy guidelines with case studies as examples of practice.

Nearly a decade after the Salamanca conference, there was evidence of training activities and the development of a large amount of materials, suggesting that a good deal of advice and guidance was available for those who sought it. However, there was little recorded evidence of the outcomes of those activities and, in particular, of their outcomes on the inclusion of all children in education. There was also little evidence of the way in which the guidance has influenced practice. This information deficit went along with an increasing focus on UNESCO's own decision-making processes in selecting and working with partners.

UNESCO decided to undertake an evaluation of an area of its work, and the IE programme was chosen as the focus of this evaluation during UNESCO's 2002-2003 planning biennium (31C/5). The National Foundation for Educational Research was commissioned in October 2003 to undertake an evaluation of UNESCO's programme for the inclusion of children from various marginalised groups within formal education programmes since the Salamanca conference in 1994. $50,000 was allocated by UNESCO to fund the evaluation. In view of the extensive requirements

of the project, this funding was insufficient to embark on this evaluation and the National Foundation for Educational Research co-funded the work by $60,000, in recognition of the status of UNESCO and the importance of this work. It was intended that the results of the evaluation would be shared with the other stakeholders during events to celebrate 'Ten Years after Salamanca', planned for 2004.

1.1   Aims and objectives of the evaluation

In the terms of reference provided by the IE unit in UNESCO, the work programme was specified in the following way:

'The Evaluation will focus on:
- *Impact, results, difficulties within UNESCO's activities at different levels of implementation with particular focus on sustainability.*
- *Effectiveness of partnerships, particularly in the framework of EFA.*
- *Examine in depth materials produced by UNESCO and disseminate in support of IE, assessing their impact on the development of IE with a special focus on the modalities for distribution of the materials.*
- *Workshop activities and their impact on the development of activities to promote inclusive education, with a critical analysis of their contents and target groups.*
- *A special focus should be put on the cost effectiveness of the different modalities as to find guidance for priorities and choice of future activities*
- *A discussion on the different modalities compared to other strategies for support to provide a guide for our follow up on the Salamanca Statement. Such an activity, "Ten years after Salamanca" is planned for 2004.*
- *Risk assessment.'*

It had been agreed that UNESCO Education Section would provide logistical support for the evaluation, including information for pre-evaluative study and circular letters sent to field officers. Early on in the evaluation's progress it became apparent that UNESCO was unable to provide either the names or offices of all UNESCO staff working on IE, or records of activities undertaken or materials sent out. This absence

of material – in itself data – hindered the evaluation both in terms of the time and resources required to seek this information more indirectly and in terms of the amount of data available for analysis.

Because of these limitations in the data-gathering, changes were made to the evaluation brief, with the agreement of the IE unit. The following questions were addressed by the evaluation team:

- What has been the impact of UNESCO's activities at different levels of implementation?
- What effect has the IS&CS project had, in terms of sustainability and readiness for future development in this field?
- What has been the impact of materials produced by UNESCO on the development of IE? Have they been distributed effectively?
- What has been the impact of workshops on the development of activities to promote inclusive education?
- How sustainable is the work of the programme?
- How effective have been the partnerships between the UNESCO IE programme and other actors, particularly within the framework of Education for All (EFA)?
- How cost effective have the activities been?
- What risks are associated with the successful implementation of the programme? What measures have been taken or are needed to manage these risks?
- Which strategies should be prioritised in the future?

The scope of the evaluation was all activities undertaken in the UNESCO Inclusive Education programme from 1995 to date. The programme includes the work of the IE unit at UNESCO headquarters, as well as activities undertaken by UNESCO field offices.

1.2   Methodology

The evaluation was conducted in three phases. In the first two phases documentation was examined and interviews were carried out with UNESCO staff, sponsors and associated experts; and a questionnaire was sent to countries. This information helped in the selection of case study sites, visits to which formed the third phase of the evaluation. These three phases ensured that data were collected from a wide range of sources so that the data could be triangulated.

Documentation and Interviews with UNESCO staff, sponsors and experts

The aim of the first phase of the evaluation was to collect data that would give an overview of UNESCO activity relating to the inclusion of pupils with disabilities; the rationale for such activity; the way in which decisions about resource allocation and support were made; and the perceptions of the donors who have helped to facilitate aspects of the activity.

First in this phase was the collation of documentation relating to UNESCO's IE activities since Salamanca. Some of this information and, in particular, case studies of IE practice in a number of countries, are publicly available via the internet. The evaluation team is grateful to the IE unit for providing other publications. While it was not appropriate for the evaluation team to evaluate the content of these publications in detail – which would require the skills and experience of experts in each particular area – the documentation was useful in identifying country activities and contacts. It was also useful in contextualising information gained through interviews, particularly in the case studies where frequent reference was made to the use of UNESCO IE publications.

Secondly, the evaluation team carried out interviews with UNESCO staff. All four individuals who currently work at UNESCO's IE[1] unit were interviewed, as were two

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[1] It is recognised that this unit has had a number of different names over the past ten years, including its present title, Section for Early Childhood and Inclusive Education (EIE), which changed during the evaluation period, from Section for Combating Exclusion through Education. It is also noted that some interviewees questioned whether it could be called a 'unit' at all, as only two of its staff are directly

members of UNESCO's EFA Dakar Follow-up Unit. All but one of these interviews took place in person in Paris; the last was carried out by telephone as there was insufficient time to complete it *in situ*. In addition, telephone interviews were carried out with two former members of the IE unit.

To provide perspectives other than those of UNESCO's staff, two of the sponsors of the IS&CS programme were interviewed in their countries. In association with these visits, it was also possible to speak with five other experts and academics who have worked with the sponsors on UNESCO and other IE activities. One further expert was interviewed by telephone. These discussions provided valuable additional insights, as well as recommendations and contacts for the case study visits.

Questionnaires

A questionnaire was developed in order to obtain an overview of country and regional UNESCO IE activities in the past ten years. The questionnaire sought information on:

- length of time and reasons for involvement in the UNESCO programme
- nature of the activities and the needs of children and young people on which they focussed
- aims and operation of IE activities and how these were planned and implemented
- the range of people involved in planning and implementing the IE activities
- use of UNESCO IE publications
- monitoring and evaluation
- successes and challenges of the activities
- impact of the activities at local, regional and national level, including evidence for this impact
- suggestions for development of UNESCO IE activities.

The questionnaire was initially developed electronically, in order to save on time in overseas mailing. A French electronic version was also developed. The questionnaire was sent to all UNESCO Regional Bureaux, Cluster and National Offices for which the evaluation team had contact details; most of these were obtained from the

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employed by UNESCO. However, for ease of reference this report refers to those working in this entity in Paris as the IE unit.

UNESCO web-pages. A small number of e-questionnaires (in French or English) were sent to those who had received a paper copy (see below) but requested an electronic version. In total, 64 English and eight French e-questionnaires were sent out. Respondents were encouraged to send existing documentation in response to the questions where available.

Additionally, 187 paper versions of the questionnaire were sent out. Of these, 117 were sent to Ministries of Education, using address details from the UNESCO website, and copies of letters sent by the IE unit to the Ministries informing them of this evaluation. As these details did not include contact names, for the most part the questionnaires were sent to 'the Minister of Education', with a request that the questionnaire be forwarded to a person involved with UNESCO IE activities, an expert in SEN or other appropriate person either within or outside the Ministry. The remaining 70 questionnaires were addressed to persons known to have been personally involved in UNESCO IE activities and, in particular, the Inclusive Schools and Community Support project. These contact details were gathered from photocopies of the contracts issued to individuals by the IE unit between 1996 and 2003.

A letter from the NFER team explaining the evaluation accompanied all the questionnaires. This included a request that the recipient forward the questionnaire to the most appropriate colleague if the recipient could not complete it him/herself. The original recipient was also asked to inform the NFER team of the contact details of this colleague: a pro forma was provided for this purpose. All non-respondents were sent a reminder from the NFER team in January 2004; a second copy of the questionnaire was sent with the reminder in case the original had got mislaid.

Table 1: Questionnaire returns

Questionnaires	Number
Questionnaires sent out	259
Questionnaires returned completed	19
Questionnaires undelivered and returned to sender by post or email	17
Respondent replied without completing questionnaire because not involved in UNESCO's IE programme	12
Total questionnaires unaccounted for	211

Table 1 summarises the number of questionnaires returned. Nineteen completed questionnaires were sent back to the evaluators. Of these, two were returned in Spanish, two in French and one in Arabic. Five of the questionnaire responses suggested that there had not been any involvement in UNESCO IE activities (including the questionnaire completed in Arabic) and so these were not analysed. A total of 14 of the questionnaires contributed to the analysis for this report. These questionnaires came from a wide range of countries: four from Africa; five from South America and the Caribbean; four from Asia and the Pacific; one from the Middle East.

The evaluators also received 12 letters and emails, which explained that the questionnaire recipient had not been involved in UNESCO's IE activities and hence was not in a position to complete the questionnaire, or that the questionnaire had been forwarded to another person. Additionally, seven postal questionnaires and ten e-questionnaires were returned to sender as undeliverable as the recipient had moved away or the account name was no longer valid. In four instances a request was made for the questionnaire in an electronic format, but these were not subsequently completed.

While this represents a low response rate for a questionnaire, a number of factors have to be taken into consideration:

- It is known that not all UNESCO Regional Bureaux, Cluster and National Offices, or Ministries of Education, have participated in UNESCO IE activities. It is therefore unsurprising that some of those did not complete a questionnaire or respond to explain their non-involvement.

- The available contact details were not all up-to-date. This was evident in the number of emails and postal questionnaires that were returned to the evaluation team undelivered. Additionally, as a majority of those contacts obtained from the contracts issued by IE unit related to activities occurring in 1996-97, it would be unsurprising if many of these individuals had moved elsewhere seven years later.

- The contact details were not all specific to an individual, both in the case of UNESCO office email addresses, and for the Ministries of Education. Research experience shows that if no individual is named as a recipient, and the questionnaire is sent to a large organisation, there is a lower response than when a named individual is addressed.

With these provisos, the questionnaire returns provided some data on the country and regional operation of UNESCO in the domain of inclusive education, which were used to complement the information gathered during the case studies. The process of administering the questionnaire in itself produced data relating to the central and local operation of UNESCO that are pertinent to the evaluation, as discussed below. Furthermore, the questionnaire responses provided data to assist with the identification of suitable case study sites.

Case studies

In order to examine in more detail the country-level perception of the impact of UNESCO's inclusive education activities, case studies were carried out in three countries. The locations for the case studies were selected from a long list of 57 countries about which the evaluation team had obtained any information about country-level UNESCO IE activities. This information was gleaned from the interviews with UNESCO staff, sponsors and other experts; the questionnaire responses; country information for posting on the UNESCO IE website; and publications on IE sent to the IE unit by field officers.

From this, the evaluators produced a short-list of eight countries in which there was evidence of substantial activity in this field. Given the limited time and resources available, it was felt that it would be most beneficial for the evaluation team to visit countries where there was a range of practice from which lessons could be learnt that may be applicable elsewhere. The UNESCO offices or appropriate Ministry of Education officials in each of these eight countries were contacted, in order to ascertain the feasibility of a case study visit. As the evaluation team were reliant on these colleagues for identification of interviewees and arranging the logistics of the visits, it was vital to have their support before deciding on the final sites for case study visits.

The three fieldwork trips, each of at least seven days, took place in April 2004. Four countries were visited. Sites included:

- offices in Africa, Asia and Latin America
- two UNESCO Regional Bureaux (one of which was not the focus of a full case study but was visited to gain information in relation to an associated National Office, the other was also a Cluster Office), and two UNESCO National Offices
- one country that was involved in the IS&CS programme
- UNESCO offices that had been working on IE since 1988, 1994, 1997 and 2002 respectively.

Most interviews were carried out with the aid of a translator as the evaluators did not speak the local languages of the countries visited. In some cases the UNESCO member of staff responsible for IE was also present during the interview, acting either as translator or facilitator. Across the three case study countries, over fifty interviews, observations and visits were carried out, in many cases involving several interviewees. A total of 87 people were interviewed.

Interviews were carried out with:

- current UNESCO office staff working on IE, EFA and other areas of education, as well as heads of offices, and including both local and expatriate staff (a total of 11 interviewees)
- national, provincial and district Ministry of Education staff. At the national level, we spoke with staff working in, and responsible for, SEN departments, a director

of planning, a coordinator of early years provision, a sub-director of general education and a director of primary education. In provincial and district offices, interviewees included directors of education, and those responsible for pedagogy and/or SEN or IE (a total of 18 interviewees)

- international and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working for people with disabilities and indigenous peoples, through advocacy, training, running support centres and schools. Staff interviewed at these NGOs included locals and expatriates (a total of 12 interviewees)

- academics and expert consultants (a total of 9 interviewees)

- teacher trainers at universities and teacher training institutes or centres (a total of 4 interviewees)

- teachers and headteachers in ordinary[2] and special schools (a total of 24 interviewees)

- non-departmental government bodies, such as disability organisations funded by the government but not affiliated to a particular department (a total of 9 interviewees).

These interviewees included people
- involved in the development or translation of materials
- who had used UNESCO materials
- who had attended UNESCO-led workshops
- who had carried out or attended UNESCO-supported training
- whose position allowed them to comment on the impact of UNESCO's IE work
- who had disabilities
- who were committed to full inclusion in ordinary schools, and others who did not believe that all people with special educational needs could be educated in such schools.

We also observed lessons in special schools and in ordinary schools in which children with SEN were included. Some interviewees were not directly involved in UNESCO's IE work, but their perspectives allowed the researchers to gain a fuller

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[2] We are aware that a variety of other terms – including 'mainstream' and 'regular' – are used to describe these schools. For the purposes of simplicity the term 'ordinary school' is used throughout this report.

understanding of the country context in which UNESCO's IE work was carried out. Although their perceptions might not always have reflected UNESCO's actual practice, it is important for UNESCO to be aware of how its work is perceived by others, particularly if misconceptions are held.

It should be noted that the case studies were not necessarily representative of UNESCO's field office practice across the globe. The countries selected for the case studies were ones for which there was sufficient evidence of the occurrence of IE activities to suggest that a visit would provide valuable information for the evaluation. Other countries have different degrees of, and approaches to, involvement; there was limited evidence available as whether other UNESCO offices were as active in IE activities as those visited by the evaluators. However, the three selected countries provided examples of UNESCO's influence at the level of practice and raised a range of issues of central relevance to the evaluation.

2   UNESCO: background and involvement in inclusive education

A central focus of the evaluation was on the work of the IE unit within UNESCO. The unit has undergone changes of name, staffing and focus in the decade following the World Conference on Special Educational Needs, held in Salamanca in 1994. At that time, the unit existed as a section for Special Needs Education. Its present official title within UNESCO – 'Section for Early Childhood and Inclusive Education' – is witness to the changing context within which this unit has operated, and which it has influenced, over the past ten years.

The agenda for the IE unit was established at the Salamanca conference, when UNESCO as the United Nations agency for education was mandated:

- *'To ensure that special needs education forms part of every discussion dealing with education for all in various forums,*
- *To mobilise the support of organisations of the teaching profession in matters related to enhancing teacher education as regards provision for special educational needs,*
- *To stimulate the academic community to strengthen research and networking and to establish regional centres of information and documentation; also, to serve as a clearing house for such activities and for disseminating the specific results and progress achieved at country level in pursuance of this Statement,*
- *To mobilise funds through the creation within its next Medium-Term Plan (1996-2001) of an expanded programme for inclusive schools and community support programmes, which would enable the launching of pilot projects that showcase new approaches for dissemination, and to develop indicators concerning the need for and provision of special needs education.'* (from *The Salamanca Statement*, UNESCO, 1995, p. 12).

This texts points to the need for the unit to operate at a strategic level, acting as a catalyst to generate action from other groups and organisations in member countries, leading at the cutting edge of innovation, and enabling the analysis of feedback. There

was evidence from the evaluation that it was at this level that the IE unit can most successfully address the very formidable challenge of influencing educators across UNESCO's very heterogeneous member countries so that children with special educational needs and disabilities across these countries can have the common experience of being educated with their peers.

The IE unit is presently located within the Division of Basic Education, within the Education Sector of UNESCO. Inclusive education is one of 17 thematic areas in UNESCO's education field; others include, for example, science and technology education, peace and human rights education, and primary education. Each thematic area is the responsibility of a team of professionals charged with developing initiatives and activities (e.g. organising and preparing meetings, workshops, events, and materials). The World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 established international support for ensuring basic education for all children, and this support was reaffirmed at both the World Conference on Special Educational Needs (Salamanca 1994, see UNESCO, 1995) and the World Education Forum (Dakar 2000; see UNESCO, 2000).

Since Dakar, the international coordination of EFA has been assigned to UNESCO; within UNESCO, it is the responsibility of the Dakar Follow-up Unit (DFU), established in 2001. The Global Monitoring Unit (GMU)[3], situated within the DFU, produces annual reports of progress in relation to the EFA goals that were adopted by the World Education Forum in the Dakar Framework for Action in April 2000. The first report, *Education for All: Is the world on track?* had a general theme (UNESCO, 2002a), while the second of these reports focussed on gender (UNESCO, 2003a). The GMU's reports are used as the basis for annual discussions within the High-Level Group on Education for All[4]. The EFA cross-thematic programmes are agreed by the EFA High-Level Group and published as the 'Draft Programme and Budget'.

Since 2000 two developments within UNESCO have particularly affected the operation of the IE unit. First, as mentioned above, following the World Education

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[3] The GMU is part of the ten-member EFA Global Monitoring Report Team.
[4] This group is convened by the Director General of UNESCO, and comprises thirty Ministers of Education and of International Co-operation, heads of development agencies and civil society representatives.

Forum held in Dakar, Senegal, the Dakar Follow-up Unit (DFU) was established. IE falls within the EFA remit, whilst not being structurally linked to the DFU. Secondly, the move to decentralise much of UNESCO's operation to regional and National Offices began in 2000 (see Appendix). Previously, all UNESCO IE money was held by the central IE unit, which was responsible for the deployment of this specific budget and the activities it enabled. These developments give the framework within which the IE operates and shape its role and capacity to lead.

2.1   UNESCO and Inclusive Education

The IE unit

The work of UNESCO's IE unit has played a part in, and been affected by, changing conceptions of special needs education and the development (seen also throughout North America and Europe) from 'integration' (whereby 'suitable' children are accepted into existing, unreformed systems) to 'inclusion' (whereby all children are educated in such a way that their educational and other needs are appropriately met and all are included within the school community).

Since Salamanca, the IE unit itself has worked towards the inclusion of children with special educational needs in ordinary classrooms and has broadened the understanding of inclusion beyond a strict focus on special educational needs and disability. At the same time, it has been sensitive to the fact that specific needs may need specific expertise, experience and provision. The agenda still needed to include those with disabilities as a distinct group. As a sponsor remarked, *'If there are too many priorities, if it is too wide, it loses its focus.'*

Those interviewees who had been involved in the development of the *Flagship on Education for All and the Right to Education for Persons with Disabilities: Towards Inclusion*, which was launched at the end of 2002, commented that it illustrated some of the tensions between the all-embracing 'inclusion' (within which some disability groups feel short-changed) and the more specific focus on provision for those with disabilities. The instance illustrates the fine line upon which the IE unit walks as it is at the centre of so many different approaches and perspectives.

The IE unit and other UNESCO central activity

The present team seeks to connect IE developments to the goals established in the Dakar Framework for Action (DFA). Disabilities are not specifically mentioned in the Framework, but a member of the IE unit commented that, *'inclusiveness is mentioned and we make every possible advantage of that'*. The internal structure of UNESCO is interesting insofar as there is the danger that the IE unit's work becomes isolated from the broader, but relevant, work of DFU and Education for All. Staff said that physical proximity meant that there was informal contact. However, formal liaison seems to be largely focused on information exchange (for example, the IE unit fed into reports on the Global Monitoring Report). The DFU sought to co-ordinate the work of all the Flagships but DFU staff were not in a position to comment specifically on the success of the EFA initiative with regard to disabilities. Although there was reported to be institutional encouragement for cross-section co-operation, there appeared to be no formal requirements or strategies for this. Given the demands on staff time in their respective units and, in particular, the limited staffing capacity of the IE unit, it is unsurprising if opportunities for embedding IE into other aspects of educational activity in which UNESCO is engaged are not fully exploited. IE unit staff felt that IE should not be compartmentalised, but should be considered in all elements of education. A member of the IE unit said,

> *'We feel that our unit is a cross-cutting area whether talking about secondary education, gender – there are also girls with disabilities. We would like to see disability reflected in all sectors of UNESCO. When we are talking about inclusion we want to be included everywhere.'*

This opinion was reinforced by interviewees in two Regional Bureaux who also expressed concern over the *'compartmentalised'* nature of IE work within UNESCO. In particular, because IE is separate from EFA, they felt that the unit was perceived to have a separate identity with responsibility only for disabilities. Additionally, the unit focus of the UNESCO structure was said to remove responsibility for IE from other units, so that it was seen to be an issue addressed by two or three people in headquarters, rather than by the whole education sector.

UNESCO and national activity

Changes in the approach to special needs education has taken place at a different pace in different countries (according to curriculum issues, leadership, resources, training, other priorities) so the whole spectrum of approaches is represented in UNESCO member states. The IE unit, in working with experts at the forefront of developments in practice and policy, has to be mindful of this. The NFER evaluation team found examples of the diversity of approaches to inclusive education in the case studies and questionnaire responses although there was a general agreement among interviewees that IE involved a gradual development towards all pupils being educated in ordinary classes together.

Within countries, actual provision and practical arrangements reflected a similar diversity. While all case study interviewees were aware that systemic reform was necessary to bring about an inclusive classroom, they spoke of the present position regarding inclusion in their country/locality and of the barriers to full inclusion that yet had to be overcome. This was significant in that it showed the way that UNESCO has to be responsive to the local context and culture. For example, different groups of children were regarded as coming under the umbrella of 'special educational needs'. So, one country included 'difficult' children, children living in remote areas, girls, and children with disabilities. There was most agreement about providing for pupils with physical disabilities, sensory impairment or medical conditions. In one case, children with emotional difficulties were not regarded as having special educational needs while, elsewhere, although children with cognitive disabilities were formally included in the category, there was minimal practical experience of providing for this group. As well as children with special educational needs, across countries for which there were data, groups identified as being the focus of IE activity included: children in poverty, street children, bilingual children, children with HIV/AIDS, minority ethnic children, indigenous children and children of high ability.

There was also evidence of different perceptions about the position of education with regard to these groups of children. For example, some NGO interviewees felt that if IE was treated as a SEN issue, then SEN was seen only in educational terms. On the other hand, other interviewees believed that the inclusion of children with special needs would result in changes in social attitudes towards marginalised groups. There

were also different perceptions of the relationship between the IE and EFA. The belief that EFA was about removing social barriers while IE was about inclusive pedagogies contrasted with the idea that the integration of individuals led to the inclusion of marginalised groups which led to Education for All.

There are thus multifarious perceptions of inclusive education, and different motivations for engaging in inclusive education from the human rights perspective to the functional (for example, Ministry of Education interviewees in two countries and two questionnaire respondents talked of the wider benefits of IE, in that it would raise standards of teaching for all children; and that it had economic benefits by reducing special education costs, pupils drop-out and year repeats). It is therefore unsurprising that a number of interviewees doubted the possibility of adopting a single national or regional definition. Local differences determined local priorities and strategies for inclusion.

The IE unit produced, through a consultation process, a *Conceptual Paper* on IE (UNESCO, 2003c). The need for this work was demonstrated by case study and sponsor interviewees who commented on the current confusion over terminology and definitions. Those who were able to take an overview (for example, a member of university faculty working with one of the sponsors) pointed out the very different use of the word 'inclusion' across countries and stakeholders within these. However, there was evidence that the development work that the IE unit has already undertaken in this area had not been widely disseminated, as some interviewees suggested that there was still a role for UNESCO to clarify the terms in use. One sponsor stated that

> *'It really would be quite a noble task for UNESCO to begin to define, within the international community... How can we more concretely define these concepts? Because there is a high degree of confusion at the moment.'*

Where the *Conceptual Paper* had been seen, some interviewees noted that their interpretation of IE was at variance to that of the IE unit. This may be the result of an awareness that different practitioners and policy-makers are at different positions on the journey towards the inclusion of all children in ordinary classrooms. Given that the unit is mandated to *'develop indicators concerning the need for and provision of special need education'* (UNESCO, 1995, p. 12), the evaluators consider that it might now be useful for the IE unit to draw out the implications of the *Conceptual Paper* by

helping its member countries to analyse their own situation in relation to concepts of inclusion in order to assess the journeys taken and identify those for the future.

2.2   Summary

- Links with other relevant UNESCO units are limited: there is encouragement for cross-section co-operation but no facilitating structures or requirements
- staff in the IE unit have to support a wide range of countries which are in very different stages of development as regards inclusive education
- local culture, context and development resulted in inclusive education initiatives embracing very different groups of children in different countries and taking different stances as regards the relationship between 'inclusion' and 'special educational needs'.
- the IE unit may have a useful role in helping countries analyse their own position on the 'inclusion' continuum and by reference to UNESCO's own conceptual work.

3 UNESCO's activities in the area of inclusive education

This chapter examines the various activities that have constituted the IE work undertaken by the IE unit and UNESCO field offices. There were a number of dimensions, at various levels, of UNESCO-led initiatives in the area of capacity-building for inclusive education. Knowledge about these was, it seemed, mostly located at regional and national levels – where they occurred. The limited resources within the IE unit had two effects. First, though knowledgeable about countries which they had visited, staff did not have a detailed overview of activities. Second, it had not been possible to establish and maintain a comprehensive database or document bank of activity-related materials in the IE unit. However, on account of devolution and regional focus, the IE unit was not necessarily the most obvious destination for reports and outputs from activities.

The evaluation team therefore used the case study visits to gather information and examples about the nature and impact of UNESCO activities. The IE work has included policy development, the production of materials, teacher training, workshops and seminars, and pilot projects. Considering the various examples of activities as a group, it was apparent that UNESCO staff had to be sensitive to the fact that, in some cases, it was appropriate to take a clear lead and 'manage' an activity while in others they accommodated their input to the structures and intentions that were already in place locally. Thus, there were examples of UNESCO-promoted workshops and seminars and, equally, of UNESCO staff being consulted about, and invited as a partner for, curriculum or policy development. The evaluation team found some examples of both approaches: for an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the two approaches, a fuller data set would be needed. The message from the available evidence is that there are obviously many different expectations for the IE unit: this has to be balanced with the unit itself having a clear vision and taking a strategic leadership role.

Many of the activities at field office level have not stood alone but are inter-related. The following is an example of a multiple approach.

Example: inter-related activities

In one case study country, interviewees in NGOs and ministries of education talked of materials that had been developed in collaboration with UNESCO for particular ends, including training and to support the national curriculum. Here a UNESCO employee felt it was insufficient to work on influencing policy alone, but that UNESCO's work should also be applied through providing materials. The director of this office also reported on the need for materials in order to implement policy.

Not all case studies yielded examples of approaches that were 'coherent' in that they followed a logical path from initial awareness-raising through specific training to a pilot project. Thus the activities are considered below under separate headings. While there was not evidence of what had been most effective across all countries, there was evidence of what had worked in the case study countries (or sites referred to by interviewees); in most cases, explanations for the 'success' were given so there could be a degree of analysis rather than merely description.

3.1 Projects

As stated in the Introduction, part of UNESCO's mandate following the Salamanca conference was to mobilise funds for the Inclusive Schools and Community Support Programmes (IS&CS). This project occurred in two phases, 1996-1997 and 1998-2001, and was funded by five European government donors through extra-budgetary funding to UNESCO (see 4.3 Financial Management). Representatives of two of the sponsors of this project were interviewed for this evaluation. The IS&CS project involved activities in thirty countries, which largely consisted of training workshops and work with pilot schools. Two reports, one for each of the two phases, were produced, based on country reports, workshop summaries and other documentation (UNESCO, 1999, 2002b).

The evidence available regarding the IS&CS and other projects, although hard to come by, suggested that there was a flexible, needs-based determination of activity. Some of the value of UNESCO intervention seemed to be in filling gaps and adding value by extending some core initiatives. While this may seem a minor contribution, it is arguably important insofar as the greater capacity of the action (whatever it was) was able to generate something that could have noticeable outcomes. The following are examples.

Example: project 1

The sponsor and UNESCO held meetings with Ministers of Education in each of the three countries and ran workshops for teachers, using UNESCO materials. Schools and/or teachers volunteered to take part, and children with SEN were then integrated into schools. Participants from each country met to learn from each other and the project was evaluated.

Example: project 2

In one country, the UNESCO officer reported that the IE programme was called 'expansion of IE'. The interviewee stated that it was a pilot project but that it did not make logical sense to continue piloting. Expansion in this context was seen as examining what had been done and producing materials where needs were identified. In practice, this 'project' was less a stand-alone project than a series of workshops, networking and pilot projects with other key actors in the field of IE. It complemented the Ministry of Education's 'pilot project' on IE in half of the country's provinces, which commenced following UNESCO workshops and made use of UNESCO IE materials. An internal evaluation of this programme in 1999 indicated a positive effect on increasing IE in the provinces in which it had been implemented. As a result, in 2000 the project was expanded to the remaining provinces. UNESCO had provided financial support for specific training activities, assisted with policy development and funded the translation of key materials.

Example: project 3

In another country UNESCO also worked with other partners in this field, through part-funding a pilot project run by a disability organisation and the Ministry of Education. The project worked with seven clusters, of 5-14 schools, in six provinces, in order to raise awareness, encourage communities to send disabled children to school, and reduce discrimination towards these children in schools. Material support (books, wheelchairs, teaching aids) was also provided to enable the children to attend school. Through the project, teachers were trained at central workshops and during visits of the project management team to the provinces. In each province a team of staff from the Ministries of Education and Social Affairs, a headteacher and a NGO representative was responsible for implementing the project, through monitoring visits to schools and families with children with disabilities. The project paid for the time spent on these activities by the implementation teams.

This project was primarily funded by UNICEF; UNESCO's supplementary funds supported teacher training workshops and study visits for implementation teams to other provinces involved in the project. UNESCO's involvement, two years after the project had started, came about because the Regional Bureau was running a regional IE project using extra-budgetary funds, and asked the National Office whether there were activities that could be developed in this country. The Ministry of Education therefore submitted a proposal to the Regional Bureau to *'develop some opportunities'* in capacity building and resource development of basic education, focussing on combating marginalisation and exclusion. Additionally, some money had been obtained from the regular budget to be subcontracted to those running the project. They had not yet decided how they wished to spend the money, as they wanted first to identify what other money they had available.

3.2   Materials

The IE unit's production of materials was widely seen as a success by people interviewed both in the first phase of the evaluation and during the case study visits. The quality of the publications, their fulfilment of a need, and the process by which they were developed and (initially) disseminated were all praised by sponsors and former and present IE unit staff. All but one of the questionnaire respondents reported that they had used UNESCO IE publications. School, NGO and Ministry of Education interviewees widely reported that the materials were very useful, of high quality and provided a good framework for development.
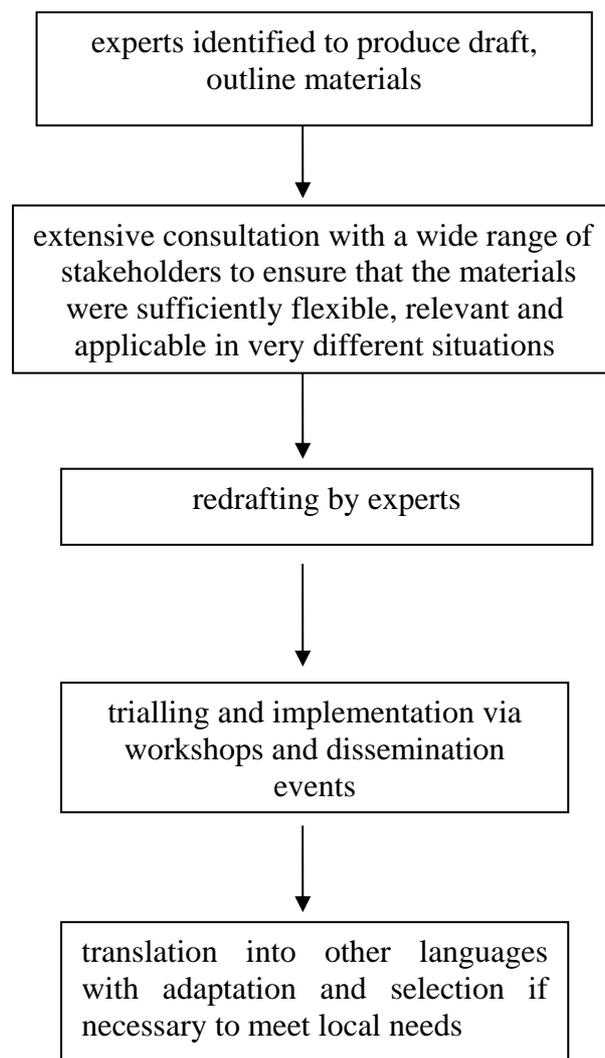
Types of materials

The materials produced under the auspices of UNESCO related to one of three main complementary categories:

- *specific special educational needs/disabilities:* In the 1980s a series of booklets were developed for countries with little expertise of particular disabilities. UNESCO had the advantage of being able to identify international experts, who were leaders in their particular field and able to produce authoritative texts based on the most recent developments. Whilst a highly respected series, these booklets need updating and reissuing to take account of subsequent medical and pedagogical advances and changing curricular demands. Further, used alone and without complementary materials as identified below, they could lead to fragmentation of expertise and a system of parallel approaches to individual needs rather than a holistic system grounded in differentiation.

- *the management of special education:* The *Open File on Inclusive Education* (UNESCO, 2001a) looks at ways of introducing inclusive education into organisations and is centred on management issues which can be widely applied in a range of contexts.

- *institutional capacity-building:* This group includes the *Teacher Education Resource Pack* (UNESCO, 1993), *Understanding and Responding to Children's Needs* (UNESCO, 2001b) and the *Toolkit* (UNESCO, forthcoming). The focus here was on general approaches to special educational needs and disabilities rather than approaches related to a specific need.

Development of materials

The development of materials generally followed a common process. There was evidence that it was this process which generated outputs which were effective in that they were relevant to a wide range of audiences (policy-makers, teachers, voluntary agencies, parents) and contexts (different countries, different types of school).

The process could be modelled as:

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┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│   experts identified to produce draft, │
│          outline materials            │
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                    │
                    ▼
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│ extensive consultation with a wide range of │
│   stakeholders to ensure that the materials  │
│   were sufficiently flexible, relevant and   │
│   applicable in very different situations    │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                    │
                    ▼
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│          redrafting by experts        │
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                    │
                    ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│     trialling and implementation via  │
│       workshops and dissemination     │
│                events                 │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│   translation into other languages    │
│   with adaptation and selection if    │
│   necessary to meet local needs       │
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Not all stages of the process happened in each case (for example, only some materials were translated or adapted). The following examples illustrate this process in practice.

The development of materials: example 1

Following research that identified the need for the *Teacher Education Resource Pack* (UNESCO, 1993), the IE unit organised seminars in all five regions for teachers in ordinary and special schools, to '*help them move forward in their thinking*'. A team of experts, led by a British academic, developed a first draft of the materials which was circulated for comment and discussed at workshops of practitioners in all five regions. The *Pack* was then piloted with eight groups from ordinary and special education in each of the five regions. It was introduced at workshops in each region, at which the materials were discussed and '*torn apart*'. One participant in these workshops stated, '*It was a very intense discussion*'. The materials were again redrafted. They were then implemented in participants' own countries, and reports written on the experience.

The development of materials: example 2

A similar process was under way, at the time of the evaluation, in one of the regions visited, in order to produce a *Toolkit* for teachers in all formal and non-formal educational settings (UNESCO, forthcoming). Developed in response to an awareness that schools had access to few materials on IE, the *Toolkit* was intended to be very user-friendly. Its focus was on inclusion of all children, rather than solely on children with disabilities. Three consultants were tasked with writing the materials. Early in the two-year process a workshop was convened to discuss the potential content of the publication, involving 13 participants from nine countries, representing teachers, Ministries of Education, NGOs, UNICEF and UNESCO. After the initial draft had been considered by UNESCO, it was sent to 19 experts across the world, and discussed by Ministry of Education officials and teachers in workshops in three countries in the region. Workshop attendees were reported by the lead writer of the *Toolkit* to have said that it was very practical and easy to use.

Many of the materials were written with the intention that they would be translated, either centrally by the IE unit, by others in UNESCO or elsewhere. For example, in 2003 the IE unit published the *Open File on Inclusive Education* in French along with a summary Brochure in all six official languages of UNESCO. *Understanding and Responding to Children's Needs in Inclusive Classrooms* was also published in French and Spanish in this year, as was the *Conceptual Paper on Inclusive Education*

in the six official languages. UNESCO materials had also been translated into other languages in case study countries, but these had not been published or disseminated by the IE unit.

It was notable that the process itself was designed rather than left subject to chance: thus the introduction to the *Toolkit*, for example, included guidance as how to translate it so that it remained accessible. The following example shows the impact of this process in one of the case study countries.

Dissemination of the Teacher Education Resource Pack.

Workshops were arranged, and governments were asked to recommend attendees who were experts in special needs education or working with issues relating to inclusion or special education. When the contact provided was inappropriate – such as an administrator – the IE unit did not accept this but requested a more appropriate attendee. A large number of workshops were arranged, at which the people who were to use the materials were introduced to the processes through which they should be used. The publications were distributed free of charge, but only if the request for the materials was accompanied by agreement to provide or attend training.

The impact of this process was evident in one of the countries visited. Several interviewees – from the Ministry of Education, provincial education authorities, universities and an NGO – reported on national and international workshops (which occurred in 1993, 1996 and 1997) that they had attended at which the use of the *Teacher Education Resource Pack* (UNESCO, 1993) was explained. As a result, a Ministry-led pilot project on IE was developed (see 3.5 Teacher Training), in which the *Pack* formed the basis of training materials; the UNESCO IE officer reported that it had been the central material used by the Ministry of Education. These materials continue to be used, as illustrated when our evaluator visited a training session at a secondary school during this evaluation.

There was evidence that the process of developing materials was a strong one and that dissemination could be effective. However, in some cases UNESCO field office staff reported that communication and networking frailties meant that information about the translation or adaptation of materials did not always reach all those who shared the

language into which they had been translated or would benefit from the adaptations. In addition, it was not always evident that adequate attention had been paid either to the potential market value of the materials or the identification of all who might benefit from materials. As there was no systematic tracking of the distribution and destination of materials, it was difficult to assess the degree to which they reached appropriate users. The difficulties of dissemination of materials would seem to stem from devolution and the regional/local development of materials. Given that there is evidence from elsewhere that materials on their own, unaccompanied by training events, can be of limited value, merely informing individuals about materials might not be the best approach: there, would, however, seem to be an argument for more effective dissemination to teacher training institutions, Ministries and other influential points.

3.3   Policy development

Many questionnaire responses referred to national policies and legislation that promote IE. It was clear that these varied in status and content and that some were more effective in establishing principles than others. There was evidence that UNESCO had made a significant contribution to the development of national policies by initiating, contributing to and supporting discussion about the infrastructure needed for inclusive education.

There was evidence that, in the case study countries, UNESCO staff from both the IE unit and National Offices, had leverage in Ministries of Education. This influence could be seen within special education and also more widely. For example, a member of staff from a Regional Bureau was, at the time of the evaluation, chairing a commission of experts established by a Ministry of Education to reform special education in the country. This person had also been involved in a UNESCO regional declaration on achieving EFA, the objectives of which made reference to IE because it had been acknowledged that IE improves EFA.

As with capacity-building in the education workforce, UNESCO's role in policy development was consultative and collaborative, seeking to facilitate discussion,

debate and understanding about inclusive education rather than taking a particular stance. There were examples of UNESCO field office staff facilitating a forum of relevant personnel locally or encouraging Ministries to do this by providing funding or the mechanisms for gathering feedback on draft policies from practitioners in the field who were going to have to implement the policies. The expertise and experience of UNESCO field office staff were also used when countries were drafting legislation relevant to inclusive education. The flexibility of the IE unit's approach, though valued in the field, could lead to inconsistencies of approach and there was the danger than Regional Bureaux staff were sidelined if central staff went straight in at the country level.

Also at the strategic level, UNESCO field office staff were involved in curriculum development (i.e. at a stage prior to the development of materials to support teachers). Examples were given of UNESCO support where there was significant curriculum reform at the national level. These developments were important given the fact that inclusive education is, first and foremost, about systemic reform, without which, attention to specific strategies for specific needs at the classroom level has limited impact. Interviewees in schools, universities and NGOs in all three case studies greatly valued UNESCO's work at the strategic, macro level to influence policy development and formalise processes which had a wide application. It was this sort of activity which they felt best defined its unique role. Interviewees acknowledged that it was UNESCO's experience and expertise, not just within the specific area of inclusive education but also in political diplomacy (i.e. facilitating discussion at Ministerial and international fora) that represented its particular value. Beside this, case work at the operational level (which, arguably, other agencies could undertake) was of lesser significance.

3.4 Workshops and seminars

In all countries visited for the case studies, mention was made of workshops run or supported by UNESCO, either inside the country in question or abroad and attended by interviewees. In some cases, these seemed to have had a significant impact on the

development of IE in the country in question, particularly where there was a multiple-pronged approach with a series of initiatives generated by different events.

Again, UNESCO's approach was flexible. In a number of examples gathered by the evaluation team, the Ministry of Education was at the forefront of developments in inclusive education but there was evidence that UNESCO initiatives (conferences, workshops, study visits) had been the point of inspiration and/or catalyst or, at least, had made a significant contribution as the following example illustrates:

Example: Translating the Teacher Education Resource Pack

A Ministry of Education employee, who attended two UNESCO training workshops in other countries in 1993 and 1996, wanted to translate the *Teacher Education Resource Pack* (UNESCO 1993) so that it could be used locally. This interviewee approached the UNESCO National Office for support, and the resulting translation, when adapted, formed the basis for cascaded training to education officers and teachers across the country.

There was evidence that conference attendees wanted to keep in touch with one another, having found the face-to-face contact with colleagues in different circumstances but with common interests and challenges, stimulating and helpful. UNESCO's facilitation of such events was valued by practitioners.

Several examples illustrated that the success of workshops lay in the fact that they brought together a range of practitioners who were able to share ideas and expertise. The workshops often generated further activity such as the development of material. Interviewees in government and NGOs or schools in all case study countries mentioned the importance of sharing experience with people from different countries in similar circumstances.

3.5 Teacher training

UNESCO was in a strong position to ensure the sustainability of IE development by means of its role in teacher training. This is an aspect of UNESCO's work which,

were extensive surveys to be undertaken, might yield the most widespread evidence of impact – that is, many teachers involved in teacher training in UNESCO countries will have been involved in specific professional development sessions. The production and dissemination of *Teacher Education Resource Pack* (UNESCO, 2003) using input from both the IE unit and the National Office, as discussed above (see 3.2 Materials), is an example of UNESCO's successful involvement in teacher training.

However, the teacher training programme must be seen in perspective. Even if individual courses are of a high quality and relevant to participants' concerns and local challenges, their long-term effectiveness needs to be reinforced by policy development and curriculum development at the national level. The evaluation team was not in a position to gather the relevant evidence here and until there is further investigation of the impact of discrete initiatives, there is no way of comparing the outcomes of one-off initiatives with the outcomes of national strategic change.

The contribution from UNESCO that was considered particularly valuable within teacher education was that at the strategic level: the development of teacher trainers/educators who were in an optimal position to sensitise and skill up the present and future profession. This was considered by interviewees to be a more effective task for UNESCO than training small groups of existing teachers as these represented only a tiny proportion of the total workforce. The fact that UNESCO had made available related materials focused on different aspects of bringing about change (e.g. managing systems) was potentially important for providing a structure for the teacher training, and for generating thought about what was most properly addressed within initial teacher training and what was better left for post-experience professional development.

University representatives in one country specifically stated that UNESCO could serve as a broker between the Ministry of Education and teacher education institutions. Much depended on national structures and relationships between agencies, as the following examples illustrate.

But in other cases, the teacher training institutions might be less responsive: for example, they might not necessarily be models of inclusion themselves and there might be structural inhibitors – for example, if people with disabilities were not eligible to become qualified teachers.

Where it was introduced as part of initial teacher training, IE was either integrated with the regular initial teacher preparation curriculum or was offered as a discrete course. The value of the former was that it reached all prospective teachers, rather than an example from a case study country in which between 250 and 450 teachers had benefited from a UNESCO supported discrete course, but 7500 teachers were recruited into teacher training colleges annually.

Examples given suggested that training generally focussed on awareness-raising with regard to the right to education of all children, identification of children with SEN, and teaching strategies for inclusive classrooms.

Where UNESCO was supporting specific teacher education programmes to post-experience teachers, there were various models of delivery – for example, by UNESCO staff in collaboration with a partner organisation, or by experts (e.g. from

an NGO or Ministry of Education). Those trained were commonly expected to disseminate what they had learnt to others.

Example: cascading training

In one case, an initial UNESCO-led workshop attended by high-level staff from the Ministry of Education and other organisations was 'cascaded' through provincial education teams, to district education authorities and finally teachers in ordinary and some special schools.

The cascade model was common but there are some dangers inherent in it: in that the message can become more diluted and potentially distorted or inaccurate the further down the cascade.

In some cases the training and dissemination were interactive and served to raise awareness of other developments that needed to take place in the system. The following is an example:

Example: teacher training

In one country the UNESCO National Office had, over several years, financially supported training in Braille and sign language by teachers from special schools of teachers in ordinary (mostly primary) schools. The training largely occurred in concentrated blocks during school holidays, but the special school teachers also travelled to visit, observe and advise the ordinary teachers in their own schools. Increasingly, other schools were requesting such support. Interviewees from the Ministry of Education, UNESCO and NGOs, reported problems with extending Braille and sign language training to secondary schools, as the country's systems did not currently contain all the necessary signs and symbols for science and mathematics. Ministry of Education staff were aware of this problem, and noted, *'The problem is not with the students, it's with the teachers – it's our problem.'*

3.6 Summary

- Detailed knowledge about UNESCO IE activities in the field was located at regional or national level, rather than at Headquarters
- there were many different expectations of UNESCO: on occasions it had to lead and manage; on other occasions, it adapted to whatever was already in place
- at field level, there was evidence of consecutive or serial activities related to each other: UNESCO might have a different role in each of these
- UNESCO funding could be valuable in giving extra impetus to projects originating from other agencies
- materials produced by UNESCO were widely praised: they targeted policy-makers, managers and those working directly with young people with special educational needs
- much of the success of the materials was attributed to the fact that they were produced by international expertise consulting closely with local practitioners at all levels
- translation and adaptation widened the possibilities for dissemination, but dissemination was inhibited by frail channels of communication and inefficient networking
- the destinations of materials were not systematically tracked
- UNESCO has made a significant contribution to the development of policy relating to inclusive education and it was in this area that it was widely considered to be most effective
- staff from the IE unit and National Offices were respected and able to exert leverage with Ministries of Education and teacher training institutions. These, in turn, were in a position to influence a large proportion of the workforce in education by way of curriculum reform and pedagogy
- UNESCO-sponsored workshops and seminars acted as catalysts for attendees; they gave an opportunity for the sharing of ideas and practice
- teacher training was an critical element in ensuring the sustainability of IE developments; initiatives seemed to have most potential when they were focused on teacher trainers, as a larger proportion of teachers could be reached

- UNESCO's reputation and perceived neutrality meant that it was an accepted broker between Ministries of Education and teacher training institutions where such was needed

- the expertise and experience of IE unit staff were particularly valuable where there were few local experts

- various models of delivering teacher education were in use; many of them were collaborative, with UNESCO working with other partners

- the cascade model of dissemination was common following UNESCO activities.

4   Organisation, Planning and Communication

In this chapter we discuss the strategic aspects of UNESCO's IE work, including data management, staffing, financial management, monitoring and evaluation, and communication and collaboration. All the evidence presented so far suggests that UNESCO is valued for its capacity to exert strategic, proactive leadership at various levels and, also, for its responsiveness and reaction to local needs and priorities. These are, in fact, complementary insofar as a critical role of UNESCO (which capitalises on its unique position) may be to scrutinise the field and use its judgement where the allocation of its relatively limited resources may have the greatest impact and where, possibly, only UNESCO may have that impact.

All this has implications for planning. When exploring this with case study interviewees, the NFER evaluation team found similar messages: namely, that though strategic direction and planning are necessitated by the demands of formal institutional mechanisms, these have to be sufficiently flexible to be regionally or nationally applicable.

Formally, UNESCO planning occurs on a biennial cycle. Activities are carried out according to guidelines that are discussed by member states at the UNESCO general conference (see UNESCO, 2003b for the current basis for planning). There is an inescapable tension between this top-down approach and bottom-up consultation given the heterogeneity of this field. One member of the IE unit noted that, *'It's good for the organisation if there are policies but it would be devastating for the organisation if those policies were so strict that no one could take local differences into consideration.'* While the IE unit was seeking to become more systematic in its planning, it was noted that activities still arise when *'signals'* are received that there is a need or desire for input on IE in particular locations.

As noted above, there was not necessarily an inclusive education expert in each UNESCO office so the IE unit staff reported that they tended to work with those most interested or committed, though they reported that they mostly focused on Regional

Bureaux. The question was raised as to whether these Regional Bureaux should focus on working with countries that were most disadvantaged or with those in which developments were already progressing. As pointed out by the head of one National Office, the key question was about UNESCO's capacity to enhance what an individual country was doing, nationally, regionally and globally.

Case study evidence suggested that planning at regional and national levels was grounded in the principles of EFA, Dakar or Salamanca but involved much consultation with stakeholders, first at national level (government officers, ministerial representatives, NGOs and university faculty) and then in the field. In one case, stakeholders in the field were asked to submit proposals which were then discussed with sponsors; the proposals which were selected were returned to the field to be worked out in greater detail and then returned to the sponsor for final approval; when this was granted, resources were delegated to those who had developed the proposal.

4.1 Data management

Although steps were being taken to create information sources and data management systems, these systems were not yet functioning fully, existing systems were not being used regularly, and, moreover, they were not being used to inform decision-making. To be effective, data management systems need to be consistent, informative and accessible, and at the time of the evaluation there appeared to be no systematic means of accessing information about IE activities being conducted in the field. In May 1998, two new databases – SISTER and FABS (Financial and Budgeting System), dealing with planning and financial information respectively – were introduced to facilitate better information management. These have only recently been implemented in Regional Bureaux. Users in the EFA and IE units and in the case study countries found them difficult and time-consuming to use; a field officer said that *'SISTER is horrible to use'*. Moreover, it was reported by a current member of the IE unit that in UNESCO headquarters many people have had problems learning how to use it, and *'it is seen as a barrier'*. Restricted authorisation for inputting data in Regional Bureaux resulted in staff not using the system for recording what had been done, thus limiting the development of a systematic institutional memory. As noted when discussing data

collection for this evaluation (see 1 Introduction), this means that the goal of having a comprehensive, accessible archive has yet to be realised, partly because reports were not stored and partly because they were not always produced. The time and resources needed for the production of a systematic series of reports have to be balanced against the savings in the long term through an awareness and analysis of previous related activity.

In the IE unit, practical problems emerged from the limited resources and systems. For example, structural problems with the existing filing system were reported, and information was not systematically recorded; contact details for individuals were kept manually on a card file index and, while it was stated that this was matched by an electronic database, the reality was that the two sets of records were not exact copies; there existed no systematic record of UNESCO's IE activities and those involved in them over the past ten years. Instead, details had to be identified from the contracts issued. Another example was that there was no long-term log of all requests for IE publications received by members of the IE unit. Not only had contact details for previous requests been destroyed because of lack of storage capacity but web access to downloadable files was not trackable. At the time of the evaluation, the systems of data management were not sufficiently developed to allow an overview of IE activity or the monitoring of the use of UNESCO publications.

4.2 Staffing

Staff mobility exacerbated weaknesses in data management. The present IE unit consists of four members of staff: a programme specialist (permanent post), a senior programme specialist and an associate expert (both temporary secondments funded by Nordic governments) and an administrator (on a temporary contract). All but the administrator have joined the unit relatively recently (since 2001). Mobility was reflected at regional level too and identified as a problem: the director of a UNESCO field office commented on the problems resulting from the lack of stability and continuity, in that a meeting reconvened a year later might have a totally different group of attendees. While the IE unit had tried to identify a key individual to be responsible for IE in each Regional Bureau, this was also difficult as office-holders moved jobs: *If you focus too much on individuals you have a fragile system.'* A

number of sponsors, experts and UNESCO interviewees felt that a change of staff was not in itself a problem; indeed, a past member of the IE unit said it could be *'productive and effective'*, as new individuals bring new thinking. However, it is important that systems are in place to ensure transfer of knowledge when individuals leave an organisation.

Staff responsible for IE in the UNESCO offices in the case study countries had extensive experience of education in general and inclusive education in particular, usually as practitioners, middle managers and then senior managers. They were also fluent in local languages, had considerable experience of development projects in the country in question, and, thus, an extensive network of relevant personnel in the country. All these characteristics were considered important for the informed development of inclusive education. Where they were lacking, tasks such as project management could distract from, and take priority over, the support of inclusive education. The staff in the field offices were, thus, key players in the IE unit's management of IE activity and influenced the effectiveness of project implementation.

4.3   Financial management

Since 1994, UNESCO's IE activities have been largely funded through two streams: the regular budget, constituted by contributions from UNESCO member states; and extra-budgetary funding, given by particular countries in addition to their payment as member states, to support particular projects. (The Inclusive Schools and Community Support project was an example of a project funded through extra-budgetary funding by a number of European governments in the 1990s.) Beyond these formal funding structures, member states further support UNESCO's IE activities through secondment or employment of UNESCO IE staff, or support for country experts' contributions to UNESCO IE activities.

Changes have occurred in the past decade in the administration of both UNESCO budget streams in relation to IE. Prior to 2000, all IE regular budget funding was

managed by the IE unit, and hence other offices requested funding for IE activities through the unit, which therefore knew what activities were planned. Since 2000, approximately $1 million per biennium has been allocated to the IE programme, of which, in the present biennium, the IE unit was allocated $220,000, and the remaining budget has been 'decentralised' to Regional Bureaux or National Offices. The amounts of money made available to the case study National Offices and Regional Bureaux varied, and the evaluation team was not able to establish the rationale underpinning the distribution of funds.

With regard to extra-budgetary funding, UNESCO staff previously made direct requests to sponsors for money for particular activities. However, in the mid- and late 1990s, sponsors reported a move away from funding individual projects towards sponsoring programmes. These funds are now distributed by a central committee in UNESCO, on the basis of proposals submitted by units and offices and according to guidelines established in discussion with sponsors.

There was wide recognition of the limited funding UNESCO had available for IE activities. Sponsors and UNESCO staff referred to the limited resources and the insecurity of staff positions and suggested that these indicated that IE was not a high priority for UNESCO. It was notable that responsibility for early childhood was added the IE unit during period of the evaluation; the implications of this for the evaluators were not clear.

In order to assess the most cost-effective strategies for use of these limited resources, careful monitoring of expenditure and evaluation of outcomes are required. For example, the IS&CS project cost at least $678,550 (the total cost may have been higher, as the records available were not clear). But with minimal evidence of the impact of the project, or reliable records of costs, it has not been possible to assess whether or not this activity was cost effective. However, the evidence presented above (see 3 UNESCO's activities) suggests that UNESCO's work is likely to be most cost effective where it focuses its limited resources on activities that will have maximum impact. Although one UNESCO field officer stated UNESCO's role was to provide funding as a catalyst for country development, others elsewhere felt that this was not UNESCO's prime role.

4.4　Monitoring and evaluation

There appeared to be no targets and indicators for IE activities. The evaluation team found no evidence of formal, common systems for monitoring and evaluation of UNESCO IE activities. This could be explained by the structure and generation of these activities and by reference to data which have been presented above. For example, given the IE unit's diverse and diffuse roles and the limited resources available to it, it is not surprising that it has not maintained a macro evaluation of the activities which it has directly or indirectly promoted. Equally, the question of where the responsibility for monitoring and evaluation should be located depends on whether UNESCO is the direct funder or the broker for sponsors' funding of projects. Where it is the broker, facilitating the strategic allocation of resources, it may be far more beneficial for sustainability and future development if responsibility for monitoring and evaluation was lodged where the activity was taking place or being managed. For example, viewed from the perspective of the IE unit or the sponsor, activities were concluded when the funding ceased.

Nevertheless, there does seem to be evidence that some consolidation of the position regarding reporting and follow-up would be beneficial: not only to ensure that time and resources are wisely spent but also to ensure that good practice and activities that are successful are not lost, and that there are opportunities to analyse the principles behind successes and the reasons why things do not work so well. In one case, a National Office and related Regional Bureau both thought the other had responsibility for monitoring, and as a result no systematic monitoring took place.

The NFER evaluators were given a range of examples of reporting at various levels. Often these examples raised questions, implicitly or explicitly, about the function and value of the exercise, as the example below illustrates.

Example: reporting to sponsors

During the IS&CS projects, the IE unit provided annual reports to sponsors, who were informed about the specific activities that they had financed, rather than being given

information about the entire project. While this was understandable given that sponsors were only responsible for their 'part' of the project, the result was that an overview was lacking and, in the words of one sponsor interviewed, *'there was no full picture'*.

Monitoring and evaluation reports varied in quality and nature as they were based on information sent by those implementing the activities in the field, and these people were working without a common reporting framework. Some reports were descriptive rather than analytic, thus hindering the emergence of principles transferable elsewhere and analysis of favourable and unfavourable conditions. In some cases it was not clear that the project had succeeded in developing new approaches that could be disseminated (for example, UNESCO 1999, 2002b). Such examples suggested that some guidance or common framework for effective reporting might be beneficial. This might help to address the present variable quality of reports and ensure that the content was both matched to the recipient (i.e. relevant to the recipients' needs and interests) and able to yield an overview (i.e. that data were not too fragmented with one part of the activity being reported to one party and another to another party).

Various strategies in monitoring and evaluation seemed to be underdeveloped, although there were examples where it was clear that there was awareness of their potential. For example, there was evidence that it may not always be appropriate to focus on written reports for, while these can be archived and contribute to the maintenance of institutional memory, the recipient(s) may not have the time to read them in detail (a sponsor recognised that *'we were blaming UNESCO for not reporting properly; whenever they did that, we didn't have the time to read the reports or comment on them!'*). This in turn means that the author(s) of the report do not receive feedback and this does not encourage them to prepare reports in the future. Oral reports can generate immediate discussion and debate and may, thus, be of more value to practitioners. One member of staff in a Regional Bureau had a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of a project from talking to and observing those involved with it, despite the fact that there were no formal systems for monitoring this project. Focused field visits were valuable for raising awareness of what was working

well, informing about further needs, and developing ideas for future UNESCO support. This was recognised by a field officer after accompanying an NFER researcher during a data collection visit for the present evaluation.

There was evidence that there was scrutiny of IE activity in less direct ways. For example, arguably there was a high degree of confidence in the appropriateness of activities given the extensive planning and consultation at all levels that took place prior to their implementation. There was also some evidence that there was the opportunity for evaluation of different activities within other processes. First, for example, there was the dissemination process, where ideas were shared and discussed by a range of practitioners and principles identified for transference to other locations. Secondly, there were opportunities when projects were embedded in regular routines – it is unlikely that this would have been done had the projects not been deemed valuable. Third, a range of staff commented on UNESCO's valuable role in bringing together work and experience in inclusive education, undertaking, for example, situation analysis and review of particular country circumstances, approaches to special education, or models of teacher training. Furthermore, local experts or consultants could take a critical role in assessing the outcomes and impact of activities as they sought to synthesise findings to enhance their own advisory capacity.

4.5   Communication, collaboration and networking

Given the vast geographical range represented by UNESCO member countries, the limited human resources available in the IE unit and the multifarious activities across nations, the management of communication at all levels of UNESCO is a key issue. Communication between the IE unit and the field seemed *ad hoc* and opportunistic, and there did not seem to be a systematic method of sharing information with the field.

The challenge is formidable because the IE unit could not necessarily be expected to know all of the exemplars, or developments, that would be of interest or transferable to another setting. (As pointed out above, there were criticisms in the field that some

useful activity, the development of materials for example, had too limited an audience).

The work of the IE unit has relied heavily on its members' international networks of contacts (academics, practitioners, policy makers) in the field. Indeed, the inclusion of 'disability' within UNESCO's overall EFA agenda at Jomtien was said by a key actor to have been *'an uphill struggle'*, achieved through the mobilisation of personal contacts. It was noted by some interviewees that use of a network of people who are involved in the area has its benefits, as they *'want to put a lot of enthusiasm into it'*. However, sponsors and present IE unit staff had concerns about the extent to which drawing these contacts together was reliant on the skills and networks of certain individuals, and fears were raised about what might happen if key individuals were to leave.

The high dependency on personal links is inappropriate for an organisation as complex as UNESCO and formal lines of communication did not always seem to be agreed or necessarily the most effective. For example, documents were sent from the IE unit to UNESCO National Commissions attached to the Ministries of Education as they had good contacts with the Ministerial staff. However, these recipients may not have had much knowledge about inclusive education. Meanwhile, in National Offices there were individuals who were highly experienced in inclusive education and active in the field for a number of years who would welcome mutual exchanges with the IE unit. Some interviewees who had had personal contacts with the IE unit some years ago did not know the present staff in Headquarters, while others had only recently developed contacts in the unit. In one case, the present evaluation visit prompted the first contact between an office and the IE unit. Questionnaire returns reinforced the evidence that contact was variable.   Notably, some questionnaire respondents requested details of UNESCO IE activity from the evaluation team – the questionnaire had been instrumental in alerting them to its work.

More positively, case study work showed regional communication and collaboration to be an area in which UNESCO had worked successfully, increasingly so with decentralisation. Regional and national collaboration included planning meetings, reviewing and sharing policies and practice, and capacity building and study visits.

Interviewees spoke of practitioners' desire both to offer experience and support to others and to learn from others. A district education officer in one of the case study countries commented, *'I want to expand our experience to other countries – we have done something that we're proud of and we think other countries could use it.'* Regional collaboration was not limited to those countries in which UNESCO has an office. One National Office had facilitated the visit of a delegation from a neighbouring country with a similar political and linguistic background, which did not have a UNESCO office itself but had made contact via the neighbouring Cluster Office, in which it was known that the case study country had useful IE experience.

Inter-regional collaboration was rare – understandable given the expense involved in bringing together geographically distant colleagues. There was some informal contact and the field officers for IE had recently met together in Paris to present information on their activities, but there were no formal mechanisms for dissemination and some interviewees considered that the IE unit should assume responsibility for developing networks which were sufficiently robust to alert colleagues to interesting developments.

There was more evidence of partnerships with other organisations and individuals at country level than there was at the IE unit level. The latter referred to collaboration with other UN agencies (for example, the use of an established UNDP National Office to manage an IE project) and the close collaboration of the five convenors of the Jomtien conference[5]. At country level, interviewees spoke of collaboration which provided opportunities both to share good practice and to maximise resources and impact. A UNESCO officer said, *'We're working with NGOs to have a greater impact and getting funds from other* [local] *organisations. It's good for sustainability but there's a long way to go.'*

The questionnaire respondents also referred to working with many key players, particularly schools, NGOs and the university / teacher training sector. Increased partnership and collaboration were seen by some respondents as being one of the

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[5] The five collaborators were UNICEF, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNDP, and the World Bank.

main successes of their IE work. The benefits of this were illustrated by one Cluster Office:

> *'The partnership and coordination between UNESCO and other agencies supporting inclusive education has been quite successful in contributing to increase the policy dialogue on inclusion by raising general awareness, providing training for teachers and education officials, and piloting IE projects.'*

UNESCO's role varied according to context from being one of a number of active players, to chairing working groups, to providing the main high level support for the government's developments in the field. UNESCO was also valued in such circumstances for being *'another pair of eyes'* although, conversely, there was some concern expressed that it trod too warily as regards noting weaknesses in government policy where its activities relied substantially on a ministry's financial support.

UNESCO's role in collaborating with other major international agencies such as UNICEF, the World Bank and Save the Children was also referred to in the course of the case studies. It was noted that as other agencies enter, and gain experience in, the inclusive education arena, the role of UNESCO may change. The IE staff welcomed the presence of other agencies and noted that their greater resources may result in a larger profile. Other interviewees considered that UNESCO had a very strong leadership potential and could capitalise on the trust and respect that it attracted and give a lead in *'gathering the network together'* and that *'UNESCO pulls people together to agree and disagree and get moving'*. Thus, although it might not be so involved in all inclusive activity, it could still lead and contribute to the vision.

4.6   Summary

- Centrally provided leadership and direction were necessary by virtue of UNESCO being a large, complex organisation, but the direction had to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate local priorities
- with limited resources, critical decisions had to be made about whether to work where there was least experience or where developments were progressing most promisingly

- UNESCO's capacity to enhance what an individual country was doing was central to decisions about resource allocation

- recently introduced electronic data management systems had potential for information - sharing and monitoring, but this was inhibited by the fact that users considered them difficult and time-consuming

- data management systems did not facilitate an overview of, or historical perspective on: IE activities; the use of UNESCO materials; or the outcomes of UNESCO seminars and workshops

- field office staff had a range of skills which were critical in supporting the local realisation of IE unit initiatives and ensuring effective project implementation

- project funding is giving way to programme funding, giving the opportunity for a more strategic approach

- financial resources available to the IE unit were restricted and thus needed to be carefully targeted in order to achieve the maximum impact; at present, there are insufficient data to give reliable information about cost-effectiveness

- there are no formal, common systems for the monitoring and evaluation of UNESCO IE activities, and there is an absence of targets or performance indicators in this area; given UNESCO's varied roles, all generating different lines of accountability, this is unsurprising

- some consolidation of the position regarding reporting and follow-up would ensure that resources are wisely allocated, that good practice is not lost and that analysis may take place to facilitate transference of principles to other locations

- common reporting procedures would be beneficial by attending to quality assurance and consistency

- greater attention could be given to effective procedures for monitoring and evaluation at all levels; locally applicable messages need to be balanced with those generated by the overview

- evaluation may be embedded in dissemination events

- communication is critical in an organisation as geographically dispersed as UNESCO

- effective communication was challenging given the limited human resources in the IE unit, the widespread activities which came under its umbrella and the variable nature of 'best contacts' in different circumstances

- intra-regional and intra-locality communication was more effective, centred around collaborative and consultative events
- collaboration with other international agencies (an increasing number of which were becoming involved in inclusive education) was considered important for sustainability and further development
- UNESCO was regarded as being a natural leader, having experience in inclusive education as well as the respect of Ministries of Education and governments.

5   Impact and Sustainability of IE activity

This chapter examines the evidence for the impact and sustainability of UNESCO's work on IE, and considers the particular role of UNESCO in this field.

5.1   Impact

In using the term 'impact' we are referring to areas in which UNESCO's work has been of influence, for example by helping to frame policies, develop concepts, or encourage teachers to reflect on their practice. There was agreement between IE unit staff, sponsors and other experts on the important role that UNESCO's IE unit had played in putting IE *'on the map'* internationally. An academic working with a sponsor of the IS&CS programme stated that, *'The importance that UNESCO had at the time about introducing new understandings and a new paradigm cannot be over-estimated'*. A sponsor remarked that this had been possible in part because *'UNESCO's prestige and role as an international organisation had carried over the years'*, despite being having limited capacity, with only two or three programme staff – two of whom have always been associate experts, and hence not directly employed by UNESCO but by donor governments.

But some sponsors and experts felt that there was still a need for someone to *'gather the network together'*, and that UNESCO's IE unit could potentially, and should, fulfil this central role, given the reported trust, respect and preference for UNESCO as a partner, and its reputation for neutrality. However, it was noted by a number of interviewees that the limited resources, financial and human, make this role *'very difficult'*. The reliance on external funding and the associated insecurity of the unit as a UNESCO entity were noted to contribute to these problems. But it was felt that UNESCO has a strong potential to lead. As discussed above, at country level UNESCO was also seen as having a major role in relation to bringing together the work of other actors, through leading discussions, disseminating research and good practice, and aiding collaboration.

Countries were reported to trust UNESCO and to prefer it, as a global partner, to other organisations, while it also had credibility at practitioner level with teachers. UNESCO was said by a current member of the IE Unit to have a '*very good logo and name*'. A senior official in a Ministry of Education stated that, '*We can take money from anywhere, but the content of education we prefer to discuss with UNESCO*'. Past and present staff of the IE unit stated that the fact that UNESCO has direct access to governments – through being '*owned and run by the member states*' – gives strength to its position. As UNESCO is already '*inside*' it can work as a partner with governments, inside their systems. The head of a UNESCO field office confirmed this position in reporting on a recent meeting with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Minister stated that because the UN is constituted by Member States, the UN is part of the government and hence, "*We are working with ourselves*".

There was agreement between external experts and the IE unit's present staff over where the unit should focus its energies. It was felt that UNESCO should be, and had been, most successful where it had been a global '*norm-setting agency*', providing guidance to others, rather than a local actor implementing its own projects. As one sponsor stated, '*UNESCO should not be a country-based organisation that runs around doing all kinds of projects at the country level. I think that's the international understanding increasingly of UNESCO's role.*' It was recognised that this is not always easy to do as countries and NGOs have expectations that UNESCO is in a position to fund projects. But it was felt by one sponsor that IE is '*not a project issue, it's a strategic, national issue that nations themselves might address, and this is where UNESCO might have a key role*'. A Ministry of Education officer said, '*UNESCO should be a normative not an operational organisation*', and that it should provide guidance to the network of other experts, NGO and governmental sponsors to enable them to act.

Some case study interviewees similarly stressed that UNESCO's role is to act at an international or regional level. For example, one senior regional UNESCO officer explained that, '*The role of UNESCO is at the regional level not at the level of individual schools. Our mandate is to work with regional networks. We are not a local actor.*' This view was endorsed by many of those working at the national level.

A government employee in one of the countries explained that *'UNESCO is in a unique position to be involved in research and international comparative understanding. UNESCO can look beyond the frontiers of this country.'* However, there was a belief that whilst UNESCO could do much at an international level it was important to retain flexibility so that specifics could be tailored to country-level needs.

In general, it was felt by sponsors and other experts that the significant impact of UNESCO's work in this field had not been at the local level. Rather, it was the work of the IE unit in producing global guidance – through materials development or workshops on policy formation – that had been (and could continue to be) influential, as opposed to small local projects.

Case study interviewees and questionnaire respondents stressed the impact that UNESCO had had in raising awareness of IE issues amongst stakeholders at all levels: policy makers, teachers, parents and pupils. Interviewees in one country stressed the increased ability of teachers to identify those with SEN. UNESCO case study staff were often more modest about the impact of UNESCO than other interviewees. One UNESCO Regional Bureau felt that UNESCO and Salamanca had caused progress to be made. The officer felt that the main impact so far had been in the development of national policies and now the focus was to turn this into practice. Almost all of the questionnaire respondents thought that UNESCO had had an impact on IE policies and practice. They most frequently referred to the development of national policies, increased awareness, and an increase in the number of SEN pupils in ordinary schools. Many respondents reported that without the involvement of UNESCO these changes would not have happened or would have happened to a lesser degree.

5.2 Sustainability

Sustainability was, to a large extent, embedded in the very nature of the activities in which the IE unit and field officers were involved – namely, influencing legislation, national policy and national curricula, developing infrastructure, and engaging at a

high level in teacher education. Individual projects were intended to build capacity and be disseminated. There was evidence that, in some countries, the degree of awareness, development and engagement of other agencies in inclusive education was such that inclusive education would remain if UNESCO withdrew. Where the situation was less advanced, however, the need for UNESCO to continue to engage with follow-up activities and support was identified. Vital elements for sustainability were identified as: partnerships, which increased the scope of 'ownership' of inclusive education; political and cultural support; and the support of teacher education institutions (which resulted in consideration of effective pedagogies). An opportunity was offered by the fact that some of the early-trained teachers were gaining promotion and becoming more influential within their home education systems.

A vital element for sustainability appears to be the need to ensure support from above, in particular from the Ministry of Education; this need was mentioned by interviewees at all levels and in all case study countries. It was often mentioned that once there is support and commitment from those at the top of the education system this *'trickles down'* to the local level. One Ministry of Education SEN officer noted that it was *'good to see that what we are doing at the centre has an impact locally'*.

Threats to sustainability were identified as: the limited resources of the IE unit; unstable political administrations which disrupted developments and broke continuity; high levels of poverty. One UNESCO officer explained that in some parts of the country there were no schools at all and so it was difficult to make IE a priority as the focus was on providing a basic level of education. Additionally, one school-based interviewee felt that the country's problems were too great for education initiatives to be able to resolve inequality. Another challenge to sustainability came from an emphasis on academic standards and national tests. A UNESCO officer explained that schools had to take national tests where they were competing against other schools and therefore some were reluctant to take SEN pupils in case they reduced the school's score. Similarly, a director of the ministry's special education department in another country explained that schools also had to show good academic results for the other children and as a country they had not yet found the right balance. It was also noted that there were particular challenges as pupils in inclusive primary phase schools moved into secondary phase schools and, again, in transition at the end of

statutory schooling. Both of these challenges are, it should be pointed out, global and not peculiar to case study countries.

5.3   Efficiency

Given the diverse nature of IE activities and of their funding, and the absence of consistent and comparable data, it was not possible to conduct a conventional cost-effectiveness exercise. (It should be noted that the fluidity and flexibility that are currently enabled in activities were valued by those in the field and so are not necessarily areas that should be altered.)   The requisite information to ground judgements of efficiency was not available to the evaluation team. However, it is possible to draw together information from the questionnaires and case studies in order to make comment on the efficiency of different IE modalities.

As noted in previous sections (see Sections 3 and 5), the areas in which UNESCO was able to maximise impact at limited cost were those in which UNESCO had worked at the macro-level to influence national policies and structures or bring about changes in concepts and attitudes. Because of UNESCO's position as an internationally respected organisation, it only takes a few individuals to bring about changes that might impact, for example, on many schools or on many teacher-training courses. Conversely, great cost and staff time can be focused on individual projects or workshops that only reach a small number of people. It is vital, therefore, that the effectiveness of any small scale, local projects are maximised through a commitment to dissemination and follow-up work by those involved. Evidence relating to projects such as the IS&CS project suggested that another key area for maximising the efficiency of UNESCO's work was to ensure that projects are flexible and based on local needs so that they are able to adapt to currently unmet needs.

5.4   Summary

- UNESCO's lead in establishing inclusive education as an idea and, in some cases, established practice, in its member countries was widely praised

- while the role of UNESCO might be changing, given greater capacity within some member countries and the emergence of other facilitating agencies, it was still seen as critical in development by leading discussions, disseminating research and practice, and aiding collaboration

- UNESCO had credibility across levels, from governments, to NGOs, to grass roots practitioners

- UNESCO activity had influenced a wide range of stakeholders, including policy makers, teachers, parents and pupils

- there were widespread agreement that UNESCO should focus on strategy and macro-level initiatives, leaving operational and functional activity to practitioners and managers at the local level

- legislation, curricula, teacher education, systems, infrastructure and materials were all points of leverage for UNESCO at which it could exert considerable influence

- the role of the IE unit could not be singular as countries were in very different stages of development – some embedding inclusive education widely and some where inclusive education would be liable to disappear with UNESCO's absence

- sustainability of inclusive education was threatened by the limited resource capacity of the IE unit and external factors such as unstable political administrations, poverty and conflicting priorities within education.

6   Conclusions and Recommendations

The NFER team acknowledges that this evaluation has taken place at a time of transition for the IE unit. Internally, staff have been in post for a relatively short time, there is a relatively new financing system, and electronic management systems remained under development. Externally, developments in inclusive education globally mean that more agencies are available, alongside UNESCO, to promote IE. Additionally, there have been developments in the general education systems in UNESCO member states and these, inevitably, have an effect on provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. That the evaluation was commissioned by UNESCO at this time was an explicit acknowledgement of this time of change and a desire to learn from past events in order to lay down the best plans for the years ahead.

As has been pointed out in the course of this report, the conduct of the evaluation faced a number of limitations. Given the absence of written records and other good or detailed management information, and the frailty of management systems that rendered data tracking or systematic contact with a representative sample of key players and UNESCO officers impossible, the evaluation team had to use best data available. The evaluation was based on the central interviews (IE unit staff and sponsors) and documentation, the small number of usable questionnaire returns and three case studies. While acknowledging the limitations of the data sources, the team nevertheless feels able to reach certain conclusions and make some recommendations.

Prior to any recommendations that emerge from the evidence gathered (see below), the team wish to recommend that UNESCO should engage in a rigorous scoping exercise before commissioning such evaluation. This exercise should focus on the viability of the research brief. It might include, for instance, considering what documentation could be made available to evaluators, compiling a list of all potential key contact for interview and survey purposes, and checking their contact details. This would help to produce useful outcomes by clarifying the resources required for given evaluations and ensuring that these resources were deployed to best effect. The

team would point out that where communication was excellent and key personnel had been identified (as the situation for all the case studies) barriers to data collection were minimal and opportunities were set up for the team to meet a wide range of UNESCO staff and partners. This contrasted strongly with the data collection which was dependent on systems.

The evidence gathered during the evaluation shows that UNESCO's IE programme has had a significant impact on developments in the understanding and implementation of inclusive education across the world. At the most fundamental level, there are children being educated with their peers today who might either be at home without education or in a segregated institution were it not for UNESCO's activities. Elsewhere, the push from UNESCO may have been combined with a push from another source and led to change. Some of UNESCO's activities have contributed to sustainable change and some of its materials continue to form core texts in the development of inclusive education. All have earned respect.

The evaluation identified challenges and successes at all levels of UNESCO's work – and we would point out that the parameters around 'UNESCO' are hard to place, given the loose structure, the informal partnerships and involvement of many practitioners in the field. In the course of the report, many small instances have been identified where it is clear that there is something sufficiently significant and important for it to be maintained or developed. Equally, there are instances that seem to point to a less profitable approach. The following sections focus on broad areas to which, on the basis of the evidence gathered in the present evaluation, the IE unit's attention should focus. The recommendations seek to build on the successes and mitigate some of the risks presented by the challenges that have faced the programme.

6.1 A more strategic approach

A strategic approach was not in evidence. To a certain extent this is to be expected, given the relatively loose structure of UNESCO and the fact that value and significance are attributed to activity at many levels. Nevertheless, there was evidence that there would be mutual benefit were there to be greater clarity over the allocation

of responsibility for IE activities among the IE unit, Regional Bureaux and National Offices. Much of the richness of UNESCO comes from its multiple layers. But a clear message needs to be given from Headquarters that IE activities are not solely the responsibility of the IE unit, and that UNESCO officers in all these layers need to assume responsibility for developing a co-ordinated, strategic approach, providing information and support within their locality, and communicating with Headquarters about this. Such an approach is necessary to make all member countries' education systems accessible to all children with disabilities and special educational needs; to ensure that good practice is celebrated and shared; and to provide mutual support.

There seems to be a lack of shared understanding of the role and remit of the IE unit – in particular, over how it relates to EFA. Additionally, there appears to be a need for clarification or review of the role of the IE unit in relation to other thematic teams within UNESCO, in order to ensure that UNESCO's internal structure does not encourage a perception of IE as being the responsibility of a small number of individuals or as solely related to special educational needs. Inclusion is an issue that should permeate other sections and does not have obvious boundaries, unlike other thematic areas such as science (which is a curriculum issue) and primary education (which is a phase). A structure and mechanisms should be established that require other sections to consider IE issues and to work constructively with the IE unit.

A strategic plan for IE activities is needed. In order to achieve ownership, ensure relevance and facilitate its implementation, the strategy should be developed in consultation with UNESCO staff at all levels. At each point in the UNESCO structure (IE unit, Regional Bureaux, Cluster Offices and so forth) someone needs to be responsible for taking a strategic overview and communicating progress towards this up and down the UNESCO structure. The long-term strategic plan needs to be translated into a series of shorter-term action plans which are reviewed regularly. It is suggested that, as at present, consistency of focus of activities should not be required of all field offices. However, a consistent approach, based on consultation with key stakeholders, monitoring and evaluation, is necessary.

6.2 Making an impact

This evaluation has found many examples of UNESCO working well where it concentrates on management issues at international, regional and local levels. When it does this, it draws on a particular strength – its ownership by governments as member states – and works with them in partnership to address their needs and complement their activities. Evidence from government, UNESCO and sponsor interviews demonstrates that UNESCO is well respected at this level. Macro-level activities have the capacity to exert influence on a large scale – for example, by influencing policies or national approaches – and, provided that they are grounded in consultation, generate change more quickly than if the approach is incremental and bottom-up. The model by which key 'levers' and critical change agents are sensitised to the arguments for inclusive education has been used successfully with Ministry of Education officials and others in the case study countries; it could be extended to senior university staff and government employees responsible for initial and in-service teacher training, and teacher deployment. Work of this nature requires UNESCO to be a catalyst and facilitator: it does not require long-term resource commitment from UNESCO.

6.3 Funding

Any strategic plan needs supporting with resources, and the pattern of budget allocation should reflect the priorities identified in the strategy. UNESCO has limited resources and, thus, it is vital that it targets these upon strategic action and the activities which are most effective in bringing about sustainable change. It should capitalise on the influence it can exert by virtue of its unique position. For example, its workshops should be directed towards change agents and ambassadors who will influence others either by policy development or by training; there should be an expectation that events will have an inherent programme of further action and/or dissemination.

If, as a result of strategic planning, it is concluded that projects should be funded, priority should be given to demonstration or pilot projects (rather than simply

sustaining existing projects) which have a catalytic effect internationally or nationally, and capacity to promote change that can be embedded. Pilot projects should provide opportunities for learning and conclusions should be disseminated.

6.4   Data management

There is a need for greater awareness of the plethora of activities occurring around the world if valuable experience is not to be lost. The evaluation process highlighted the lack of coordinated information on IE activities and the restricted flow around relevant institutions of information related to IE.

Programmes are devolved and, thus, it is not suggested that there be detailed reporting to the IE unit. But it would be valuable for the IE unit and field officers to have access to general information on the activities taking place to allow them to take an overview, co-ordinate related activities, facilitate communication between relevant parties and take the lead in analysing and debating 'what works' in relation to IE.

Strategic planning depends on comprehensive, good quality data. The introduction of an electronic planning system (SISTER) has enabled field offices and Headquarters to access each other's IE planning. However, many offices are unable to use the system and this situation should be rectified as soon as possible. It is suggested that it might be worthwhile considering the potential of SISTER as a communication and development planning tool (for example, the creation of a key-worded database might provide search facilities).

6.5   Networking

More effective data management should support more better networking, communication and collaboration. While, as pointed out above, there has been a degree of uncertainty as to respective roles and responsibilities within the UNESCO structure, two things remain clear: these roles are complementary and interdependent, and the policy of decentralisation is appreciated and appropriate. This makes effective

networking, communication and collaboration critical. The evaluation highlighted problems in relation to a limited awareness of the work of others, resulting in overlap, ineffective use of resources, and failure to identify shared interests and approaches.

The situation has been exacerbated by the fact that many IE activities have been reliant on personal contacts. While this has meant that these activities have engaged committed, motivated participants with relevant expertise, two main challenges emerge from this approach. First, undue responsibility is placed on individuals: in view of workloads and staff mobility, the development of networks might facilitate greater sustainability as well as broadening the base of participants. Secondly, the absence of systematic records of activities means that the history is located purely in an individual's memory and is lost when an individual moves on (see 6.4 Data Management above).

UNESCO might add most value to IE by focusing on the management of networking. It needs to develop and sustain simple mechanisms that would facilitate the sharing of information, experience and ideas, and capture innovative and cutting-edge developments. It also needs to give attention to the membership of networks. There is evidence that in some cases these have been opportunistic, resulting from personal contacts made in other areas of IE work. While, as pointed out above, this has advantages, it has disadvantages insofar as some key participants and agencies (both statutory and voluntary) and with the authority/influence to bring about widespread and systemic change, may be excluded.

6.6   Summary

In summary, in terms of inputs, process and outputs, the evaluation suggests that as regards:

Inputs
- the resources available to the IE unit should be sufficient to fulfil the strategic plan
- a critical mass of expertise, experience and international contacts is required in order to maintain continuity and ensure the IE programme is sustainable

- the expertise and experience in many Regional Bureaux and National Offices need to be managed in order to increase and strengthen total capacity so that expertise can be guaranteed around the world

- the limited funding must be utilised to maintain central expertise, experience and management capacity in order to design a strategic approach to maintaining and developing effective inclusive education around the world

- usable electronic databases and communication systems should be developed, and appropriate access should be given to all who would benefit from this

- the kudos and influence by virtue of the 'brand' of UNESCO should be valued

- the potential for other sections to support the IE programme should be realised.

Processes

- long-term strategic planning, using input from field offices, and translated into short-term action plans, should be the basis of the UNESCO IE programme

- monitoring and evaluation need to be more rigorous, both to eliminate wasteful use of resources and to maximise effectiveness

- a communication strategy needs to be developed

- lines of, and systems for, accountability need to be clearer to ensure responsibilities are carried out and there is attention to quality assurance

- data management systems need to be kept up-to-date and used to inform practice.

Outputs

- outputs are generally good, though their influence could be improved with wider dissemination

- materials need to be scrutinised in terms of shelf-life; new publications should focus on principles and core management, which are more enduring than advice on specific disabilities

- seminars should have a clear target audience and facilitate some or all of: the exchange of ideas, discussion, development of understanding, peer support, action planning

- teacher training should be focused where it brings about the greatest change in practice in context.

We should point out that outputs do not necessarily lead to outcomes (changes of professional behaviour in those using the outputs) or impact (changes in the life experiences of the beneficiaries for which outputs and outcomes are intended). It is essential that all activities are tracked in order to ascertain that well-intended activities are, in fact, enhancing the educational experiences and life chances of children with disabilities.

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Appendix: UNESCO field offices

In addition to its headquarters in Paris, UNESCO has 56 field offices. The present operational context of these offices is a result of the implementation of a decentralisation policy, as a *'means to ensure that UNESCO designs and implements programmes that, although global in scope, are adapted to the needs and specific circumstances of Member States'* (UNESCO 2004). Although decentralisation had been planned from 1994, it was only fully implemented in 2000. Through this policy, member states are served by a network of Regional Bureaux, Cluster Offices and National Offices.

Regional Bureaux are responsible for regional programmes in one sector (e.g. education), which are developed through regional consultations and implemented by Cluster and National Offices. There are four UNESCO Regional Bureaux for Education (Dakar in Senegal (Africa), Beirut in Lebanon (Arab States), Bangkok in Thailand (Asia and the Pacific) and Santiago in Chile (Latin America and the Caribbean)). Regional Bureaux are usually situated in Cluster Offices, which serve a group of countries that do not have their own National Office. Cluster Offices ideally include staff representing all UNESCO sectors, and are the main platform for delivery of UNESCO activities. National Offices, with representational authority for one member state, have more focussed and time-bound national programmes, developed through consultation within the country (UNESCO 2004).