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1. BACKGROUND¹

In 2007 and 2008, UNESCO's International Bureau of Education (IBE), through its Community of Practice (COP) in Curriculum Development,² organized nine Regional Preparatory Workshops on Inclusive Education³ and contributed to the organization of four Regional Preparatory Conferences.⁴ These events had the overall goal of initiating a participatory, consultative discussion that would highlight key issues and challenges regarding inclusive education in preparation for the forty-eighth session of the International Conference on Education (ICE), entitled "Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future" to be held in Geneva, 25–28 November 2008.

Each preparatory regional workshop and conference was organized around four sub-themes that had been proposed by the IBE Council to structure the forty-eighth session of the ICE, as follows:

1. *Inclusive education: approaches, scope and content* (to broaden our understanding of the theory and practice of inclusive education);
2. *Inclusive education: public policies* (to demonstrate the role of governments in the development and the implementation of policies on inclusive education);
3. *Inclusive education: systems, links and transitions* (to create education systems that offer opportunities for lifelong learning);
4. *Inclusive education: learners and teachers* (to foster a learning environment where teachers are equipped to meet the learners' diverse expectations and needs).

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2 From 2005 onwards, UNESCO-IBE, in conjunction with curriculum specialists from different regions of the world, set up the Community of Practice (COP) in Curriculum Development. It has been conceived as an open and plural worldwide space that contributes to generate collective thinking and action on curriculum issues within the framework of a holistic approach to determining and implementing the goals of Education for All (EFA). More than 400 participants from seventy-five countries were mobilized through the COP and involved in the ICE's preparatory workshop discussions.

3 Regional Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education—Eastern and South-eastern Europe, Sinaia, Romania, 14–16 June 2007; Regional Preparatory Seminar "Poverty Alleviation, HIV and AIDS Education and Inclusive Education: Priority Issues for Quality Education for all in Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa", Nairobi, Kenya, 25–27 July 2007; Regional Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education—The Gulf Arab States, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 27–29 August 2007; International Workshop on Inclusive Education—Southern and Andean Cone Regions, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 12–14 September 2007; Regional Preparatory Working Session on Inclusive Education—African Region during the Regional Workshop "What Basic Education for Africa?", Kigali, Rwanda, 27 September 2007; CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) Workshop on "Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future", Minsk, Belarus, 29–31 October 2007; Caribbean Symposium on Inclusive Education, Kingston, Jamaica, 5–7 December 2007; East Asia Workshop on Inclusive Education, Hangzhou, China, 2–5 November 2007; Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future, Nordic Countries, Helsinki, Finland, 6–7 March 2008.

4 Regional Preparatory Conference for the 48th session of the International Conference on Education (ICE) (Europe and the North American Region), Riga, Latvia, 24–26 February 2008; Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Conference for the 48th session of the International Conference on Education (ICE), Bali, Indonesia, 29–31 May 2008; Arab Regional Preparatory Conference for the 48th session of the International Conference on Education (ICE), Beirut, Lebanon, 25–27 August 2008; African Regional Preparatory Conference for the 48th session of the International Conference on Education (ICE), Yaoundé, Cameroon, 17–18 September 2008.

In line with these sub-themes, the events aimed at promoting dialogue among policy-makers, researchers, educators and civil society with the purpose of identifying challenges, strategies and practices related to inclusive education that were significant at the regional and national levels.

As a result of the workshop deliberations, most of the workshops provided a regional roadmap that participating countries adopted at the end of each event. Based on the ICE 2008 sub-themes, this roadmap identified actions in the strategic areas of policy-making, legislation, finance, institutions, curriculum design, awareness and support. In defining such actions, challenges, policy initiatives and good practices already existing in the regions were also taken into consideration. This document presents the workshops' outcomes and trends derived mainly from the national presentations for each region, discussions on the status of inclusive education and on the proposals for regional roadmaps.

In the case of the regional preparatory conferences, emphasis was given to ministerial participation in discussing policy priorities, achievements and challenges in relation to the advancement of the concept and practice of inclusive education in the regions concerned. In particular, as a key outcome, policy recommendations in the form of a regional final document are included in this document.

The purpose of this document is therefore to draw lessons from the collective learning that was achieved in these preparatory events by: (a) addressing the on-going discussion of conceptual dimensions of inclusive education; (b) examining trends across regions within the ICE sub-themes;⁵ and (c) highlighting as a conclusion points for future debate on inclusive education. The key outcomes of the regional workshops and conferences are presented in detail in Appendices 1 and 2.

5 The following sections of this document: Section 2: Conceptual Dimensions of Inclusive Education; Section 3: ICE 2008 Sub-Themes And Regional Trends Of Inclusive Education and Section 4: Conclusions and points for further debate - were originally published in Operti, R.; Belalcazar, C. (2008.) Trends in Inclusive Education at Regional and Interregional Levels: Issues and Challenges. *Prospects*, March no. 145. Section 3 contains added input from the Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future—Nordic Countries.

2. CONCEPTUAL DIMENSIONS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education is a growing universal concern that informs and challenges the processes of educational reform in both developing and developed regions. Inclusive education is also an evolving concept useful to guide strategies of educational change addressing the sources and consequences of exclusion within the holistic framework of the EFA goals and the understanding of education as a human right.

2.1 SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION

Traditionally and even today in various world regions – for example, in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, as well as in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and most parts of Asia^{6, 7, 8} the concept and practice of inclusive education have been mainly limited to students categorized as having special needs, meaning mainly those with physical and/or mental disabilities, as well as refugees. Under this perspective, the approaches and responses given to students' needs have been mostly remedial and corrective, consisting of the setting up of special schools and curricular tracks and by increasing the number of special education teachers.

One significant consequence of differentiated curricular and institutional structures for students categorized as having special needs has been their marginalization and even segregation within the education system. Likewise, these children are learning to live separately from society, instead of learning to live together as a main part of it. The assumption that there are “special needs children” is questionable, as stated by Stubbs, “any child can experience difficulty in learning [...]; many disabled children have no problem with learning”⁹ and “children with intellectual impairment can often learn very well in certain areas”.¹⁰

2.2 INTEGRATION

The concept of integration came to the fore in the 1980s, as an alternative to special needs curricula and school models, with the objective of placing students identified as having

6 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2006. *Education policies for students at risk and those with disabilities in South Eastern Europe: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, FYR of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia*. Paris: OECD.

7 IBE, 2007 International Bureau of Education (IBE) 2007. *Report on the Commonwealth of Independent States, Third Workshop on Curriculum Development: “Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future”*, Minsk, Belarus, 29-31 October 2007. Geneva, Switzerland: UNESCO IBE, IBE/2007/RP/CD/06.

8 IBE, 2007 International Bureau of Education (IBE) 2007. *Report on the International Workshop on Inclusive Education – East Asia*, Hangzhou, China, 2-5 November 2007. Geneva, Switzerland: UNESCO IBE, IBE/2007/RP/CD/08.

9 Stubbs, S. 2002. *Inclusive education: where there are few resources*. Oslo: The Atlas Alliance, p. 23.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

special needs in mainstream schools. The restructuring and improvement of physical facilities and the provision of learning materials, along with the increase in the number of special education classrooms and specially trained teachers in mainstream schools were, and still are, some of the main components for the application of integration models. Mainly focused on students with mild impairments, integration risks becoming a rhetorical device rather than a reality in practice; it can become a spatial change of school classrooms rather than a change of curricular content and pedagogy relevant to children's learning needs and capabilities.

After the 1990s, the scope, objectives, contents and implications of inclusive education in relation to integration considerably changed. This was principally due to the recognition that integration models solely based on closing special schools and “inserting” students into mainstream schools and curricula did not respond to the diversities of learners' expectations and needs. Such an understanding has prompted the revision of educational policies dealing with integration issues by questioning the relevance of the curriculum and school models that are the same for all students, regardless of their differences. In such models, students must *adapt* to the norms, styles, routines and practices of the education system instead of the education system changing according to the learner. Moreover, dropout rates may increase among students with special needs when they are integrated into mainstream schools that have not undertaken a comprehensive set of institutional, curricular and pedagogical changes.

2.3 INCLUSION

Inclusive education can be understood as a guiding principle to attain reasonable levels of school integration for all students. In the context of a broader vision of integration, inclusive education implies the conception and the implementation of a vast repertoire of learning strategies to respond in a personalized way to learners' diversities. In this sense, education systems have the obligation to respond to the expectations and needs of children and young people, considering that the capacity to provide effective learning opportunities based on a rigid scheme of integration (placing “special needs” students in mainstream schools) is very limited. This is what Peters¹¹ refers to as the “continuum of placements” paradigm; that is, when inclusive education is conceptualized as a place and not as a service delivered. The debate on inclusive education and integration is not about a dichotomy between integration and inclusion policies and models, but rather about identifying to what extent there is progress in the understanding that each school has the moral responsibility to include

11 Peters, S. 2004. *Inclusive education: an EFA strategy for all children*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

everyone. Such requirement is also challenged when education systems have to address effectively other core universal education issues such as poor school attendance, repetition, dropouts, and low learning outcomes. Empirical evidence indicates that a student who repeats the first school years has a strong probability of dropping out of school altogether.¹²
^{13, 14} Each of the above problems and the combination of them generating exclusion are exacerbated by persistent institutional and pedagogical practices (e.g. frontal teaching) which assume that all children have the same learning conditions and capabilities. Moreover, as noted during the 2004 International Conference on Education,¹⁵ a child's exclusion from education leads to a lack of the professional and social competencies needed in order to access essential knowledge and to exert an autonomous and responsible citizenship.

Therefore, over approximately the last fifteen years, the concept of inclusive education has evolved towards the idea that all children and young people, despite different cultural, social and learning backgrounds, should have equivalent learning opportunities in all kinds of schools. The focus is on generating inclusive settings, which should involve: (a) respecting, understanding and taking care of cultural, social and individual diversity (responding to the expectations and needs of students); (b) providing equal access to quality education; (c) close co-ordination with other social policies.

A broad conception of inclusive education also addresses the learning needs of students with disabilities and learning difficulties, as conceptualized by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.¹⁶ Such conception refers to the inclusion of children with educational needs related to learning difficulties caused by organic pathologies and/or to behavioural or emotional disorders. OECD also addresses learning difficulties in children due to a problematic interaction between the student and the educational context or to disadvantages related to socio-economic or cultural/linguistic factors. Although there are the above categories to consider, the nature of the concept of inclusive education is non-categorical, and aims at providing effective learning opportunities to every child, in particular tailored learning contexts.

12 United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 1998. *Wasted opportunities: when schools fail; repetition and drop-out in primary schools, Education For All, Status and Trends*, Paris: EFA Forum Secretariat, UNESCO.

13 United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 1996. *La Repetición Escolar en la Enseñanza Primaria Una Perspectiva Global*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNESCO IBE.

14 United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 1984. *The drop-out problem in primary education: some case studies*. Bangkok: UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Asia and the Pacific.

15 United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 2004. *International Conference of Education. 47th meeting. Workshop 2: Quality education and social inclusion*. Geneva: UNESCO IBE. Available online at: http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/ICE47/English/Wdocs/Wdocs_main.htm, pp. 8–14

16 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2006. *Education policies for students at risk and those with disabilities in South Eastern Europe: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, FYR of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia*. Paris: OECD.

UNESCO defines inclusion precisely thus: “as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children”¹⁷. Furthermore, as stated by Booth and Ainscow¹⁸ in their proposal of an *Index for inclusion*, “inclusion is about making schools supportive and stimulating places for staff as well as students. [...] It is about building communities which encourage and celebrate their achievements”.

Indeed, the design and the development of policies on inclusive education should not be understood as the sum of initiatives and efforts in favour of specific groups (an endless and quite possibly incomplete list). On the contrary, the focus is not on categories but on the provision of friendly learning environments and diverse learning opportunities for all. According to Tutt,¹⁹ the main challenge is to provide inclusive settings in all schools, through the provision of a diverse continuum of services that are part of a school network linked to other social policies.

The challenges of attaining inclusive education are therefore also related to the provision of a comprehensive set of policies aimed at: (a) a pertinent and relevant curriculum with a vision that facilitates dialogue among various actors of the education system; (b) a vast repertoire of diverse and complementary pedagogical strategies (formal and non-formal schooling) that can respond to the specificities of each student by personalizing educational provision; (c) available physical facilities and equipment aligned with the designed curriculum and its implementation; (d) strong teacher support in the classroom —seeing the teacher as a co-developer of the curriculum; and (e) engaging in dialogue with families and communities in order to understand their expectations and needs, as well as to promote their active participation in the schools.

An inclusive educational strategy implies the careful and detailed consideration of the specificity and uniqueness of each child and adolescent so as to provide them with effective educational opportunities throughout their lives. In these terms, inclusive education is about the ways and the modalities under which teachers and students interact with each other and

17 United Nations Educational and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 2005. *Guidelines for inclusion: ensuring access to Education for All*. Paris: UNESCO.

18 Booth T., Ainscow, M. 2002. *Index for inclusion, developing learning and participation in schools*. Bristol, UK: Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, p. 4.

19 Tutt, R. 2007. *Every child included*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing/The Association for all School Leaders (NAHT). United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2005. *Human development report 2005: international cooperation at a crossroads: aid, trade and security in an unequal world*. New York, NY: UNDP. Available on-line at: hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2005/

generate mutual empathy and closeness; how they understand and respect their diversities and jointly create suitable and attainable conditions for achieving relevant and pertinent learning opportunities for all.

Cognitive education plays a key role in achieving inclusive education as it tends to make children aware of their own cognitive functions, which can help them to understand and learn better. It is an effective way for educators to address the needs of diverse populations by better understanding how students learn, think and reflect, critically and creatively, and how this understanding can be used in the construction of a meaningful curriculum and related learning.

As a contribution to the discussion of pedagogical approaches of inclusive education, Skidmore²⁰ draws attention to the differences between a pedagogy of deviance and one of inclusion by noting the following five aspects:

- a) *Student's learning*: while the deviance discourse establishes a hierarchy of cognitive skills to measure the abilities of each student, the inclusion discourse highlights the open learning potential of each student, which can be progressively discovered and stimulated.
- b) *Explanation of school failure*: while the deviance discourse points out that the main learning difficulties are related to the deficiencies of the students' capacities, the inclusion discourse argues that the main difficulty lies instead on the inadequate responses generated by the curriculum.
- c) *School response*: while the deviance discourse states that the learning process should be focused on the students' deficiencies, the inclusion discourse emphasizes the need for reforming the curriculum and of implementing a cross-cutting pedagogy in the school.
- d) *Theory of teachers' expertise*: while the deviance discourse emphasizes the importance of specialized discipline knowledge as the key to the teachers' expertise, the inclusion discourse highlights the active participation of the students in the learning process.
- e) *The curriculum model*: while the deviance discourse argues that an alternative curriculum should be designed for those students categorized as low achievers, the inclusion discourse emphasizes the need of a common curriculum for all students.

In overall terms, inclusive education implies four key elements:

- a) It is essentially a process of looking for the most appropriate ways of responding to diversity, as well as of trying to learn how to learn from differences.

20 Skidmore, D. 2004. *Inclusion: the dynamic of school development*. London: Open University Press, pp. 112–127

- b) It is linked to the motivation and development, through multiple strategies, of students' creativity and their capacity to address and resolve problems.
- c) It comprises the right of the child to attend school, express his/her opinion, experience quality learning and attain valuable learning outcomes.
- d) It implies the moral responsibility of prioritizing those students who are at risk of being marginalized and excluded from school, and of obtaining low learning outcomes.

2.4 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

The urgent need to advance in the democratization of opportunities that would enable all children to access and profit from a high-quality equitable education draws on the conception of inclusion as a guiding principle to foster educational and social change. Inclusion from an educational perspective can help address the traditional and structural problems of poverty, the challenges of modernization and social and cultural integration, and the growing diversity of national societies. Social inclusion and inclusive education are mutually implicated in a feedback relationship. Inclusive education seeks to address forms and contents of exclusion, such as the social gaps in access to information and communication technologies (ICTs); the marginalization of disaffected young people (those who do not study, do not work and do not look for work); the lack of educational opportunities and low learning outcomes among migrant populations; the cultural homogeneity of educational proposals that are not exposed to, or do not understand and value multiculturalism, and the stigmatization of cultural and social diversity as an obstacle to inclusion.

Inclusive education can therefore be considered a pathway to attain social inclusion. From a societal perspective, inclusive education is clearly and substantially linked to the discussion around the type of society to be attained; the kind of well-being desired for all citizens; and the quality of democracy and social participation we wish to pursue. On a long-term basis, education in relation to social inclusion implies an understanding of the former as the key to citizenship and as an essential component of social policy.

Along those lines, the relationship between social inclusion and education highlights central issues of inclusive education related to: (a) the struggles against poverty, cultural and social marginalization and exclusion; (b) the consideration of cultural diversity and multiculturalism, as both a right and a learning context within a framework of shared universal values; and (c) the protection of the rights of minorities, aboriginals, migrants and displaced populations.

In the light of these issues, the following points are critical in understanding and advancing the conception and practice of inclusive education:

- a) Identifying the significance and priority given to inclusive education in governmental and state policies. Inclusive education, as a key social policy, is a powerful instrument to mitigate the negative effects of social inequalities and cultural disintegration, as well as residential segregation. Inclusive education is useful in addressing the changing cultural, ethnic, migrant and social composition of schools, a major challenge to the development of efficacious and efficient government social policies.
- b) Fostering high-quality equitable learning opportunities for all by considering the articulation, diversification and flexibility between the different ladders and pathways of the education system, its structures and contents, within a global and unified vision of basic and youth education.
- c) Developing a tailored approach to providing a real opportunity for educational success for each child by focusing on the learning needs of both potential and current students (those who have never attended school, those who are currently attending and those who have dropped out), taking into account their cultural, social and cognitive diversities as well as their ethnic origin, philosophical and religious beliefs and migrant status. Diversity in learning contexts should be considered as a challenge and an asset to education and not as an obstacle.
- d) Guiding, articulating and undertaking efforts and initiatives aimed at generating suitable conditions for achieving meaningful and relevant learning by conceiving the school as the main force for educational change, as well as an integrated institutional and pedagogical unit within a solid educational policy and shared curriculum framework, from early childhood to youth education.
- e) Renovating and recreating teachers' professional roles taking into account their ethical and societal mission and responsibility. Teacher training and professional development should strengthen the ways in which teachers understand, approach and respond to students' differences; teaching styles should be revised and adjusted in order to be aligned with cultural and social contexts that are increasingly complex and uncertain; teachers should be considered as co-designers and co-developers of inclusive education policies at the school and classroom levels, and not as mere implementers of curriculum change.

In overall terms, the transition towards inclusive education implies collective thinking and action on: (i) the concept of social justice and social inclusion; (ii) the beliefs around the

learning potential of each student; (iii) the conceptual frameworks that sustain good teaching and learning practices; and (iv) endorsing a comprehensive political and technical vision of curriculum encompassing processes and outcomes.²¹

21 Nind, M. 2005. Inclusive education: discourse and action. *British educational research journal*, vol. 31, no. 2, April, pp. 269–275.

3. ICE 2008 SUB-THEMES AND REGIONAL TRENDS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

3.1 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: APPROACHES, SCOPE AND CONTENT

Compared to all the other sub-themes, this one in particular was by far the most discussed in all the regional workshops. The prevalence of this thematic discussion is illustrative of the importance of reaching a common understanding of the term “inclusive education” in order for it to be successfully appropriated at policy and implementation levels in national and regional contexts. The following trends can be identified in relation to the approach, scope and content of inclusive education across all regions: (a) further discussion of the term is needed; (b) several approaches to inclusive education reflecting those proposed in the previous section of this document were found to be present to varying and overlapping degrees in all regions (e.g. special needs education, integration, social inclusion, EFA and quality education; UNESCO’s definition); and (c) social awareness and advocacy of inclusive education were tightly connected to issues of social exclusion and tolerance.

Further Discussion on the Concept of Inclusive Education

It is evident from all regional workshops that the term “inclusive education” needs further clarification and appropriation by educators, governmental and non-governmental organizations, policy-makers and social actors. Inclusive education is strongly associated in conception and in practice with special needs education. As an example, in the CIS and Eastern and South-Eastern European regions, it is difficult to redefine inclusive education as a new concept, as it is usually intertwined with the idea of “special needs education”. This is also the case in East Asia, where inclusive education has been limited to the domain of traditional special needs education. In this region, as a new concept, inclusive education encounters difficulty in adapting to local conditions, while also facing language and translation barriers. Participants in this region were apprehensive about the new concept of inclusive education as creating a “completely new education system”, with the consequence of uncertainty and disarray in the rationale and practice of educators. In the Nordic countries, in addition to refining the concept of inclusive education in relation to integration and special needs education, it is also important to further distinguish the term from similar existing ones such as individualization and personalization of education.

The representatives of the Andean and Southern Cone regions in South America also agreed that more conceptual work was necessary to clarify and enrich the term Inclusive Education. Since the term was conceived to address problems of equity and quality in

education, it is important to justify to ministries of education and other stakeholders the reason why a new term has been created to respond to the same objectives of previous education reform discourse.

Approaches to Inclusive Education

Special needs education

As inclusive education is a new term akin to and originating in special needs education, most regions referred to this tradition when approaching inclusive education. For example, in Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa, the CIS and Eastern and South-Eastern European regions, special needs education is based on the scientific and intellectual tradition of defectology as a way of addressing the education of children with special needs. Similarly, in the latter two regions, considerable importance is given to the education of gifted children. The separation of gifted children — as well as that of special needs children (e.g. especially of hearing and visually impaired; physically or mentally disabled) — from mainstream schools was envisaged as necessary as there is no clear understanding of how to address the learning needs of these groups in the same classroom.

Integration

At the same time, alongside special needs education, regions are also presenting aspects of integration in their education systems. In some cases, special needs children with motor disabilities are integrated into mainstream schools as they do not represent “extreme cases” of disability. This could be approached as an initial step in inclusive education, yet in need of further development involving upcoming curricular and pedagogical changes. However, as is the case in some countries of the CIS region, integration of special needs children into mainstream schools could also be understood as a step in response to a lack of special education schools in remote areas. As expressed more evidently in the Gulf Arab States, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, and the CIS region, inclusive education remains very much limited to special needs education and, in some instances, to integration of children with special needs into mainstream schools that provide physical access and equipment to these children without implying a systemic change of educational structures.

Social inclusion

Whenever participants in the workshops referred to excluded social groups that did not have equal access to education or did not have an equal opportunity to fully develop their educational potential, the link between social inclusion and education became evident. All regions' representatives recognized the dialectical relationship between an inclusive, just society and education, while they also stressed the need for their reciprocal support. It became clear that social equity could not be separated from an inclusive education approach and that inclusive education could not be implemented successfully without a just society. Inclusive education implies valuing diversity within social cohesion.

The English-speaking Caribbean, Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa and the Southern Cone and Andean regions of Latin America were the most attentive to the importance and understanding of inclusive education in terms of social inclusion, perhaps as a consequence of the deep social inequities present in their countries. On the other hand, such inequities resulting in social and economic segregation are not a main challenge to address in the scope of inclusive education in the Nordic region. At the same time, challenges to inclusive education point to social exclusion as the main factor underlying the achievement of EFA goals, especially in Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa and the Andean and Southern Cone regions. Likewise, participants from the CIS countries acknowledged their success in achieving almost full education provision at the basic and secondary education levels, while recognizing the challenge of nevertheless providing opportunities for socialization leading to social inclusion. For instance, children are often excluded from education due to their low socio-economic background, their culture and their language.

EFA and quality education

Understanding inclusive education in relation to the EFA goals broadened the concept of inclusive education when participants in all regions considered who does not have equitable access to quality education as a human right. In all regions, several social groups are excluded from full access to education, with the common characteristic of being the less privileged on all aspects of human development. All participants agreed on the need to find a bridge between inclusive education and EFA goals when prioritizing the right to education of all marginalized and excluded children. In Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa, the

English-speaking Caribbean, Latin America and the Gulf Arab States, there is still a need for improvements in literacy and access levels, for repetition rates to decrease and for completion rates to increase. Not only is access to education unequal, but educational outcomes are also unequal reflecting and maintaining social inequities. In most regions, reaching universal educational coverage of the population in at least basic education is an essential goal in order to advance the provision of quality Education for All. In the case of the Nordic countries, inclusive education aims to sustain and further enhance equitable and successful learning in all students within a quality learning environment in which each student receives support to fully develop his/her individual potential. In the case of the CIS region and some Eastern and South-Eastern European countries, high literacy levels and attendance in basic education at national levels were highlighted as a legacy of Soviet educational policy; however, more attention should now be paid to providing quality education. Quality education was defined as taking into account the different learning abilities of children with engaging educational processes, decreasing exclusiveness, and not related to the accumulation of knowledge detached from reality.

Participants, especially those from the Gulf Arab States and African countries, noted that expanding and democratizing basic education, while promoting inclusive education goals, would require an elaborate strategy, to be implemented gradually, if it was to be achieved. Along those lines, inclusive education would involve long-term changes in the curriculum and a renovated school model to expand and democratize basic education.

Towards a Broader View of Inclusive Education

Each workshop discussion on the scope, approaches and content of inclusive education was preceded by a presentation of UNESCO's definition of the term. Participants from all regions acknowledged that UNESCO's definition of inclusive education was sufficiently broad and flexible in scope and approach to be applicable at both regional and national levels. For example, the roadmaps of four regions — Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa, the English-speaking Caribbean, and the CIS and Nordic regions — clearly reflected the approach to inclusive education suggested by UNESCO's policy guidelines. Together with reforms in curriculum content, approaches, structures and strategies, these regions also addressed inclusive education as: (a) a process providing effective learning opportunities to every child by taking care of their uniqueness and diversity, thereby promoting respect and human dignity; (b) development of education systems in which everyone has access to quality education regardless of physical, intellectual, economic or social conditions; (c) a

process addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners by creating conditions for successful learning and social inclusion, eliminating any forms of segregation among children.

Awareness of Inclusive Education: Increasing Social Tolerance

In all regions, the lack of awareness in society about the importance of inclusive education was identified as a common and important problem. Various proposals for inclusive education advocacy were advanced (i.e. mainly employing the media, non-governmental organizations, family and community groups). As noted in the Public Policy sub-theme, the need for awareness of and advocacy for inclusive education also reveals the need to find support in participatory approaches for policy design and implementation by involving all actors, including those who are excluded at present.

The clear need to raise awareness about inclusive education revealed that it is not only a question of society *knowing* more about inclusive education, but about changing the attitude and behaviour of individuals to become more tolerant. Appealing for more awareness of inclusive education represents a move in all regions to revise and change exclusionary rationales, attitudes and practices towards certain social groups; it implies an overall socio-cultural change, aimed at increasing tolerance. Moreover, the recognition of cultural diversity as essential for education, both as a right and conducive to a creative learning environment, is still missing in most regions.

The identification of excluded groups in society means that the same challenge of exclusion needs to be addressed within schools. As a common trend across regions, the following social groups were often referred to as excluded and in critical need of having their right to quality education protected as part of a basic human development: people living in marginalized areas, such as urban slums or rural areas; street families and children; nomadic and migrant populations; pastoralists; girls and adolescent mothers; Roma families and children; adult learners; orphans; those directly or indirectly afflicted by HIV/AIDS; victims of war, conflicts and disasters (refugees or those displaced by war or natural disasters); child soldiers; post-conflict children; children with emotional, cognitive and/or physical disabilities or special needs; unpaid or paid child labourers; children of household personnel; and children forced into prostitution.

While the most vulnerable/ excluded groups were being identified and strategies were set forth to include them with equity and justice into education and society, some participants called for caution in labelling those groups: as expressed in the workshop of the

Southern Cone and Andean regions, educational policies should be careful in their categorization of those who are excluded, as this may lead to the contrary effect of stigmatizing such groups.

3.2 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: PUBLIC POLICIES

The following topics of public policy in relation to inclusive education can be identified:

1. The purpose of public policy and inclusive education (e.g. social justice, the alleviation of social problems such as poverty and HIV and AIDS, the role of education in society).
2. Endorsement of conventions and their ratification in national legislation.
3. Effective policy-making, planning and implementation (e.g. establishment of priorities; long-term continuity; augmented, transparent and equitable allocation of resources; a co-ordinated and collaborative effort in policy design and implementation, and a multi-sectoral approach in policy and implementation).

The Purpose of Public Policy and Inclusive Education: Society

When discussing aspects of public policy in relation to inclusive education, participants in several regions considered it important to firstly explore the rationale guiding such policy. The Southern Cone and Andean regions contributed a critical approach questioning the underlying purpose of public policy and the long-term goals of inclusive education. In their view, policies need to incorporate further reflection and discussion on the kind of society desired when considering the drawbacks of exclusion generated by a knowledge and information society. Along those lines, social inequity and poverty levels should be reduced, as these are major obstacles to the implementation of inclusive education in terms of social justice. This critical approach was also relevant for countries in East Asia when noting that, in terms of equality, relevant social policy and laws should be implemented to reduce social inequality and poverty levels at the regional and national levels.

Social ailments, such as extreme poverty levels and the epidemic of HIV and AIDS, as important aspects to be addressed by public policy in relation to inclusion, are increasingly evident in the case of Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa. In this region, funding for inclusive education in national socio-economic agendas has to take into account the extreme poverty levels and the epidemic of HIV and AIDS. In such a context, inclusive education has to be planned as part of the struggle against poverty and social marginalization, especially in relation to the exclusion of children due to their poor

economic background, and their suffering and that of their families with HIV and AIDS. Indeed, among all regions, the impact of HIV and AIDS on the provision of education and school attendance must be especially highlighted in Africa. For instance, in Sub-Saharan Africa, approximately 9% of children under the age of 15 have lost one parent to AIDS, and one in six households with children is caring for at least one orphan.²² The education sector has also to consider the psychological trauma caused to children who become orphans as a result of losing both parents to AIDS, and who are separated from their siblings. The impact of the AIDS epidemic on societies and human development goals are of crucial importance to any kind of public policy in the region. Indirectly or directly, AIDS increases child mortality and affects the poor more than other population groups; girls are dropping out of school to look after family members affected by AIDS; orphans' attendance at school is limited, and the number of public school teachers is declining when they fall ill with HIV and/or die from AIDS while in service.^{23, 24, 25}

Equally important, as a challenge to inclusive education, is the extent to which society is willing to include children affected by HIV in schools, as the stigma and discrimination against them and/or against those suspected of being infected with HIV are two of the worst consequences that aggravate this epidemic.²⁶

Issues of poverty to be dealt with by public policy in relation to inclusive education were addressed by all participants especially by those from Africa and Latin America. Poverty is discouraging children from continuing to go to school, since the basic household income may depend on various forms of child labour. Sub-Saharan Africa has the greatest incidence of economically active children: 26.4% of all 5–14 year-olds, compared to 18.8% for Asia and the Pacific and 5.1% for Latin America.²⁷ The impact of poverty on education is more evident in deprived rural or urban slum areas. Schools and communities in such areas have inadequate facilities; poor provision of public services; no roads or transportation; no electricity and basic social services such as sanitation and clean water provision. The lack of water supply and sanitation results in considerable costs to human

22 Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) 2006. *Report on the global AIDS epidemic*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNAIDS. Available on-line at: www.unaids.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/HIVData/GlobalReport/, p.92

23 Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) 2006. *Report on the global AIDS epidemic*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNAIDS. Available on-line at: www.unaids.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/HIVData/GlobalReport/.

24 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2005. *Human development report 2005: international cooperation at a crossroads: aid, trade and security in an unequal world*. New York, NY: UNDP. Available on-line at: hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2005/

25 Beckmann S, & Rai P. 2004. HIV/AIDS, Work and development in the United Republic of Tanzania. Geneva, Switzerland: ILO and GTZ. Available on-line at: www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/trav/aids/pul/cp_2_tanzania.pdf

26 Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) 2006. *Report on the global AIDS epidemic*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNAIDS. Available on-line at: www.unaids.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/HIVData/GlobalReport/.

27 International Labour Organization (ILO) 2006. *Global child labour trends, 2000-2004. Statistical information and monitoring programme on child labour*. Geneva, Switzerland: ILO, p. 3.

development, especially in the poorest countries. For instance, “Sub-Saharan Africa loses about 5% of GDP, or some \$28.4 billion annually, a figure that exceeds total aid flows and debt relief to the region in 2003”.²⁸ Moreover, undernourishment in regions with extreme poverty has a considerable negative effect on the well-being of children and their families and on any educational outcome. As an example, according to the UN’s Millennium Development Goals regional classification, the prevalence of undernourishment in the total population of Sub-Saharan countries was estimated to be 31% in the latest 2000–2004 preliminary data.²⁹

Finally, directly addressing the role of the state, public policy and inclusive education, the Southern Cone and Andean regions expressed their concern about restoring and strengthening the public purpose of education. Education is a public good and a right that should be guaranteed by the state. An increasing weakness of the public school in Latin America was identified as a consequence of the privatization of the education system, a phenomenon that was described as occurring due to group pressures and requirements that the state is unable to contain.

International Conventions and National Legislations

Workshop participants from all regions called for national legislations to be changed according to a revised policy incorporating notions of inclusive education. Moreover, participants agreed that international conventions should be endorsed and ratified in national legislation, e.g. the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, Art. 28, 29), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted in December 2006 (Art. 24). In line with these conventions, national laws should make education compulsory for all school-age children, with access to education protected as a human right. Furthermore, it is important to introduce specific anti-discrimination laws that protect particularly vulnerable groups. Participants from the Southern Cone and Andean regions and the English-speaking Caribbean specifically called for bilingual education to be included in legal frameworks and in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Inclusive education was also referred to as a goal to be pursued not only within national frameworks but also within a global perspective of shared responsibility among the international community.

28 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2006. *Human development report, 2006: Beyond scarcity: power, poverty and the global water crisis*. New York, NY: UNDP, p. 6.

29 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) 2006. *Food security statistics*. Rome: FAO. Available on-line at: www.fao.org/es/ess/faostat/foodsecurity/Files/PrevalenceUndernourishment_en.xls

At the same time, participants from all regions drew attention to the fact that policy and laws related to inclusive education are rarely implemented in full. If policies and laws are not implemented or enforced in practice, there is a risk of inclusive education becoming a rhetorical device of educational reform. Finally, it was recommended that, in order to be effective, legislation needs to be accompanied by adequate and sustainable funding. At the same time, as expressed in the workshop for the Southern Cone and Andean regions, relying entirely on financial support in order to make a law successful should not be the final goal, since a good law in itself should contribute to improving conditions of inclusion as well.

Effective Policy-Making and Implementation

Public policies in all regions were described as needing to improve their effectiveness at both the design and implementation levels. An exception to this is the case of the Nordic region where continuation of current decentralized education policy and implementation is deemed effective due to its flexibility and relevance to school levels. With a strong political will policy planning should be revised in most regions. All participants drew attention to the need to clearly establish priorities according to a well-designed plan, accompanied by appropriate and sustained efforts and resources on a long-term basis. Participants from Eastern and South-Eastern European countries, as well as those from the CIS region, noted that socio-economic and political transitions have complex implications, resulting in discontinuity in the planning of large-scale systemic educational reforms. At the same time, participants from these two regions noted that countries could benefit from situations of reconstruction or transition by incorporating the idea of inclusive education into the processes of educational reform from the very beginning.

Allocation of Resources

Participants from all regions noted the importance of adopting public policy changes that lead to an increase in the resources needed to implement inclusive education programmes. In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, it was noted that the public resources are unequally distributed between the rich and the poor leading to increasing social inequity. All regions' representatives agreed that budgetary allocations for inclusive education need to be equitable, transparent, accountable and efficient. Also, decentralized autonomy in the use of resources at the local levels was marked as important. The English-speaking Caribbean also noted that countries had to consider servicing their high debts while dealing with competition for scarce resources among the various state sectors. Similarly, as observed in

the workshop for Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa, government commitment and national poverty levels affect the resource allocation for education. In regions with countries experiencing crucial poverty levels, basic provision for a decent quality of life needs to be addressed urgently, especially when thinking of inclusive education and the attainment of EFA goals.

There is a marked concern in most regions that inclusive education could become too expensive for the education systems, especially when it involves adapting education to the various learning needs of children. In the case of East Asia, inclusive education is considered to be more costly than concentrating special needs children in special institutions.³⁰ In this region, a special school is considered to offer a better service than a mainstream one in providing the necessary education for children with special needs. On the other hand, in the CIS region, for example, diminished economic performance levels prevent countries from providing all the necessary facilities and professional staff training needed to specifically address children with special needs; thus, those children are in some cases integrated into mainstream schools.

The following elements were identified as being in need of further funding and improvement in relation to inclusive education: (a) pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes; (b) advocacy to increase social awareness; (c) school facilities; (d) class size; (e) teaching materials; and (f) special classroom support. There is also a need for resources to improve non-formal education so as to reach nomadic and rural populations, especially in Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa.

A Multi-Sectoral and Collaborative Approach to Policy

In all regions, participants remarked that long-term policies of economic and social development contribute to achieve and sustain the objectives of inclusive education. As resources are needed not only to address the educational needs of children, but also for their social and developmental potential, regions recommend an integral multi-sectoral approach to attend to children's needs in order to guarantee their right to education. Early childhood interventions were highlighted as an area where various social sectors can collaborate jointly, share funds and provide a co-ordinated and comprehensive effort to address children's development and welfare, especially regarding their health and educational development. It was often noted in all regions that the education sector cannot be entirely

³⁰ It should be noted that a study carried out in 1994, focusing on primary education provision for children with special educational needs in selected countries in the Asia region, found that most children with special educational needs can be successfully and less expensively accommodated in integrated than in fully segregated settings, Lynch, J. 1994. *Provision for children with special educational needs in the Asia Region*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

responsible for children's welfare. A multi-sectoral approach is needed for an overall improvement of human development from an early age. Unfortunately, such a goal is fragmented due to a lack of comprehensive participation from various public sectors; moreover, different sectors are often redundant in their work as a consequence of inefficient coordination of their policy objectives and programs.

Participants in most regions agreed to involve the private sector in the provision of inclusive education. The representatives of the Southern Cone and Andean regions raised a note of caution about the process of privatization taking place in Latin American education. All participants called upon non-governmental and religious organizations and donor agencies to participate in joint efforts in favour of inclusive education. Partnerships with developed countries regarding financial support were also recommended.

All participants suggested that policy-making about inclusive education should involve a regional and national dialogue, in order to ensure public understanding, awareness and support for inclusive policies. Policy decisions should be taken in participatory fora that promote social cohesion and commitment supported by political will at all levels. Civil society, social actors, community groups and marginalized social groups should also participate in the design and implementation of policies. Participants often recommended engagement of likely opponents in the promotion of inclusive education, especially when such opposition comes from family and community.

3.3 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: SYSTEMS, LINKS AND TRANSITIONS

The following points were emphasized in all the regional workshops when addressing the sub-theme of systems, links and transitions:

1. The links and balance between special needs education and integration
2. The links between early childhood, primary and secondary education
3. The links between formal and non-formal education
4. Curricular changes for inclusive education in mainstream schools
5. The links between school and society

The Links between Special Needs Education and Integration

In all regions there is a shared tendency to consider that, up to a certain point, inclusive education is taking place through the integration of special needs children into mainstream schools. However, more development is needed to adapt curricular and teaching practices to the diverse needs of children as is the case in the Nordic region. It is clear that in all other regions the integration of children with special needs (mainly disabilities) into mainstream schools still remains a major curricular challenge.

Though all participants recognized the risk of exclusionary practices in education as being intensified by various models and types of special schools segregated from the mainstream ones, there was still a tendency in most regions to “protect” them, i.e. by setting up and expanding special needs schools. Special schools are considered necessary for children who have severe physical or mental disabilities. Transitional institutions were referred to as useful for special purposes, such as rehabilitation and guidance for certain children before they are placed into mainstream schools. At one point, participants suggested assessment and expertise facilities that evaluate and identify the particular disadvantages and needs that children have in order to determine the institutions in which they should be placed.

At the same time, as mentioned earlier, especially in the CIS and Eastern and South-East European regions, the scientific and intellectual tradition of defectology as a way of addressing the education of children with special needs is essential in determining the establishment of specialized institutions; such a distinction is also used to justify the education of gifted children in separate schools. The separation of gifted children, as well as that of special needs children, from mainstream schools was understood as necessary as there is no clear understanding on how to address the learning needs of both groups in the same classroom; there is a fear that such children will eventually become isolated.

The Links between Early Childhood, Primary And Secondary Education

All participants agreed on the importance of early childhood interventions as a way of protecting and guaranteeing the right to education of all children. Identifying and addressing the different learning needs that children may have in the early years, along with other developmental aspects, helps to pave the way to placing them all on an equal footing in their access and completion of basic education, and in achieving significant learning outcomes. Early childhood education, as part of basic education, is still a challenge in Africa, Latin

America and the English-speaking Caribbean, the CIS and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. Also, making early childhood education, primary and secondary education free and compulsory is a long-term objective that must be pursued in all regions, except in Nordic countries and to a lesser extent in the CIS region, considering their advancement in the universal provision of basic education.

At the same time, the articulation and cohesive transition of the curriculum between primary and secondary education were acknowledged by most regions' representatives as being incipient and in need of further development. Participants agreed that the lack of articulation may result in increasing the number of drop outs from primary and secondary education. As in the case of the African countries, everybody agreed on the need to develop a holistic, integrated and inclusive competency-based curriculum relevant to the needs of children and youth for a minimum of nine years of basic education as is the case of comprehensive schools in the Nordic region.

The Links between Formal and Non-Formal Education

The importance of non-formal education in achieving the goals of inclusive education was discussed in most regions, especially in Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa. Reaching out to neglected or excluded populations obliges countries to consider not only challenges within the formal system of education, but also within non-formal education contexts that may include such populations. In the case of African countries, several nomadic populations call for the provision of alternative education programmes that are relevant to their lives. In this regard, the curriculum would have to be revised to provide flexibility in various aspects (timetable, yearly calendar, language of instruction, duration of learning process, and place of teaching). Accelerated learning, mobile schools, rehabilitation, non-formal education models and community learning centres were suggested as useful methods for reaching such excluded populations. In the case of Latin America, non-formal education was also identified as relevant to achieving the goals of early childhood education.

Curricular Changes for Inclusive Education in Mainstream Schools

All participants were enthusiastic about addressing the kinds of curricular changes that are needed for an inclusive curriculum in mainstream schools. Importantly, as expressed in the Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan workshop, curriculum-related reforms are integral parts of the social agenda. The curriculum and its delivery of quality education are important based on the conviction that “the curriculum defines the kind of society a nation wants to

have”. Along those lines, discussions regarding Latin America, Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa, the Gulf Arab States, the Nordic and CIS regions, referred to the curriculum as a way of promoting a more tolerant culture within schools and society. Thus, its content could involve common human values, learning to live together, citizenship education and global issues, such as human rights.

In relation to curriculum design, the representatives of the Southern Cone and Andean regions, for example, noted how this process involved a collective negotiation, and a participatory approach to the organization of learning. The curriculum should be designed and implemented with flexibility in a way that incorporates the different paces of children’s learning, with positive and supportive teacher-student interaction, and active student-student cooperation (e.g. Nordic region). For that purpose, participants from Eastern and South-Eastern Europe suggested that students must be involved in the curriculum process if their needs are to be met. Also, as proposed by representatives of East Asia, Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Nordic region, curricular modifications should involve flexible components that allow teachers to modify the curriculum according to the various needs of children (e.g. flexible timetables). Finally, for all regions teachers’ participation is essential in the design and implementation of curricular policies.

It was clearly acknowledged in all regions that a highly academic, overloaded curriculum was counterproductive to inclusive education. A flexible and dynamic curriculum was believed to be essential in order to identify and support the diverse learning needs of all learners. Addressing a child’s learning needs should be considered a part of their full development as a human being in the context of the community in which they live. A curriculum sensitive to inclusive education would recognize and develop multiple intelligences, be child centred and encourage active learning. The curriculum should be relevant to the diversity not only of learners but also of teachers.

Moreover, keeping a test/exam oriented curricular agenda was identified in all regions as another form of exclusion. How current evaluation systems in the curriculum tend to promote exclusion in all regions was discussed at length. Rather, evaluation methods should be considered part of a comprehensive integral development of the child. Furthermore, evaluation of pedagogies and learning environments should be useful to determine the extra and individual support that children need.

The Links between School and Society

The role of the school in society was discussed during the workshops, especially in those for the Southern Cone and Andean regions, and the English-speaking Caribbean. The school was referred to as a centre of justice, linking both social and educational goals. Participants drew attention to how schools should regain their pivotal role in the articulation and implementation of social policies, going as far as to serve as community centres, which initiate and sustain social change. Schools have to be able to respond to children's problems (e.g., health, nourishment), since the scope and concerns of the school — as a social institution — should be integral and not only focused on education.

Participants in the Southern Cone and Andean regions' workshop emphasized that the school, as an important social institution, needs to promote acceptance and diversity among students in order to develop an inclusive society. In this sense, educational institutions should aim to be more heterogeneous and to include children from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Also, schools should offer socialization processes that involve and value living and learning together within diversity.

Participants from East Asia, the English-speaking Caribbean, Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa, the Nordic region, and the Southern Cone and Andean regions drew attention to the importance of establishing a collaborative system among schools, parents and their communities. Community participation should be increased and community service learning should be explored as a tool to further develop inclusive education objectives. Representative community committees within each school were suggested as a way of pursuing such objectives. Family and community support was addressed as an essential element in all regions to achieve inclusive education in tandem with an inclusive society. Families and communities need to be aware of the availability and importance of inclusive education.

3.4 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: LEARNERS AND TEACHERS

The discussion of this sub-theme in all regions concentrated more on teacher-related aspects than on those of learners; however, the latter group was addressed implicitly when referring to the kind of pedagogical strategies that teachers should be trained in when considering children's different learning needs. The following topics can be observed as important for all regions:

1. Improving the quality and content of pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes.
2. Support/training of educational staff other than teachers.
3. Teachers' motivation: the lack of it; the poor status of the teaching profession in society; the need to make teachers active participants in the educational process.
4. Regarding learners, the discussions concentrated on pedagogical aspects of the classroom, which were also mentioned as an important part of the content of teacher-education programmes.

Teachers

Improving pre-service and in-service teacher education

Participants from all regions expressed concern about the necessity to improve teacher education programmes (both pre-service and in-service) particularly in relation to inclusive education. Changes in both types of programme should respond to and be aligned with curriculum reforms addressing the diverse needs of learners in schools. It is important to strengthen the link among universities, teacher-education programmes and curricular reforms, as a way of supporting schools and teachers in the practice of inclusive education. Participants in all regions noted how teachers need a better understanding of the concept and practice of inclusive education by being trained in content and pedagogical strategies that enable them to engage in inclusive educational settings. Teachers' practice should be based on a paradigm shift, moving teachers' attention away from students' "defects" to supporting each child's development within diversity. With a flexible curriculum at hand, teachers would be more at ease in understanding that, despite their differences, children do have the capacity to develop their full learning potential. Teacher training should further prepare teachers to design individual action plans according to different children's learning styles. Teachers should be prepared to teach with multi-grade capacities and with comprehensive approaches to classroom behavioural management. Teacher education should also include the development of teaching materials that are user friendly to the diverse needs of learners and that make use of locally available resources. With regard to technology as a learning tool, participants noted that teachers should have the capacity to redefine the use of technology according to the various needs and ways of learning. The use of educational technology in the classroom should be approached in ways that do not promote and increase inequity. Finally, participants from all regions agreed that teacher training was significantly focused on the objectives of standards and examinations, instead of doing so on the flexible

curricular practices of inclusive education. On the contrary, training in assessment techniques should be improved to enable teachers to tailor programmes to students' various needs.

Support/training of educational staff

All regions' representatives agreed on the importance of also training educational professionals (other than teachers) to achieve the shared goals of inclusive education. In particular, school principals and teacher trainers should be further prepared to acquire a better understanding of the objectives of inclusive education and to envisage schools as both educational and social institutions. Comprehensive training in inclusive education of all education staff (e.g. teachers, teacher trainers, school administrators, inspectors, municipal officers and social workers) is also important to create inter-disciplinary support teams within the schools. Along these lines, it is important to train specialized teachers to offer support to mainstream classroom teachers. Collaboration between regular education teachers and special education teachers/schools should be increased, moving away from the expectation that one teacher can provide all of the required services. At the same time, participants from the Nordic region noted how emphasis should be giving to improving and supporting the knowledge and skills of teachers in inclusive education rather than relying on the support of random assistant teachers in the classroom. Participants in all regions also suggested teacher resource centres in remote areas as a way of providing support for teachers and students.

The need to improve teachers' motivation

With less emphasis in the CIS and Nordic regions, the teaching profession was referred to in all other regions as not being sufficiently valued by society. The result of this, among other reasons, is a lack of engagement and motivation on the part of teachers regarding teaching and learning processes. All participants in the IBE workshops agreed that the value of teaching and its role in society should be promoted and strengthened within social networks. It is also necessary, they argued, to change teacher attitudes by improving their teaching abilities and by allowing them to participate fully and be creative in the organization of their students' learning process. All participants also noted that schools should more actively recruit teachers and administrators with diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, including those coming from marginalized social groups. Finally, all regions'

representatives noted that reducing the workload of teachers could be a means to improve the quality of education.

Participants in all workshops appealed to governments and communities to create incentives that would improve teachers' social status and living conditions (e.g. increasing salaries, providing better living conditions, increasing the respect given to them, etc.). Especially, teachers working in hardship areas in Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America are in great need of support for their social and professional development, including, importantly, the improvement of basic living standards.

Learners

Discussions in the workshops in relation to learners and inclusive education tended to concentrate on changing pedagogical approaches in the classroom based on students' needs. Rigid and ineffective teaching methods should be revised in favour of more hands-on, competency-based approaches, centred on the child. Action plans or individualized plans for each student according to the child's learning needs, and social and cultural background were often suggested by participants from all regions with special attention in the workshops of the Nordic and East Asia regions. According to all participants, reflecting the prevalent content of teacher-education programmes, students experience inadequate assessment procedures and methods that should be changed. There is concern about high teacher/student ratios and a lack of time per student in schools with large class sizes. It is highly important to lower teacher/pupil ratios in classrooms in order to provide quality education that is inclusive of all kinds of learners. Finally, all regions agreed on the importance of encouraging learning environments that are collaborative and friendly, with welcoming non-hierarchical relationships between students and teachers.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND POINTS FOR FURTHER DEBATE

The points that follow are suggested as a way of encouraging further debate on the status of inclusive education in the world's regions addressed in this document.

Balancing the Spectrum: Special Education, Integration, Inclusion and Social Inclusion

It was evident from all regional discussions that the extent to which special education schools and institutions should be maintained and improved in parallel with mainstream schools is still open to debate. At the same time, mainstream schools are facing the dilemma of integrating special needs children (including those from culturally and socially disadvantaged groups), with or without adapting the curriculum and pedagogy to the particular needs of the child. The type of integration that adapts to the needs of the child paves the way for real inclusive education, not only by aiming to develop and improve physical facilities and equipment, but also by adjusting the curriculum and tailoring pedagogical approaches and teacher practices to the students' needs. Nevertheless, discussions in the regional workshops approached the balance between integration and inclusion by focusing predominantly on "physical" integration (e.g., facilities, number of special needs children placed in mainstream classrooms, etc.). In addition, participants from all regions raised the question about the high cost that inclusive education may have in comparison to existing models of special-needs education and integration. Contrary to this belief, inclusive education can, in fact, be less expensive, as it contributes to lower repetition and drop-out rates and can have a positive impact on the achievement of higher learning outcomes.

Inclusive education entails a friendly and socially diverse environment in school settings and effective learning opportunities tailored to the expectations and needs of each child. Nevertheless, learning conditions and processes can only be developed if they are adjusted to the societal conditions needed to achieve an active and equal participation and development in the educational process (e.g. socialization around values and attitudes that promote the significance of learning and social tolerance). Thus, even if an inclusive education setting is achieved at the school level with curricular and pedagogical changes, this needs to be linked to aspects of social inclusion around critical points such as: (a) a supportive social network consisting of families, communities and society at large, in which social tolerance and appreciation of diversity within learning environments and communities are encouraged; and (b) a dialectical relationship between social inclusion and inclusive education based on the premise that the state should play a significant role in fostering

education as a public good. Thus, the following questions could be taken into account when discussing inclusive education: How does education contribute to the kind of society to be attained? How unequal and hegemonic is this society? And thus, how unequal is the education system reflecting such a society? Is the knowledge society generating more exclusion than inclusion? Which social groups have more access to education, as compared to others? In cases in which everyone has equal access, do they also have the opportunity to fully develop their education potential in the context of basic standards of human development?

Further examination of where regions stand regarding inclusive education practices within the above range of approaches will serve to better clarify the concept of inclusive education. At one point, the integration/inclusion debate may be addressed by developing inclusive settings in different types of schools through the personalization of educational provision.

Who Participates in the Design And Implementation of Inclusive Education?

Though all the regional workshops recognized the importance of democratic participation in the design and implementation of policies pertaining to inclusive education, more political will and discussion are needed to define and engage stakeholders from inside and outside the education system. More debate is needed on how to appeal to and organize the role of civil society, the various state sectors, non-governmental organizations and representatives of marginalized and excluded groups in pursuing the goals of inclusive education. The removal of barriers for engagement and participation in schools requires, among other critical aspects, the empowerment of communities at the local level.

Is Inclusive Education a Renewed Commitment To EFA and Quality Education Goals?

Inclusive education provides wide scope for educational reform to respond to the needs of diverse cultural and social groups, as well as to reinforce the uniqueness of each child. It also proposes a new way to address the challenges of attaining high-quality and equitable education for all. Further debate is needed to address the following questions: 1. Is there added value in the concept of inclusive education to further accelerate and to strengthen the attainment of EFA goals? 2. As a comprehensive educational strategy, can inclusive education provide both a conceptual and operational framework for achieving an effective approach towards EFA goals? 3. Can it also contribute to overcoming the vision and the

practices of solely linking EFA goals to universal access to primary education? 4. How can quality education be conceptualized in the light of inclusive education as a guiding policy principle towards the attainment of EFA goals?

Does the Curriculum Matter In Achieving An Inclusive Educational Setting?

All regional discussions initially explored the extent to which curricular changes are needed in mainstream schools to achieve inclusive education. For example, questions of how an inclusive education curriculum should involve participatory and flexible design and implementation, a revised content (e.g. social values and core life competencies) and more emphasis on formative assessment processes will certainly become relevant to future debate. As noted earlier, curricula can be exclusionary when overloaded, too academic and excessively exam-oriented. Curricular content can also be exclusionary when presenting a biased preference for certain social and cultural groups over others. At present, there is too much emphasis on the transmission of information, along with a lack of articulation between early childhood and primary and secondary education. Further discussion is needed on how to overcome the institutional, curricular and pedagogical separation between primary and secondary education. A broader concept of comprehensive basic education, including early childhood education and lower secondary education, could be further explored.

How to Improve Teachers' Roles in Inclusive Education Settings?

Several obstacles were discussed in all regions regarding teachers' roles in inclusive education. Common challenges point to the improvement of the quality and content of pre-service and in-service teacher-education programmes. Teacher-education curricula lack conceptual frameworks and methodological tools to address the diversity of learners' expectations and needs effectively. As a consequence, teachers resist dealing with the heterogeneity of their school and classroom. Teacher-education programmes need to change from a deviance/labelling discourse (establishing a hierarchy of cognitive skills to place each student in a rather closed system) to one of inclusion (highlighting the open learning potential of each student which can be progressively discovered and stimulated).

What has been shown to work for teachers in inclusive education settings? Receiving school-based support; appealing to interdisciplinary team work, collaborative teaching, peer tutoring and co-operative group teaching; supporting special education in mainstream schools; using special schools as resource centres; providing personalized pedagogical

support; working within school networks and in close co-ordination with social institutions, the community and parents.

5. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

REGIONAL PREPARATORY WORKSHOPS ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: OUTCOMES

Eastern and South Eastern Europe - Workshop on Inclusive Education³¹

1. *Approaches, Scope and Content*

The discussion in this workshop was mainly focused on redefining the concept of inclusive education. Participants were prepared to address inclusive education by going beyond the regional tradition of “medical defectology” and were willing to revise policies that are at present limited only to students with special needs (the prevalence of the traditional integration model). Although there have been positive advances in terms of visions, strategies and practices, mainly by integrating children categorized as having cultural and social disadvantages (i.e. street and working children, the Roma population), inclusive education is still not a high-level priority in the regional agenda. The understanding and practice of inclusive education are dominated by the objective of integrating students with special needs into mainstream schools.

Challenges impacting initiatives of inclusive education in the region involve various exclusionary practices. Discrimination towards certain ethnic groups still exists. For example, the Roma people have historically faced widespread discrimination in Southern and Eastern European countries. Exclusion results in the placement of Roma children in separate schools and classes. According to the workshop’s participants, schools with an overall Roma population offer low-quality education and their schools’ infrastructure suffer from poor conditions. At times these students are sent to classes for students categorized as having learning disabilities, despite the fact that they might not have any special learning need.

As part of the workshop’s dialogue and reflection, participants acknowledged the importance of reaching a common, broader and shared definition of inclusive education that would be useful for each country. Such a definition would move in the direction of recognizing that education should address the requirements of students with diverse learning conditions and needs in mainstream schools; this initiative would build upon what has already been achieved with the integration models. At the same time, while reaching and respecting an international consensus regarding a common understanding of inclusive education, each country should tailor and implement its policies according to its specific situation.

2. *Public Policies and Inclusive Education*

Considering the above scope of inclusive education in the region, participants proposed changes in public policy in relation to the goals of inclusive education. Public policy in this region was described as unsuccessful in its design and implementation. Sustained policies of

31 International Bureau of Education (IBE). 2007. *Report on the Eastern and South-eastern Europe Regional Workshop on Inclusive Education, Sinaia, Romania, 14–16 June 2007*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNESCO-IBE. (IBE/2007/RP/CD/04.) This meeting included the participation of policy-makers, educators, and curriculum specialists and developers from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine (twenty-three participants). It was co-organized by Centre Education 2000+ (Bucharest, Romania), the Eastern and South-Eastern Europe Community of Practice in Curriculum Development and the IBE.

economic and social development were recommended as useful for inclusive education. The lack of resources for and data about inclusive education was identified as hindering the implementation of policies. Improvement of financial management and tools was suggested in order to better monitor the allocation and use of national budget lines for inclusive education. Regional and national networks must co-operate, collaborate and share good practices. Educational professionals, ministers, inspectors, school principals and teachers should be trained so as to improve their understanding and management of inclusive education.

In addition to the above obstacles, countries drew attention to the complex implications for educational planning and reform brought about by recent socio-economic and political transitions in the region. Policy discontinuity was identified as an obstacle to the progress of consensus-building within a long-term vision. At the same time, participants noted how periods of transition can confer an advantage on countries by incorporating the idea of inclusive education from the very beginning of the processes of educational reform.

In order to advance with a new conception of inclusive education beyond that of special needs, both in policies and practice, public awareness and tolerance about the importance of inclusive education need to be increased in society. Attention should be paid to places where deep segregation occurs. Unfortunately, there is strong communitarian and family opposition to the integration of students with special needs into mainstream education. Non-governmental organizations were identified as having an important role to play in the process of increasing public awareness about inclusive education.

3. *Systems, Links and Transitions*

Exclusionary educational practices were identified as being intensified by the region's diverse models and types of special schools which are at present segregated from mainstream ones. In addition, there is an insufficient curricular integration and articulation between primary and secondary education—which are also characterized by overcrowded classes.

Participants recommended national governments to guide and monitor inclusive education by promoting a more flexible curriculum in order to support the diverse needs of all students. For this purpose, students must be involved in the curriculum preparation process, otherwise their needs cannot be met. This point was emphasized considering that the current curriculum has been designed by an older generation that cannot translate contemporary students' expectations. There should be a strong political will to conceive—but especially to implement—a student-centred inclusive curriculum.

4. *Learners and Teachers*

Teacher training and professional development were identified as in need of considerable reforms in order to achieve the goals of inclusive education. Teachers need to better understand the concept and practice of inclusive education; further training in this area is needed not only for teachers but for other educational staff as well. Countries must invest in in-service teacher training and explore alternatives, such as distance training. Inclusive education should also form part of pre-service training programmes. Both in theory and in practice teacher-training programmes should incorporate the importance of the various learning needs in children. Along those lines, participants noted that educational standards must be diversified together with exams as a way to assess students' learning. Finally,

participants in the workshop recommended that teachers should be actively involved as co-developers of an inclusive curriculum at the school level.

Poverty Alleviation, HIV/ AIDS Education and Inclusive Education: Priority Issues for Quality Education for All (EFA) in Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa^{32, 33}

I. Approaches, Scope and Content

The scope of inclusive education in the region is defined and challenged by the participants' recognition of several social groups who are at present excluded from education. These groups have the common feature of being less privileged in all aspects of human development. Among others, participants emphasized that the following groups deserve urgent attention due to their situation of social neglect: (a) people living in marginalized areas such as urban slums or rural areas; (b) street children; (c) nomadic and migrant populations; (d) adolescent mothers and orphans; (e) disabled children; (f) displaced and refugee populations; (g) adult learners; (h) porters and pastoralists in the region; (i) those afflicted by HIV/AIDS; and (j) those affected by war, conflicts and disasters.

The inclusion of all of these groups in the education systems of all participating countries focuses attention on the overall regional challenge of changing society's lack of awareness, knowledge and tolerance about diversity. Cultural and religious barriers affect society's support in providing all children with an equal right to education. At the same time, the understanding of cultural diversity as an asset to education, both as a right and as conducive to creative learning, is still missing. At present, inclusive education settings in the countries of this seminar were primarily focused on children with disabilities and, thus, on a model that adjusts the provision of education to accommodate special needs.

However, within an on-going process of collective reflection, the conceptualization of inclusive education in the region showed a tendency to deviate away from the understanding of inclusive education as a process of integrating children with special needs (mainly disabilities) into mainstream schools. Collectively, participants defined inclusive education as education for all learners and, in particular, for all those excluded and marginalized, in line with UNESCO's inclusive education definition and EFA goals. Participants agreed that there is a need to have a clear operational definition of inclusive education in place, ample enough to take into consideration the context of each country. It is important to include in such a definition all groups that have been identified as target groups.³⁴

32 IBE. 2007. *Report on the Regional Preparatory Seminar Poverty Alleviation, HIV and AIDS Education and Inclusive Education: Priority Issues for Inclusive Quality Education in Eastern and Western Sub-Saharan Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, 25-27 July 2007*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNESCO-IBE. (IBE/2007/RP/CD/01.) The workshop involved policy-makers, directors of education, curriculum specialists and teacher trainers from Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda, as well as representatives of the Division for the Promotion of Basic Education (ED/BAS, UNESCO, Paris), the Nairobi Cluster Office and local UN country teams, who discussed the issue of inclusive education during two days (twenty-three participants). It was co-organized by the Kenyan Ministry of Education, the Kenyan Institute for Education (KIE) and the IBE.

33 This seminar had two objectives: The first was to respond to specific requests made by the IBE Council to explore the possibility of the IBE expanding its activities beyond French- and Portuguese-speaking countries, which had been targeted in previous years within the two existing Poverty Alleviation and HIV programmes. The second objective was to place this seminar within the framework of preparations for the International Conference on Education, 2008, by soliciting feedback for such an event. Considering the country cases presented during the seminar, this sub-section synthesizes the overall challenges and good practices in the region in relation to poverty alleviation, HIV/AIDS education and inclusive education.

34 In addition to the discussion and with the listing of previously noted groups, the roadmap identified specifically as target groups: (a) children with special needs (physically challenged, mentally challenged, emotionally challenged); (b) those affected by poverty; (c) orphans; (d) those affected by HIV/AIDS—girls and boys; (e) children living under difficult circumstances (i.e. street children); (f) migrant populations; (g) victims of war, conflicts and disasters;

In the context of Education For All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), participants agreed to a Consensual Statement on Inclusive Education that was presented to the African Union Meeting of Ministers of Education (COMEDAF) in Johannesburg, South Africa, in August 2007. In this statement the concept of inclusive education was addressed by emphasizing the need of removing barriers to participation and learning for girls and women, all disadvantaged and excluded groups, including children with disabilities and out-of-school children. Inclusive education was also addressed in relation to the development of an inclusive curriculum. That is, involving the design of a basic and youth education curriculum emphasizing the need of early education interventions and the development of competency and life-skills approaches.

Specifically, in the Consensual Statement inclusive education was defined for the region as follows:

- A process providing effective learning opportunities to every child by taking care of his/her uniqueness and diversity, thereby promoting respect and human dignity;
- Reforms in curriculum content, approaches, structures and strategies;
- A common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range;
- A conviction that it is the responsibility of the education system to educate all children;
- A concerted effort to harness appropriate and relevant resources to provide a continuum of services and support based upon a multi-sectoral approach;
- A paradigm shift from a narrow conception of disability specific theories, practices and models to a broader conceptualization of inclusion to accommodate a diverse group of learners excluded from education

Participants agreed that the dissemination of a revised definition of inclusive education is important in order to change society's awareness and support towards educational practices of inclusive education. This can be achieved if all stakeholders and social actors are involved and sensitized about the subject. Inclusive education advocacy is needed at different levels of the education system; for example, school-based management committees can be helpful not only in advocacy, but also in locally implementing inclusive education policies and practices. Media has to be involved as well in disseminating a tolerant understanding towards inclusive education.

Although countries recognized the importance of broadening the conception of inclusive education to address the needs of all kinds of learners together and equitably as a social and educational responsibility, they encountered several obstacles to do so as is further detailed in the following sub- sections.

2. *Public Policies and Inclusive Education*

In most of the region's countries, there are no clear national policies for inclusive education regarding currently excluded children and even for those with special talents and abilities. National policies of inclusive education should be designed and reviewed according to a redefined approach of inclusive education. In parallel, international conventions should be endorsed and ratified by all countries in the region (e.g. Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, Art. 28, 29), UN Disability Convention (2007, Art. 24)). In line with these

(h) pastoralist and rural groups; (i) refugees; (j) out-of school children; (k) children in remote areas; (l) children living in slums; and (m) those belonging to cultural/religious minorities.

conventions, national laws should make education compulsory for all school-age children, protecting the right to education as a human right. Participants noted that it is important that laws shall be enforced and that the negligence of not doing so should be sanctioned. Lobbying for inclusive education and the right to education is important and should be enhanced at national congress levels.

Policy-making about inclusive education should involve regional and national discussions in order to ensure public understanding, awareness and support in this area. Policy objectives should be monitored and evaluated according to minimum standards and mechanisms that would have to be considered in the design of such policy. Governmental commitment and financial resources are needed to support inclusive approaches (e.g. provision of physical infrastructure, barrier-free and child-friendly learning environments). Accountability expenditure frameworks and tools to ensure equity of financial distribution are noted as essential in policy designs and their implementation. Policies should also consider the importance of establishing and clarifying the sustainability of resources. Resource mobilization strategies— involving both the public and private sectors—should be considered. At an institutional level, keeping in line with inter-sectoral planning, participants noted the importance of establishing and/or strengthening institutions and agencies responsible for inclusive education. Co-ordinated networking and joint collaboration is needed between ministries and State sectors working on the interdisciplinary aspects of inclusive education. In addition, there is lack of dialogue and participation of population/target groups in the planning and implementation of social policy and a lack of co-ordination between policies and plans to reduce poverty, which has an impact on any education goals concerning equity and quality.

In relation to community participation in inclusive educational practices, Uganda involves community actors in designing and implementing such policies. As an example, Uganda highlights the representation of individuals with special needs in parliament. In Ghana, community participation is also involved in the provision of infrastructures or facilities. Finally, Ghana's long experience of HIV/AIDS education regarding the provision of materials and teacher training can be highlighted as a significant experience.

Poverty and Inclusive Education

Inclusive education policies and practices and their adequate funding are challenging priorities in national socio-economic agendas in the region. The importance of addressing extreme poverty levels in these countries and the epidemic of HIV/AIDS and their impact on education challenges the allocation of resources. Inclusive education also struggles against the social marginalization and discrimination of children due to their deprived economic background, and their infection and that of their families with HIV/AIDS.

Issues of poverty in relation to education were addressed implicitly by all countries when referring to groups in the population that do not have access to education, either because of their poor economic background (e.g. street children) and/or due to their location in remote rural areas with poor provision of public services. Poor youth are excluded from learning processes and educational opportunities leading to the perpetuation of their weak socio-economic development. Child labour³⁵ is another factor hindering inclusive education.

35 The most recent estimated regional trends of the International Labour Organization (ILO) for children's work, 2000–2004 (5 to 14 year olds) indicate that Sub-Saharan Africa has the greatest incidence of economically active children: 26.4 per cent of all 5–14 year-olds, compared to 18.8 per cent for Asia and the Pacific and 5.1 per cent for Latin America (ILO. 2006. *Global child labour trends, 2000-2004. Statistical information and monitoring programme on child labour*. Geneva, Switzerland: ILO, p. 3.)

Poverty in rural areas discourages children and their families from continuing with schooling as children are considered to be more useful contributing to the household income by working in farms. In addition, schools are often far away from where children live and they are forced to walk long distances in both directions.

Government commitment and poverty levels in a country have an impact on the resource allocation for education. For example, there is need for financing the construction of workshops for vocational education, as well as providing resources for teaching, such as tools and equipment. As there is scarcity in the provision of tools, equipment and materials, teaching and learning is defined by what is available and not according to learners' needs. Transportation and the construction of roads are needed in the region in order to implement social policies, such as education. It is essential as well to build schools near communities in order to support the children's access to education. Schools should also provide basic services, such as clean water and sanitary facilities for the children. Recreational activities and equipment should exist in schools.

The impact of poverty on education is more evident in deprived rural areas. Teachers do not want to work in remote and/or poor areas—usually rural—with the result that there is a shortage of qualified teachers. Schools in the region, especially in remote rural areas have inadequate facilities. Furthermore, access to schools is difficult due to a lack of roads and transportation, in addition to environmental barriers. Most importantly, rural areas are characterized by a lack of electricity and basic social services, such as sanitation and clean water.³⁶ In particular, slum dwellers and those living in rural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa have access to much less than the 20 litres of water per person per day required to meet the most basic human needs. Women and young girls carry a double burden of disadvantage, since they are the ones who sacrifice their time and their education to collect water.³⁷ Furthermore, food deprivation in the region has a considerable negative impact on the well being of children and their families.³⁸

HIV, AIDS and Education

The importance of the negative impact that HIV/AIDS has had on the provision of education and school attendance in the region must be emphasized, alongside its overall negative effect on human development. Child mortality, mostly in poor areas, has increased due to AIDS. At the same time, orphans who have lost parents to this disease suffer from limited school attendance. The impact on girls who are not continuing in school when caring for sick family members should also be noted. Furthermore, we should also take into consideration that the number of in-service public school-teachers has been considerably

36 Deprivation in water and sanitation brings considerable costs to human development. According to research undertaken for the United Nations Human Development Report, 2006: "losses are greatest in some of the poorest countries. Sub-Saharan Africa loses about 5% of GDP, or some \$28.4 billion annually, a figure that exceeds total aid flows and debt relief to the region in 2003." (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2006. *Human development report, 2006: Beyond scarcity: power, poverty and the global water crisis*. New York, NY: UNDP, p. 6.)

37 Please also refer to the United Nations Human Development Report, 2006, for a discussion on the global water crisis being rooted in power, poverty and inequality and not in physical availability. Also, strategic principles are given on how to address at the international and national levels the deprivation in water and sanitation in order to reduce its costs on human development. (UNDP. 2006. *Human development report, 2006: Beyond scarcity: power, poverty and the global water crisis*. New York, NY: UNDP, p. 2.)

38 Undernourishment refers to the condition of people whose dietary energy consumption is continuously below a minimum energy requirement for maintaining a healthy life and carrying out light physical activity. The prevalence of undernourishment in the total population of sub-Saharan countries according to the MDG's regional classification was estimated to be 31% in the latest 2000–2004 preliminary data. (Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). 2006. *Food security statistics*. Rome: FAO. Available on-line at: www.fao.org/es/ess/faostat/foodsecurity/Files/PrevalenceUndernourishment_en.xls)

diminished through them falling ill with HIV or dying from AIDS.^{39, 40} For example, in the case of Tanzania, there is need for around “45,000 additional teachers to make up for those who have died or left the system because of AIDS. The greatest proportion of these, according to the Tanzania Teachers’ Union, constituted highly experienced staff in the 41–50 age group”.^{41, 42}

At the same time, it is important to address the existing social stigma and discrimination⁴³ against children and adults who are affected by HIV, since, in the case of children, this may result in communities not accepting them in their schools. “Stigma and discrimination are not only obstacles to HIV prevention, care and treatment for people living with HIV but are among the epidemic’s worst consequences. HIV-related stigma consists of negative attitudes towards those infected or suspected of being infected with HIV and those affected by AIDS by association, such as orphans or the children and families of people living with HIV”.⁴⁴

3. *Systems, Links and Transitions*

Participants from the region recognized the importance of giving priority to curriculum related reforms as an integral part of the social agenda; such reforms are key tools to achieving EFA goals and thus inclusive educational objectives. Therefore, the crucial role of the curriculum in the delivery of quality educational services is noted as important, based on the conviction that “curriculum defines the kind of society a nation wants to have”.

It was clearly acknowledged that a highly academic, heavily overloaded curriculum, with a strong division between primary and secondary education, which is moreover exam oriented and far from responding to the needs and expectations of students, is a major source of exclusion. In a certain way, teachers are delivering a curriculum that excludes more than it includes. Nonetheless, when participants referred to concrete practices of inclusive education, it is clear that the integration of children with special needs (mainly disabilities) into mainstream schools still remains a major curricular challenge. At the same time, there was also a call for building and expanding special needs schools.

Curricula in the public schools in the region could be described overall as centralized and inflexible, thus not allowing scope to respond to the diversity of learners (content, timetable, yearly calendar, teaching methods, outreach for certain groups not attending school). Curriculum reforms should identify and take into account the needs of learners and their competencies in the ways in which these are developed into a useful end; that is, in the context of the developmental needs of the child and those of the community. Curriculum

39 Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). 2006. *Report on the global AIDS epidemic*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNAIDS. Available on-line at: <www.unaids.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/HIVData/GlobalReport/>

40 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2005. *Human development report 2005: international cooperation at a crossroads: aid, trade and security in an unequal world*. New York, NY: UNDP. Available on-line at: <hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2005/>

41 UNAIDS. 2006. *Report on the global AIDS epidemic*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNAIDS, p.86. Available on-line at: <www.unaids.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/HIVData/GlobalReport/>

42 Beckmann, S.; Rai, P. 2004. *HIV/AIDS, work and development in the United Republic of Tanzania*. Geneva, Switzerland: ILO and GTZ. Available on-line at: <www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/trav/aids/pul/cp_2_tanzania.pdf>

43 “Discrimination, as defined by the UNAIDS Protocol for Identification of Discrimination against People Living with HIV, refers to any form of arbitrary distinction, exclusion or restriction affecting people because of their confirmed or suspected HIV positive status. Both place a burden on human development by denying hundreds of thousands of people the chance of reaching their full potential.” UNAIDS. 2006. *Report on the global AIDS epidemic*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNAIDS, p.86. Available on-line at: <www.unaids.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/HIVData/GlobalReport/>.

44 Ibid.

reforms that considered such needs will lead to a common ground across countries when considering the type of skills force needed in the region.

Also, curriculum reform should take into account the importance of providing relevant linkages between formal and non-formal education. Mentoring programmes and short-term refresher courses were suggested as a way to complement the curriculum. Formal and non-formal education should provide curricula with the possibility of flexible time schedules adaptable to community needs. Outreach programmes, mobile schools and distance learning could help with nomadic and remotely located populations. There is a need to establish resource centres that make appropriate materials available to the schools.

There is an inadequate quality assurance mechanism to oversee inclusion in the education system. Moreover, reaching out to neglected populations prompts countries to consider challenges of inclusion within the formal system of education, as well as in non-formal education contexts. The region has several cases of nomadic populations calling for the provision of alternative education programmes that are relevant to their lives. In this regard, the relevance of the curriculum would have to be examined, including flexibility at all levels (timetable, yearly calendar, duration of learning process, place of teaching) and by training members of nomadic groups to be educators who were willing to follow the group; education would have to take place in the local language and provision would have to be made to facilitate access to secondary education.

As a response to the above challenges, countries are slowly giving attention to early childhood education by attaching kindergartens to primary schools, as is the case in Ghana. The use of the mother tongue in kindergarten and lower primary education as a way to facilitate learning is another strategy of inclusive education pursued in this country. Nigeria has a home-grown feeding programme in State-based schools and, very importantly, has abolished examinations between primary school and junior secondary school. School fees for elementary schools have been abolished in Kenya since 2003.

Considering the relevance of education to socio-economic development in communities, Ghana is aiming to change the negative parental/societal attitudes towards the importance of vocational education. It aims to better link the skills and competencies of this education with the general curriculum and with individual and community needs for earning a livelihood. Interestingly, beyond the concept of inclusive education, Tanzania adds the importance of creating a tolerant and inclusive society. As a starting point, countries are moving ahead with curriculum issues on how to incorporate children with visual and hearing impairments into mainstream schools, such as is the case in Ethiopia. Along these lines, Uganda integrates special needs students into mainstream school classrooms accompanied by community awareness supporting this initiative. Strategies to include girls in the schools (compared to a higher enrolment for boys) are underway in Ghana where schools are providing bicycles, uniforms and materials to girls to encourage their school attendance. Pregnant girls are encouraged to stay in school and/or to return to school after the birth of their child, which is also the case in Kenya. Aiming to increase school enrolment and retention, Ghana also exonerates poor parents from paying school fees and provides a school feeding programme.

It appears that the issue of HIV and AIDS education is not yet properly addressed by the curricula of most of these six participating countries. The topic of HIV/AIDS and its relation to education were only referred to in detail in the country presentation of Ghana.

4. *Learners and Teachers*

The professional development of teachers via pre-service and in-service programmes has to be revised in relation to the necessary awareness and practice of inclusive education at a pedagogical/curricula level; changes in both programmes should respond to curriculum reforms responding to learners' needs. Teacher-training programmes should provide for specialization in areas defined according to the needs of learners. Teachers should receive training on how to develop teaching materials using locally available resources. Relevant user-friendly materials for diverse needs of learners should be used in the pedagogical practices of inclusive education. Finally, participants also suggested that the conception of a cohesive basic education involving primary and secondary education levels should be incorporated into the teacher-education curriculum.

There is a great need for teacher training, including a change in teachers' attitudes and preparation towards the learning needs of children who are different. In this respect, there is a lack of motivation on the part of teachers. Creative and productive teaching and learning should start early at the primary school level with a cohesive transition to secondary education. It is noted that rigid, orthodox and ineffective teaching methods are prevalent in the region; there is a need for more hands-on, competency-based approaches centred on the child. There are also inadequate assessment procedures and methods calling for examination methods to be revised. Most of the countries have to deal with large class sizes that unfortunately limit the attention that teachers can pay to each student. There is a lack of effective monitoring, evaluation and research leading to curriculum revision. It is also important to revise and strengthen monitoring and evaluation tools regarding curricular objectives. The translation of developmental policies into specific content (knowledge and skills) and into classroom teaching and learning should be explored and pursued in-depth.

The training of school managers and support staff was also identified as important. Existing programmes of teacher training should be reviewed to consider the renewable licensing of teachers to respond to the growing demand of teachers. There is need also of improving programmes for the training of teacher trainers.

Teachers in the region, especially those working in hardship areas, are in great need of receiving support for their financial, social and professional development (e.g. salaries should be increased, housing improved). Participants also noted how the professional skills of teachers should be up-graded. The workload of teachers should be reduced to improve the quality of education.

In Tanzania, the Ministry of Education is using an "Inclusive Education Teacher's Guide and Teacher's Resource Pack" (adapted from UNESCO). The teachers' resource pack intends to encourage effective schools for all by enlightening teachers on how effective teaching can be made responsive to the needs of individual pupils.

The Gulf Arab States Workshop on Inclusive Education⁴⁵

1. *Approaches, Scope and Content*

In the Gulf Arab States the conceptual understanding and use of the term “inclusive education” remains limited to special needs education and to the integration of such children into mainstream schools. Nevertheless, participants focused on the need to broaden the concept and scope of inclusive education, linking it to current on-going processes of educational and curriculum change in the region. These processes imply the strengthening of basic education (primary and secondary), the development of competency-based approaches and improvements in the provision of learning resources (e.g. textbooks). As in other regions, immigrants, migrant workers and temporary residents are a challenge for inclusive education as these groups have difficulty in accessing the education and social welfare systems. Also, girls, the poor and rural students are not fully participating in educational opportunities.

At the end of the workshop, it was agreed that a team involving the Gulf Arab States Education Research Centre (GASERC) would contribute to defining a common concept of inclusive education in the region and strategies for its promotion. Such a definition would entail a broader, more comprehensive coverage, including children with diverse learning needs, as well as all socially, politically and economically marginalized and excluded groups. Inclusive education was understood in relation to education as a right and as a step towards the attainment of EFA goals—an expectation that participants agreed could only gradually be fulfilled.

As in other regions, participants remarked on the importance of advocacy work⁴⁶ (informational campaigns and programmes) to change negative attitudes towards excluded groups, including people with disabilities. Along these lines, it is useful to ensure the participation of local communities and NGOs in the educational process. Awareness should also be raised through the media about the right to education of all children. Social awareness through the media should support families and communities to uphold and defend the rights of their children to education in a more open manner.

2. *Public Policies and Inclusive Education*

Revealing the incipient development of inclusive education in the region, the workshop’s discussion at a policy level concentrated on future recommendations more than on a discussion of the current status of such policies. It was recommended that all countries sign

45 IBE. 2007. *Report on the Regional Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education—Gulf Arab States, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, UAE, 27-29 August 2007*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNESCO-IBE.(IBE/2007/RP/CD/02.) The workshop included policy-makers, directors of education, educators, and curriculum specialists from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and the United Arab Emirates, as well as representatives from the UNESCO Division for the Promotion of Basic Education (ED/BAS), and Finland who attended the workshop (twenty-five participants). It was co-organized by GASERC (Gulf Arab States Educational Research Centre), the Gulf Arab States Community of Practice in Curriculum Development and the IBE. The outcomes of this workshop looked mainly towards the proposal of a regional roadmap for the future, rather than on the current status of inclusive education in the region. At the same time, the roadmap is a reflection of current challenges to be addressed.

46 Several regional seminars were organized by the UNESCO Office in Beirut regarding inclusive education. For example, in May 2005 the Dubai Municipality, the Arab Urban Development Institute and the World Bank organized a conference entitled “Urban Children and Youth in the MENA Region: Addressing Priorities in Education”, leading to the “Dubai Declaration on Urban Children and Youth”. The declaration mentions “inclusive education for all children and youth” as the first priority and states that “conference participants stress the importance of inclusive education and reaffirm their commitment to improve the well-being and quality of life for all children and youth, regardless of their age, gender, religion, ethnicity, disability, or social background.”
http://www.araburban.org/employee/menacpi/uploadfiles/Dubai_Declaration_-_English.pdf

and ratify all relevant international conventions and declarations promoting inclusion, in particular the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007). Participants remarked on the need to implement clear educational policies and strategies to support inclusive education. Complementary legislation and instructions in the fields of education, health, social rehabilitation and professional training for all institutions should be developed. It was suggested that national commissions should co-ordinate educational, health and social services institutions, along with the recommendation of an ombudsperson/office to monitor the implementation of the right to education. At the same time, they noted that ministries of education should be primarily responsible for the education of all children, regardless of their status. Participants also noted how discussion about the complete inclusion of girls, the poor and rural students was a sensitive and complex one that should be specifically addressed under the public policy framework. Policies should carefully identify and allocate resources dedicated to education and redistribute these to ensure that they reach the most vulnerable groups.

Supporting the above suggestions, participants recommended partnerships between private and public sectors with the common objective of inclusive education. Strengthening co-operation between regional and national networks, as well as the collaboration and sharing of good practices was highlighted as important. In this regard, participants noted that there are positive on-going changes in their countries regarding the provision of physical facilities and resource centres for children with disabilities. Nevertheless, they also drew attention to the need for adopting legislation that supports the improvement of school infrastructures and transportation so as to make the school physically accessible to all.

3. *Systems, Links and Transitions*

If inclusive education is understood in the context of educational and curriculum changes that strengthen basic education, including both primary and secondary education, participants suggested that schools should adopt flexible inclusive curricula which embrace EFA goals based on a common curricular framework. Strengthening the links and transitions between early childhood and primary and secondary education to provide lifelong learning opportunities was also suggested. Participants also called for a plan involving the transition between special needs schools, inclusive education resource centres, support institutions and regular schools. With the aim of achieving a more tolerant society, curricula also include values and citizenship education. National guidelines and standards should be developed to assess how the curriculum is implemented and to help teachers manage diversity while using the mainstream school curriculum as a reference.

4. *Learners and Teachers*

At the same time that co-ordination with universities was being strengthened, there should be development and investment in pre-service and in-service training programmes to respond to the diverse needs of learners in schools. Inclusive education should become an integral part of pre-service training. Participants suggested that mainstream classroom teachers need to be trained on how to address the diverse needs of learners, together with the support of specialized teachers. Teachers should learn how to diversify learning strategies with a focus on tailored approaches. Allocation of resources was recommended for the acquisition of equipment and the provision of facilities to support all children's access and learning in mainstream schools. In addition to specialized teachers, ideally, guidance and counselling services should also be provided in schools for all learners. Comprehensive training on inclusive education should also involve all educational personnel, including

inspectors, social workers, etc., to create inter-disciplinary support teams. Finally, alternatives employing distance training were proposed, together with the further exploration of the use of ICTs in order to increase learning opportunities for all children.

Workshop on Inclusive Education: Southern Cone and Andean Regions⁴⁷

1. Approaches, Scope and Content

Participants in this workshop carried out a critical discussion of the extent to which social inequity and poverty levels at regional and national levels negatively impact the conception and implementation of inclusive education in terms of social justice. Quality education is necessary to achieve more inclusion, yet education cannot compensate for social and economic inequalities. Emphasis was given to the extent to which education, understood as a society of information and knowledge within a new capitalism, also generates exclusion and inequality more powerfully than those generated by an industrial society. Participants also drew attention to the extent to which schools are now moulded and defined according to a demand for schooling, instead of responding to social and knowledge needs. The education systems democratize access by including social groups previously excluded, but the gap in educational outcomes remains wide, preventing these groups from the use of pertinent knowledge and the development of core competencies.

Country education reports discussed during the workshop noted how education remains unequal in terms of access and, moreover, in terms of outcomes. Countries need to improve literacy and access levels. Repetition rates need to be reduced and completion rates increased. Poor children, rural children and special needs children are the most affected by exclusion. An increasing weakness of the public school in Latin America due to privatization of the education system was identified as a result of certain group pressures that the State is unable to contain. Education is a public good and a right that should be guaranteed by the State. The role of the State in protecting the right to a quality education should serve the needs of the entire population, instead of only the demands of particular groups. In addition, allocation of State resources is very unequal, revealing an increasing gap between rich and poor.

After group deliberations, the concept of inclusive education was again defined in terms of social justice and social inequity. With the emphasis given by participants, social equity cannot be separated from the understanding of inclusive education. Inclusive education cannot be implemented without a just society, thus implying a dialectic relationship between social justice and inclusive education. Inclusive education also implies valuing diversity within social cohesion, as well as lifelong quality education.

Participants agreed that more conceptual work is needed to clarify and enrich the term “inclusive education”; progress needs to be made regarding the appropriation of this

⁴⁷ IBE. 2007. *Report on the Regional Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education—Latin American, Andean and Southern Cone Regions, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 12-14 September 2007*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNESCO-IBE. (IBE/2007/RP/CD/05.) Governmental representatives, including Vice-ministers of Education (Argentina, Peru, Bolivia and Paraguay), policy-makers, consultants, scholars, researchers and educators from eleven Latin American countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela), as well as representatives from the UNESCO Division for the Promotion of Basic Education (ED/BAS), UNESCO’s Regional Office for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC) and IIEP-Buenos Aires, the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education and COP Focal Points from Africa (Nigeria), Europe (Belarus, Finland and Romania) and the Gulf Arab States (Bahrain) attended the international workshop (forty-eight participants). It was co-organized by ED/BAS, OREALC, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Argentina, the University of San Andres (Argentina), the Southern and Andean Communities of Practice in Curriculum Development and the IBE.

new term. The conceptualization of inclusive education, as well as its policies, should incorporate criteria that identify the extent to which education is responding to inclusion. Considering that inclusive education is a new term that may already be addressing similar problems to those of equity and quality education, it is “essential to be able to justify to our education systems why this new term has been created in order to avoid redundancy”.

As a way to respond to the lack of social awareness regarding the importance of inclusive education, workshop participants emphasized how all actors at stake in inclusive education should be involved in policy-making debates at all levels—international, national, regional and local. Governments and civil society should both be committed to pursuing goals of inclusive education with the aim of impacting the public policy agenda. Media would have a key role in disseminating the objectives of such an agenda. Information should be addressed as a public good that cannot be protected and used without the strength of social capital. Inclusive education implies a change in the way society lives and in the extent of civil participation, which should be increased.

At the same time, promising inclusive education initiatives could be identified in each country. Among others, for example, Guatemala is implementing a project called *Educación Inclusiva en La Región Mesoamericana* with key bilingual curriculum components; Venezuela, is implementing its approach of inclusive education through the *escuelas bolivarianas* with a holistic conception of human development; and Chile is developing special education and multicultural axes connected with inclusive education.

2. *Public Policies and Inclusive Education*

Following the above-mentioned critical approach to inclusive education, policy proposals for inclusive education in terms of social justice should aim to reduce social inequity and poverty levels at regional and national levels. Also, there is an evident challenge at both levels to reach universal educational coverage of the population and quality education for all. At the same time, when policy-makers are considering those who are excluded from education, they should do so without labelling them in a way that may have the undesirable effect of formalizing such groups within condescending educational patterns. (e.g. “...as they are poor, we cannot teach them in the same way as those who are rich”.)

Participants mentioned that policy-makers and social actors should devote further reflection and discussion to the kind of society that is desired. In particular, this should be considered when reviewing the shortcomings of exclusion in a capitalistic society of knowledge and information. A just society requires quite different actors that guarantee social cohesion, transparency, basic levels of integration and equity. Neo-liberal policies merge with competition, whereas integration encourages the concept of dependency—not as domination but as a dependency of responsibility. A sense of social cohesion and solidarity among elite groups towards the rest of society could also be encouraged.

There should be policies that generate the necessary conditions to define, create and build laws that respond to the needs and objectives of an inclusive policy. Current laws should be revised to see their relevance and/or adaptation to a refined concept of inclusive education. There should be legislative mechanisms to demand and protect principles of inclusive education. Regarding the kind of legislative measures that should be encouraged and adopted, participants agreed on the importance of having anti-discrimination laws that explicitly protect vulnerable groups. Legal texts regarding education should incorporate the topics of inclusion. There should be encouragement and support to adopt the necessary legal international frameworks that protect the rights of childhood and children. Good legislation

needs funding to be accomplished effectively in conjunction with a set of conditions that prevent the bureaucratization of such laws. Participants also noted that, to be successful, not every law implies that it should be accompanied by funding, since a “good law” in itself should contribute in terms of goodwill to improve the conditions of inclusion.

A consensus was reached among the participants regarding the importance of addressing inclusive education not only within national frameworks but also within a global perspective of shared responsibility among the international community.

Policy decisions should be taken in participatory fora that promote social cohesion and commitment supported by the political will at all levels. Civil society and social actors should also participate in the design and implementation of policies for socio-economic development. At present, such a policy is fragmented regarding the various public sectors involved, occasionally resulting in redundant work. Educational policy should be complemented by the social aims of other sectors. Overall, these policies should focus on reducing poverty. According to participants, inclusive education and Education for All are useless when they are not understood in relation to social inequalities. Policies for socio-economic development should share and reaffirm a vision of human development, with a focus on rights. Religious groups, the media, businesses, trade unions, social movements, ombudsmen, those enforcing or in charge of the right of law, etc., should all also participate in policy-making for inclusive education.

Policy initiatives in the Andean and Southern Cone regions of Latin America should aim to improve the material conditions that allow all children to access the necessary tools and quality standards of the education process. Their living conditions should be improved to reassure equal access of identical learning outcomes. Thus, inclusive education requires an increase in the allocation of financial resources, which should be redistributed according to the criteria of equity. The allocation and use of resources should be accompanied by monitoring mechanisms that support transparency. Social control of allocations and their use is equally important. It is necessary to allocate funds for early childhood development and protection within a comprehensive approach involving all social sectors. There should be funding of analyses examining the costs involved in the provision of an education of quality in different contexts and addressing personal needs.

3. *Systems, Links and Transitions*

The role of the school in society was discussed at length during the workshop. Participants emphasized how the school should be a key centre of justice that facilitates the articulation and implementation of social policy. The school in itself should be understood also as a community centre that is empowered for social change. The rights of the child have to be safeguarded at the local levels. Schools have to be able to respond to children’s problems (i.e. health, food, shelter) since the scope and concerns of the schools—as a social institution—should be integral and not only focused on educational purposes. Educational policies addressing learning contexts should consider the creation of welcoming environments in which collaborative relationships among students and teachers are encouraged. In order for schools to function at a basic minimum level, they should be equipped accordingly with the infrastructure needed for the implementation of educational strategies of inclusive education.

Participants also noted that educational institutions should be more heterogeneous including all socio-economic strata since, as of now, schools are not offering space for the *other*. In that sense, schools should offer socialization processes that involve living and

learning together within diversity (*lo diferente*) as a way to recover the sense of public education and as a key aspect of human development. Yet, though socio-economic diversity is valued as a positive and important aspect of education, attention should always be given to the need for reducing social and economic inequalities and to prevent the mass education of rich and poor in existing schools.

When considering the objectives of educational quality and equity, new ways of teaching and of organizing learning have to be considered. Curricula should always be guided by the notions of quality education. Collective negotiation and participatory approaches regarding the organization of learning were recommended by the participants. The curriculum should ensure that all children will learn equitably. Countries in Latin America should be able to guarantee minimum standards of learning as a right. The curriculum should be designed and implemented with flexibility in a way that incorporates the different rhythms of children's learning. Curricular policies for learning, such as higher-order thinking, should be designed in partnership with teachers. Implementation of such policies should take into account any resistance that teachers may express towards it. Intercultural bilingual education in the curricula of basic and youth education was also suggested by participants. Likewise, as an integral part of basic education, early childhood education should be expanded through diverse formal and non-formal models. Participants also agreed that curricula should be revised by introducing competency-based approaches. Changes in the curriculum should be able to go beyond the national context in order to include global issues, such as human rights, as these are everyone's concern. At the same time, policies and curricular reforms have to be designed and implemented with consideration to the context, especially in what pertains to changes at the local school level. Finally, how current evaluation systems in the curriculum promote exclusion was discussed at length. Evaluation methods should be revised and considered as part of a comprehensive integral development of the child.

4. *Learners and Teachers*

Teacher education in Latin America needs to be further developed and enhanced in terms of inclusive education. At the same time, it can be noted that the teaching profession is unfortunately not highly regarded in most Latin American countries. As a result, among other things, there is a lack of engagement and motivation on the part of teachers regarding teaching and learning processes.

The workshop discussion and recommendations focused on the kind of teacher education, qualifications and pedagogical skills needed by teachers when considering an inclusive education tailored around students' different learning abilities in mainstream schools. Participants agreed on the need for developing frameworks of teacher training that have quality education as a main objective. With a flexible curriculum at hand, teachers should understand that despite their differences, children do have the capacities to develop their full learning potential. Strategies focused directly on the child should be designed—assuring and recognizing diversity. The use of technology in the classrooms should be considered in ways that do not promote and extend inequity. The curriculum and its implementation should aim at diminishing this. Teachers should be able to redefine the learning of and use of technology and they should be trained to do so keeping in mind the various needs and ways of learning. Special attention should also be given to those who train teachers. As a starting point, participants proposed to focus on the training of a particular group of teacher trainers that is of such a size that it could actually be carried out in order to accomplish the desired outcomes.

Session on Inclusive Education—Regional Workshop on “What Basic Education for Africa?”⁴⁸

1. Approaches, Scope and Content

The discussion in this workshop reconfirmed aspects highlighted during the earlier preparatory workshop which had taken place in Nairobi, Kenya, in July 2007. Similarly, during the Kigali workshop and looking into the future, participants addressed the scope of inclusive education by noting how special attention should be paid to excluded groups, among others: (a) girls (including those forced into prostitution); (b) children with disabilities or special needs; (c) street children and out-of-school children; (d) child workers; (e) socially stigmatized children (orphans, HIV and AIDS affected children, etc.); (f) children belonging to nomadic and minority groups; (g) refugees; and (h) displaced and post-conflict children.⁴⁹ At the same time, and reaffirming the importance of the EFA goals, participants expressed concern about how long it would take to achieve inclusive education goals. Looking forward, inclusive education would involve changes in the curriculum and a renovated school model as critical dimensions in order to expand and democratize basic education in Africa.

In order to reduce the exclusion of the above-mentioned groups from education, advocacy campaigns at local and national levels promoting their inclusion are necessary. As in other regions, advocacy campaigns about inclusive education were considered to be a necessity in order to sensitize all stakeholders, including policy-makers, politicians, educators, communities and families.

2. Public Policies and Inclusive Education

Various recommendations were put forward by participants regarding public policies supportive of inclusive education. Their suggestions are useful to reveal the areas that are still in need of development at the policy level, as well as to expose a certain understanding of inclusive education. Interestingly, in contrast to the Nairobi workshop, participants were more open in their discussions about the possibility of having different schools for different children. That is, different types of institutions are needed for different target groups. Special schools are needed for children who have severe physical or mental disabilities. At the same time, they were open to the proposition of including mildly impaired children into mainstream schools. Children with more severe disabilities should also be progressively integrated into formal structures. Before doing so, transitional institutions should be identified for special purposes, such as rehabilitation and guidance for certain children, before they are placed into mainstream schools. With an increase in budgetary allocations needed for inclusive education, catching up and supportive structures should be created for street children, out-of-school children and the children of house personnel. Elitist schools

48 IBE.2007. *Report on the regional workshop “What basic education for Africa?”*, Kigali, Rwanda, 27 September 2007. Geneva, Switzerland: UNESCO-IBE. (IBE/2007/RP/CD/03.) Policy makers, directors of education, curriculum specialists and teacher trainers from sixteen countries (Benin, Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda), as well as representatives from the UNESCO Division for the Promotion of Basic Education (ED/BAS), UNESCO’s Regional Office for Education in Africa (BREDA), the Addis Ababa and Nairobi Cluster Offices, UNEVOC, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), the African Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank attended the workshop (115 participants). It was co-organized by ED/BAS, BREDA, the Ministry of Education of Rwanda and the IBE.

49 Other target groups that were identified as being excluded are: (a) children in schools staffed by volunteer teachers; (b) children living with a handicap; (c) children of house personnel/servants; (d) socially stigmatized children (from divorced families, children of alcoholics); (e) gifted children; (f) guide children (who are used to guide their blind or disabled parents to beg on the street); (g) children forced into commercial prostitution; and (h) children living in slums.

should be abandoned. Programmes should be initiated to bring children up to level in specific centres and psychological help should also be provided. There is a need for distance education, mobile schools and to take full advantage of the use of technology in education.

Looking into the non-formal education area, participants suggested that community learning centres should be created for the development of skills in fields such as agriculture, handicrafts, etc. Regarding several of the targeted groups, there is a need to implement projects that generate income.

3. *Systems, Links and Transitions*

The discussions during this workshop devoted attention to recommendations concerning different types of curriculum and institutions for different target groups. The discussion on the kinds of schools and curricula to be pursued regarding inclusive education showed three tendencies: (a) to design and implement curricula for specific groups; (b) to employ curricula that provide flexibility in adapting to the different needs of the population groups; and (c) to have holistic integrated curricula for all. For example, when proposing various ideas that encouraged integration, participants in this workshop suggested specific curricula for socially stigmatized children. Specific curricula should be elaborated as well for girls who cannot be integrated into the school. Participants also recommended having assessment procedures and expertise facilities that evaluated and identified children who were able or were not able to “pass” a systemic needs analysis approach to determine the institutions in which they should be placed.

At the same time, participants also suggested that children from specific social backgrounds should have a curriculum that integrates their specific cultures. Flexible curricula must be put into place for street and out-of-school children. School years must be arranged to fit in with nomadic populations’ movements. Accelerated learning, mobile schools, rehabilitation, non-formal education models and community learning centres are options useful to reach excluded populations. There is a strong need to collaborate with parents in order to reach decisions about the education of nomadic children. Participants proposed boarding school facilities for orphans. Finally, in the frame of basic educational objectives, participants agreed on the need to develop a holistic, integrated and inclusive competency-based curriculum framework relevant to the needs of children and youth in Africa for a minimum of nine years of basic education. Special framework structures and educational structures (chairs, stairs, tables, blackboards, etc.) should be adapted for children living with special needs. Guidance and counselling should be provided in educational settings.

4. *Learners and Teachers*

The professional motivation of teachers was addressed as a problem in the region. Awareness should be raised among stakeholders of the importance of the teaching profession as a key component in educational quality. Participants strongly called upon governments and communities to create incentives regenerating teachers’ social status and improving their living conditions (increasing salaries, providing better living quarters, providing home leave, increasing the respect to be shown to them, etc.) In schools, teachers need to be re-trained to acquire intellectual freedom as well as the necessary knowledge and skills to adapt their teaching approaches to the children’s needs. It is also necessary to allow teachers to be creative and thus to acquire better capacity-building techniques. It is necessary to change teacher attitudes towards excluded groups.

Family and community support are essential to achieve inclusive education in an inclusive society. Families and communities need to be aware about the availability and importance of such education. It is crucial to provide support to parents and to pay particular attention to drop outs in order that they may be subsequently included again. There is a strong need to detect children's special needs from an early stage. Learning opportunities should be broadened to take into account the specific competencies of each student. Regarding street children and out-of-school children, parents' financial capacities should be reinforced. Participants suggested a specific campaign of psychological help for stigmatized children and their parents.

Commonwealth of Independent States Workshop⁵⁰

1. Approaches, Scope and Content

Presentations and discussions during this workshop showed that the understanding of inclusive education in the region was mainly in terms of: (a) special needs education based on a "defectology" background of theory and expertise (this can be referred to as the narrow conception of inclusive education)—this approach has been mainly associated with students categorized as having physical and/or mental disabilities; (b) integration without implying a systemic change of educational structural components; and (c) a wider conception in which children are equally included in quality education. Overall, the region pays considerable importance to the scientific and intellectual tradition of defectology as a way of addressing the education of children with special needs (e.g. especially of the hearing and visually impaired). Similarly, considerable importance is given to the education of gifted children. The separation of gifted children in special advanced schools is understood as necessary to further develop their talented potential. There is apprehension about the combination of special needs students and gifted ones in the same classroom as this can result in isolation and stagnation of learning development for both. However, in some cases, special needs children with movement or motor disabilities are integrated into mainstream schools as they do not represent "extreme" cases of disability.

At the same time, it is important to highlight that, after three days of discussions, participants revised their above approaches to inclusive education with a refined definition that was presented in a final regional statement. Inclusive education was addressed in terms of social inclusion and a revised defectology approach corresponding to UNESCO's definition of inclusive education. The following definition of inclusive education for the region was proposed: *Inclusive education is "a process addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through the creation of conditions for successful learning and social inclusion, eliminating any forms of children's segregation. The participants state that inclusive education, understood in its broad interpretation as engagement of all students in the educational process, regardless of their age, gender, ethnic and religious background, previous achievements, differences in abilities and capacities, their social and economic status, is one of the main focuses of the development of the national educational*

50 IBE. 2007. *Report on the Commonwealth of Independent States, Third Workshop on Curriculum Development: "Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future"*, Minsk, Belarus, 29-31 October 2007. Geneva, Switzerland: UNESCO-IBE. (IBE/2007/RP/CD/06.) Ministerial representatives, policy-makers and educators from Armenia, Belarus, Russia, Latvia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Uzbekistan, as well as representatives from UNESCO-IBE, the UNESCO Office in Moscow, the Belarusian and Latvian National Commissions for UNESCO, the UNESCO Division for the Promotion of Basic Education (ED/BAS) and the Finnish National Board of Education attended the workshop (twenty-six participants). It was co-organized by UNESCO-IBE, the National Institute of Education of the Belarusian Ministry of Education, the UNESCO Office in Moscow and the CIS Council on Co-operation in Education.

*systems in the CIS region. Though inclusion in its broad meaning is not widely used in official documents, still the ideas of inclusive education are more and more reflected in the CIS countries educational policies”.*⁵¹ Interestingly, it was decided that the term and/or categories of special needs would not be employed in the final statement.

Participants emphasized that inclusive education should be understood as a flexible paradigm focused on providing support for each child’s development, and the realization of equal rights for high-quality education and the social inclusion of all children. Various country presentations demonstrated the challenge of addressing multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and changes due to migration in their populations in relation to the aim of the right to education for all (e.g. Russian Federation, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Uzbekistan). Quality education was often mentioned as an important goal to be pursued when referring to inclusive education. The definition of quality education was refined. It now took into account the different learning abilities of children with engaging educational processes, decreasing exclusiveness—and not in terms of having access to “high-level academic knowledge”. The importance of socialization within a diverse society was noted as an important characteristic of quality education that should be added to the concept of inclusive education.

In the region, inclusive education is a new term akin to those used in special needs education. Thus, there is difficulty in redefining it as a new concept and it is rather intertwined with special needs education. Participants were concerned that UNESCO’s agenda would result in making special needs education incompatible with inclusive education. Participants noted that they wanted to preserve specialized institutions addressing special needs in children. It was specified that the concept of inclusive education as presented by UNESCO involves special needs education as well, and initiatives of inclusive education refer to comprehensive changes in the education system as a whole.

Moreover, the need to refer to special needs education in relation to inclusive education was justified by participants since “we should focus on it as a special problem, not because we are excluding, but because we need to define the challenges and the changes” (e.g. Moldova). It was also recognized that inclusive education brings certain advantages and disadvantages: “the advantage is that children with special needs are not isolated anymore and education is also then less expensive”.

There is an evident challenge at regional and national levels to create awareness in both the education system and society about the importance and value of inclusive education. Public awareness and acceptance of the ideas of equal educational opportunities for all children should be strengthened through mass media and web sites of educational and research institutions in the region. It is important to create awareness about inclusive education implying not only a reform of special schools but also of mainstream ones; such a change should be brought about in a step-by-step process. At the same time, it is important to eradicate taboos associated with disabilities and with special needs by making efforts to change negative attitudes towards excluded/marginalized groups.

⁵¹ Final Statement, Regional Roadmap: IBE. 2007.. *Report on the Commonwealth of Independent States, Third Workshop on Curriculum Development: “Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future”, Minsk, Belarus, 29-31 October 2007.* Geneva, Switzerland: UNESCO-IBE. (IBE/2007/RP/CD/06.)

2. *Public Policies and Inclusive Education*

Perspectives, strategies and practices exchanged during the workshop revealed the regional strength of having achieved an almost 100% degree of literacy and attendance in basic education at national levels as a legacy of the educational policy of the former USSR. The right to education as a human right is guaranteed by national constitutions and laws. The implementation of such a right in terms of inclusive education is to be further discussed at a regional level comparing national and local cases of practice. There was recognition that the CIS region is well advanced in providing Education for All, but it is still in need of providing opportunities for socialization leading to social inclusion. Thus, the region supports UNESCO's strategy documents and methodologies regarding pedagogies that lead to social inclusion. National legislations could further align themselves with inclusive education and international norms so that all children could benefit from equal opportunities, high-quality education and social inclusion. At the same time, any educational change should take into consideration the national and local social, economic and political characteristics of the context it addresses.

The present economic levels of these countries prevent them from providing all of the necessary facilities and professional staff training in relation to children with special needs; thus, as a default, these children are in some cases integrated into mainstream schools. For example, in the case of Armenia, children with special needs in remote regions attend mainstream schools as in such regions there are no specialized schools, as there are in urban areas. In addition, there is a lack of resources and funds. Classes are becoming large with an increasing number of students per teacher. Participants also noted how more is needed so that schools are able to better accept special needs children.

Participants also discussed the necessity of a greater commitment from and co-ordination of other public sectors involved in social policy addressing children's development and welfare, especially regarding their health. It was pointed out that the education sector cannot be the only sector responsible for a child's welfare.

3. *Systems, Links and Transitions*

Integration is typical for the region, however, without implying a systemic change of educational structural components. After a discussion, the participants agreed that it is important to bring change through the diversification of the school curriculum such that it meets the educational interests and needs of all students. In addition, they proposed that the curriculum must be based on common human values and should be flexible enough to be adapted to meet the expectations and demands of inclusive education. Further support is needed for educational initiatives aimed at promoting a culture of tolerance in schools and society. Educational assessment should be more qualitative within the framework of comprehensive monitoring of all students' development and social inclusion. In terms of inclusive education, the importance of providing and further developing early childhood education, with attention to pre-school education, was noted.

4. *Learners and Teachers*

Participants recognized that there is an important challenge for teacher training at all levels regarding inclusive educational practices. Further training of teachers is needed to increase their acceptance and capacity to work in inclusive educational settings. Such settings should shift from an educational paradigm focused on students' "defects" to one supporting each

child's development within diversity. At the same time, participants expressed their concern about large student/teacher ratios and a lack of time per student in the large class sizes encountered in the region. There was discussion on the use of ICTs and the development of distance education to broaden access to high-quality education for all children.

At the same time, some examples of good practices of integration and inclusive education were identified. For example, Moldova states that it has “children with special needs (movement disorders) in the same classrooms with healthy peers, though the former are taught with a specialized curriculum according to their disability; we think that children with special needs have the right to psychological and medical attention”. In the case of Armenia, to overcome the obstacle of large class sizes and brief contact time between teacher and student, the solution has been to implement a collective approach to education with working groups of four to six students in which children co-teach, co-learn and generally help each other.

East Asia Workshop on Inclusive Education⁵²

1. Approaches, Scope and Content

Discussions in this workshop mainly focused on the definition of inclusive education and the relevance of such a term to the region's context. Until now, inclusive education has been limited to the domain of special needs education. Also, the conception of inclusive education was referred to as being alien to Asia and thus difficult to adapt to local conditions and their policy framework. There are also language barriers for widening the use of the term when considering the different linguistic translations needed in national languages. There are also misgivings that this new term might create a completely new education system, which will cause uncertainty and disorder among the various stakeholders. Some participants reiterated their concern of having so many new terms and thus creating a situation leading to confusion.⁵³ As a way to clarify the concept and its applicability in the region, participants pointed out the need to pursue further discussion and of raising awareness in society by demonstrating good and concrete examples and providing financial incentives for each one (e.g. tax reductions). In particular, the education system needs to familiarize itself with the concept. In co-operation with the Ministry of Education, seminars and training should be organized for teachers and government officials.

2. Public Policies and Inclusive Education

The discussion concentrated on the concern of inclusive education becoming expensive for the education system as, according to the participants, including severely impaired children in different mainstream schools is more costly than concentrating them in a special institution. Moreover, under certain conditions, a special school can still provide a better service than a mainstream one in providing the necessary education to children with special

52 IBE. 2007. *Report on the International Workshop on Inclusive Education – East Asia, Hangzhou, China, 2-5 November 2007*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNESCO-IBE. (IBE/2007/RP/CD/08.) Governmental representatives, policy-makers, researchers and educators from China, Mongolia, Japan and the Republic of Korea, as well as representatives of the organizers, UNESCO Headquarters and UNICEF Beijing, regional experts invited by UNESCO Bangkok and UNICEF Beijing attended the workshop (twenty-five participants). There were also about twenty local elementary and secondary school principals participating as observers. It was co-organized by UNESCO-IBE, UNESCO Bangkok, UNESCO Beijing, the UNESCO National Commission for China and the Department of Education, Provincial Government of Zhejiang.

53 It was also suggested that a new term, such as “new inclusive education”, be created so that it will not be in conflict with the traditional meaning of inclusive education.

needs. At the same time, participants were open to the idea of how the ‘financial burden’ of inclusive education could be undertaken within a multi-sectoral approach promoting co-operation, with all financial resources being integrated under governmental leadership.

Participants pointed out that in terms of equality, the relevant social policy and laws should be implemented to reduce social inequality and poverty levels at the regional and national levels. Linkages should be pursued between inclusive education, quality Education for All and lifelong learning with the necessary skills to exercise freedom and increasing individuals’ capacities to choose.

3. Systems, Links and Transitions

Participants acknowledged the importance of ensuring early childhood education for marginalized children as well as alternative provisions for their continuation in basic education. It is important to change the mindset of school administrators and teachers regarding the conditions required to achieve inclusive education and child-friendly schools. Curricular modifications should involve flexible components that allow teachers to modify the curriculum according to the various needs of children. School facilities should be accessible to accommodate all students. Participants proposed to establish a collaborative system between schools and their communities, with representative committees within each school to work on inclusive education objectives.

4. Learners and Teachers

The region is in need of improving teacher and staff training (particularly school principals) in relation to the objectives of inclusive education and the understanding of schools as both educational and social institutions. It is necessary to ensure that teacher training should include the elements of inclusive education and prepare teachers with multi-grade teaching capacities to facilitate understanding and coping with diversity in their class. It is also necessary to develop instructional methods to meet individual needs. Action plans were recommended tailored around the needs of different groups of children with special needs, such as children with a severe impairment or those with a single parent. Establishing teacher resource centres in remote areas as a way of providing support for teachers and children was also recommended by participants.

During the workshop, cases of child-friendly schools (CFS) in Mongolia, Thailand and China, advocated by UNICEF, were presented as a good method of implementing initiatives for inclusive education. It was unanimously agreed that CFS is indeed a good means for inclusive education.

Caribbean Symposium on Inclusive Education⁵⁴

1. *Approaches, Scope and Content*

Referring to the Caribbean as a diverse region in need of a general framework of inclusive education, an overall agreement among participating countries was reached in relation to UNESCO's definition of inclusive education as presented in the *Guidelines for inclusion, ensuring access to Education for All* (UNESCO, 2005).⁵⁵ Perspectives discussed regarding the conception of inclusive education pointed out the need of having education systems in which everyone in society receives a quality education, regardless of their physical, intellectual, economic or social condition.

The concept of inclusive education in the region would involve a revision of education systems and an overall socio-cultural change aimed at increasing tolerance. It is important to increase society's awareness of and support for inclusive education by identifying exclusion factors, with the aim of achieving an inclusive society. Participants agreed that the concept of inclusive education, approached as a new concept, can be further developed, clarified and sustained by implementing capacity-building activities with stakeholders on the concept and practices of inclusive education (e.g. teachers and principals, parents, students and community actors); this would lead to self-reflection and a changing attitude necessary for inclusive education reforms. Initiatives of inclusive education will be more accurately implemented if sustained by research-based information and strategies aiming to reduce exclusion.

Participants drew attention to the role of regional, national and local discussion fora supporting the dissemination and understanding of inclusive education. Advocacy and communication strategies to change society's perception of marginalized groups were suggested. Participants noted that it is important to involve and train media groups and personnel on relevant issues and terminology so that they can in turn inform the community. Associations should be developed focusing on advocacy for inclusive education reaching out to parents and teachers. There should be incentives for institutions that are actively involved in inclusive education and that serve as an example to others. Dissemination of research findings is needed to better inform those involved in inclusive education. There is usefulness in having Internet tools available that facilitate an on-going discussion and learning process at a regional level about inclusive education practices. Successful best practices should be documented and shared inter- and intra-regionally.

54 IBE, 2007. *Report on the Caribbean Symposium on Inclusive Education*, Kingston, Jamaica, 5–7 December 2007. Geneva, Switzerland: UNESCO-IBE. (IBE/2007/RP/CD/07.) This symposium, involving only English-speaking Caribbean countries, was organized by the UNESCO Office for the Caribbean; the Division for the Promotion of Basic Education (ED/BAS, UNESCO Paris) and UNESCO-IBE, in partnership with the Ministry of Education of Jamaica. Some 110 participants, including ministerial representatives, policy-makers, international organization experts and educators, attended and discussed the presentations of sixteen English-speaking Caribbean countries (Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Christopher and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago); representatives from Argentina and the United Kingdom were also present.

55 "Inclusion is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children", UNESCO. 2005. *Guidelines for inclusion: ensuring access to Education for All*. Paris: UNESCO, p. 13.

2. *Public Policies and Inclusive Education*

Countries recognized that there are a number of conventions and agreements that provide a framework for national legislations addressing inclusive education. Countries in the region need to endorse and ratify these conventions, at the same time as revising and aligning their national legal frameworks with these instruments. There is a need to empower the right holder and to strengthen the capacity of the duty bearer to provide inclusive education. There was an overall claim in the region calling for policies to be implemented and laws to be enforced with the goal of preventing inclusive education from remaining merely a rhetorical device of educational reform. Policy revisions should include a language that promotes definite rather than probable actions. Participants drew attention to the existence of discriminatory language in laws and policies and that, therefore, should be revised.

An increase of budgetary allocations for inclusive education was recommended. There is a need for an equitable and efficient allocation of financial resources according to identified needs, in particular for local school levels. Allocation of resources should be preceded by a financial analysis examining the advantages and disadvantages of such costs (i.e. understanding relationships between inclusion and economic and social benefits). Transparency, accountability and auditing are needed in relation to an efficient and equitable allocation and spending of educational financial resources according to identified needs.

Countries in the region would benefit from policy planning that clearly identifies priorities and appropriate resources on a long-term basis. Policies should be periodically revised. A lack of political will and a lack of vision are factors to consider in revised policy planning. Inter-ministerial collaboration, as well as co-ordination among all education sectors, are necessary to carry out inclusive education reforms.

Poverty is a major barrier when considering the priorities of inclusive education. Countries have to consider settling their high debts at the same time as there is competition for scarce resources among the various State sectors. There was an overall call for the involvement and linkage of the private sector with education. Also, non-governmental and religious organizations were called upon to participate in inclusive education. Partnerships with developed countries regarding financial support should be pursued. Donor agencies should be better informed about allocating funding for inclusive education purposes. A policy observatory was recommended, along with a protection system for inclusive education practices. These should work in collaboration with proposed national commissions on inclusive education.

Participants stated that excluded and community groups should be involved in inclusive education policy-making and implementation. Participants also suggested that likely opponents in the promotion of inclusive education should also be involved. Policies should actively discriminate in favour of disadvantaged groups (i.e. positive discrimination): equity instead of equality. Access to quality education should be for all and not just for elite groups.

3. *Systems, Links and Transitions*

The role of the school was defined as assisting the development of the full potential of all children, regardless of their differences. As an important social institution, the school needs to promote acceptance and diversity among students for an inclusive society. More co-ordination is needed at local levels regarding the involvement of private and public actors in

supporting school action for inclusive education. Community participation should be increased and community service learning should be explored as a tool to further develop inclusive education objectives.

Making early childhood education, primary and secondary education free and compulsory was a long-term objective to be pursued by the countries in the region. In particular, the importance of an early childhood education as an essential step for the successful completion of basic education was reiterated as key for inclusive education goals. Funding of school feeding programmes was also noted as an advantage in achieving inclusive education goals.

It was recommended that a curriculum in line with inclusive education should be flexible, dynamic and adjustable and not rigidly presented by curriculum units. Curricula should be revised to recognize and address multiple intelligences; it should be child-centred and encourage active learning. The curriculum should be relevant to the diversity not only of the learners but also of the teachers. Classroom activities should highlight the accomplishments of differently enabled students. Overall, there was a strong call for revising assessment methods and standards preventing them from becoming hegemonic or exclusionary. Assessment should be continuous, linking all education levels. There needs to be an improved articulation between special needs education as part of inclusive education. Schools' physical infrastructures need to change in order to become more accessible and child friendly for all children. The role of information technology should be further explored to advance inclusive education objectives.

Finally, participants noted that bilingual education is a key issue to address within inclusive education. Legal frameworks should support it and it should be included in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

4. *Learners and Teachers*

Overall, teacher training in the Caribbean was identified as not being conducive to inclusive education and, thus, in need of various reforms. As a starting point, values and attitudes underlying teaching objectives and practices should be revised in the light of inclusive education. Common standards in teacher education programmes regarding inclusive education should be considered, aiming to highlight commonalities in the region.

Overall, the teaching profession has to be more highly valued in society. As one particular weakness, participants noted how there are a few teachers coming from excluded groups—there should be more diversity within the teacher population and institutions. Teacher-training programmes should receive compensation from the government; for example, through the provision of scholarships for teachers involved in inclusive education settings.

Teacher training is focused too much on the objective of standards and exams instead of on the flexible curricular practices of inclusive education. Teachers should be trained in skills for individual learning styles, using positive approaches and behavioural management techniques. Assessment techniques should be improved to enable teachers to tailor programmes for students and their various needs. Collaboration between regular education teachers and special education teachers/schools should be increased. This idea was proposed by participants when considering that one teacher cannot provide everything that is required by children with special needs in an integrated inclusive classroom. Finally, participants

noted that it is highly important to lower teacher/child ratios in classrooms in order to provide quality education that is inclusive of all kinds of learners.

Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future. Nordic Countries⁵⁶

1. Approaches, Scope and Content

Nordic countries situate their conception and scope of inclusive education at a stage that aims to develop successful learning in all students within a good learning environment and with individual support. Inclusive education is about everyone being in school and providing good-quality education and learning that enables everyone to develop his/her full potential. In Nordic countries, early intervention in the education of a child is an essential component of inclusive education. Refining the concept and practice of early intervention in some countries can be useful as a key step to promote inclusion.

The term of inclusive education should be further clarified in relation to integration and special needs education. Refining the concept of inclusive education also requires clarifying if there are two separate processes occurring when speaking of inclusive education and individualized education. It is also important to distinguish between individualization and personalization. Participants identified that countries in the region are moving towards personalization, which means taking into account the uniqueness and potential of each child within the social context.

Participants agreed that inclusive education in Nordic countries does not face the same challenges as in other world regions. For example, the degree of social and economic segregation found in other regions resulting in social exclusion is not a main challenge to be addressed by inclusive education in the Nordic countries. This region has developed well-functioning education systems for immigrant children; however, participants agree that it is still very challenging to address the growing cultural diversity (e.g. language and religion) in the learning processes of students. Proposals to address this diversity could involve special teaching methods and support activities that consider: the different learning and cultural differences in students; bilingual education; education in mother tongue (e.g. Finland, Norway and Sweden). The following groups were identified as deserving more attention in terms of inclusive education: (a) children who are unable to attend school especially because of social-emotional problems regardless of their socio-economic background; (b) ethnic groups (e.g. Roma, adolescent immigrants); and (c) students who do not have the skills to continue with education after comprehensive school, especially boys who are dropping out from upper-secondary education. Participants remarked how schools should not only pay attention to these groups, but also become involved in the educational process concerning the local community and family of these students in order to sustain any reform or support within the school. The community's approach and involvement in children's education was referred to as one of the particular strengths of Nordic countries.

Both the school and society need to be ready for inclusion. It is important to increase awareness about inclusive education throughout the education system, especially at the

56 IBE. 2008. *Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future. Nordic Countries. Helsinki, Finland; March 6-7, 2008.* Geneva, Switzerland: UNESCO-IBE. (IBE/2008/RP/CD/02.) This workshop was organized by the Finnish National Board of Education, and the International Bureau of Education (UNESCO-IBE). The workshop had twenty-nine participants, including ministerial representatives, policy-makers, researchers and educators from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, and representatives of the UNESCO Division for the Promotion of Basic Education (ED/BAS) and the UNESCO Flagship: The Right to Education for Persons with Disabilities: Towards Inclusion.

school level. In parallel, the concept of inclusive education and diversity should also be understood and shared with parents and the community as they may be reticent or afraid to support it. Parents sometimes lose sight of the fact that the school is a reflection of society and they think only about their child instead of envisaging education always in its social context.

2. *Public Policies and Inclusive Education*

In relation to public policy, participants highlighted the importance of keeping laws and national policies of inclusive education flexible in order for them to become relevant and applicable to local formal education contexts. Also, it is important to envision policy proposals that address both students' welfare and education through inter-sectoral collaborations. Also at the school level, investment and development of multi-professional co-operation for the benefit of students should be further enhanced. In addition, resource people at the level of the municipality who support schools and teachers and parents can also be helpful.

Nordic countries vary in their national and municipal budgetary allocations for special and temporary support provided to children during their school years. Nevertheless, in all Nordic countries municipalities have autonomous power on how to allocate and use such resources. At the same time, in all countries there is a need to develop more flexible forms of support provided temporarily or continuously to the student through all school years. Such support can vary in form including methodologies of differentiation, flexible study groups, remedial teaching, part-time special needs teaching, etc.

Finally, participants recommended that there should be unified policy objectives linking university teacher-education programmes, school curricula and teaching practices throughout all educational levels. In parallel, policies involving pre-service teacher education should focus on increasing teachers' skills on how to work with different kinds of children and on how to support them individually. In these same terms, it is also important to guarantee systematic in-service training for all teachers.

3. *Systems, Links and Transitions*

Discussion in the workshop in relation to this ICE sub-theme, focused on the kind of schools and curriculum that Nordic countries implement and aspire to continue in their education systems. Flexibility and independence in the way schools work is positively reflected in the students' learning abilities. The idea of inclusion is built into policy-making and a national curriculum that is not loaded with instructions; rather, the curriculum focuses on general competences and does not detail what to teach. The school and classroom levels, with positive and supportive teacher/student interaction and active student/student co-operation, are the most important elements in education. It is important to support municipalities and schools in relation to their provision of pedagogical leadership. Such support should not be a controlling or monitoring one, but rather implying a supportive interaction.

Participants agreed on the benefit of a decentralized evaluation of education systems with the objective of assessing and supporting the system as a whole and with less emphasis on specific inspections coming from the national level. For example, in Finland there are no national inspections of schools and in Iceland educational administrators with a supervisory role regarding schools were abolished in the 1990s, thus providing all compulsory and upper secondary schools with the autonomy to adopt methods to self-evaluate their internal

communication, external relations, instructional and administrative activities. Denmark introduced quality reports as part of a municipal reform in 2007 with the goal of helping municipalities govern schools; only Sweden has a national inspection system to monitor schools.

Nordic countries agree in keeping the approach of a broad-based curriculum. Institutional and curricular flexibility is a key factor in positive learning processes, in addition to schools having discretion in the use of time, space and resources. The curriculum could be used more freely with more flexible timetables that allow for the development of the full potential of students; this is the case in Finland, especially in the lower grade levels. Time is a challenge especially in the upper levels of schooling (i.e. upper secondary). There is need also to allocate more time to physical exercise as part of the holistic development of a child. Nordic countries are therefore finding ways to insert physical activities at different times throughout the school day.

The Nordic experience shows that the comprehensive school model involving nine years of basic education allows for flexibility. It is this type of school that makes the difference in education processes and outcomes; it is not the curriculum that defines the school model but the school model that allows for flexibility in the curriculum. The same ethos of comprehensive schools needs to be incorporated into upper secondary education; the competencies of all students need to be strengthened to make the transition. In order to have cohesive transitions in the curriculum across grade levels, it is often an advantage to have elementary and secondary schools in one building; smaller building units work well in order to support students individually.

The continuation of education after compulsory education is a common challenge in the region. There are still too many drop-outs at the upper secondary level, even though the drop-out figures would be considered quite low in an international comparison. Support systems are needed to follow up drop outs. Participants proposed to address drop-outs at the upper secondary level by improving student guidance and counselling activities and by improving students' competencies as they move from comprehensive school to upper secondary; also learning barriers, such as family problems, must be addressed. Attention should be given to helping students in their transitions between education levels by involving parents in the process.

In the Nordic region, values (e.g. democracy, self-development, learning how to live together, tolerance, participation, responsibility) are translated into curriculum and teaching practices. The following aspects are always present at the classroom level: partnership, equality and community. Students' personal development is a key aspect of an inclusive curriculum.

The relationship between the school and the community should be a close one when it comes, among other things, to the design of the school curriculum. Co-operation inside and outside the school should be continued and enhanced. Especially among teachers, special educators and other professionals, this should take place in ways that encourage multi-professional co-operation. This is needed particularly in the seventh, eighth and ninth grades. A note of caution was made by participants in situations in which different salaries and training backgrounds exist between classroom and subject teachers as this may encourage divisions between them, hindering collaboration at the school level.

4. *Learners and Teachers*

The teaching profession is highly valued in Nordic societies. An education system based on trust of the teachers' work is essential for positive educational processes and outcomes. In Nordic countries, the relationship between teachers and students is not a formal hierarchical one and could be better described as involving a warm, friendly and respectful interaction.

Teachers need continuous support to meet the various needs of students. A lack of qualified teachers and special needs class teachers was identified in certain countries (e.g. Denmark, Sweden); it varies as well by geographical area (urban, rural). It is important to develop a good knowledge base and skills about how to teach children with different needs in teacher-education programmes; in this way, teachers will be able to rely on their own competencies in an inclusive way. Also, assistance to teachers in the classroom was discussed precisely in terms of increasing and supporting such knowledge and skills in inclusive education. Upon discussion of the role of assistant teachers, they were referred to as having the disadvantages of not providing continuous support and varying in teaching quality. At the same time, team teaching could be a useful support for inclusive education, yet without excluding the possibility of teachers receiving assistance. Assistance should be provided as a whole, in the context of a community understanding that everyone receives help. In Finland, part-time special needs education is a good example of a successful and non-stigmatizing form of support.

Participants also remarked on the importance of implementing more creative ways of enhancing the learning environments in the classroom, for both academic and social purposes (e.g. peer tutoring, assistance and team teaching). Creative teaching methods that aim to meet and develop the different needs of students were suggested. For example, participants discussed “differentiation”—also understood as “personalization” or “individualization”—as a pedagogical approach that involves using different methods with students, giving them different tasks and using different kinds of materials. This kind of pedagogy results in a differentiated pedagogy used in mixed-ability groups in which all students benefit. According to participants, if a teacher is able to “differentiate” or “personalize” or “individualize” learning situations from the very beginning, it will result in lowering the numbers in special education.

The role of individual study plans was also widely discussed when positively considered in the region as a good way to approach the variety in students' learning needs and interests. This involves a negotiation with the student and parents about goals, methods and commitments. Implementing individual study plans presupposes an on-going co-operation between parents and teachers. For example, Denmark has introduced an individual student plan to evaluate each student and communicate with the parents. Individual study plans were referred to as helping the student be aware of his/her own learning process. Setting up individual study plans should not suppose lowering the standard of what is expected from each student or hinder the possibility of following their learning process. These study plans should be applicable to students with special needs as well as gifted ones. Individual study plans could also be supported by pedagogical methodologies involving student group work. Nordic countries encourage and develop student participation as a key element of an inclusive society. There is widespread development of student participation beyond student councils; it is embedded in all the educational school processes.

Student assessment should be based on the individual growth rate. Nordic countries could be more creative about how to measure the progress of learning. Evaluation of individual progress should take place in a way that is continuously supportive during

schooling and that at the end of compulsory education provides some criteria helping teachers to see the individual achievement compared to the national level of achievement. For example, the National Core Curriculum 2004 in Finland presents this kind of evaluation system. It is important to give feedback to students, teachers and parents in order to better understand different strategies of learning during children's schooling. At the same time, teachers' education must incorporate that approach. Instead of increasing and using a diagnostic approach to identify children's learning differences, evaluation of pedagogies and learning environments should be useful to seek extra support and additional funding to attend to the different learning needs of children.

To date, about 25% of students in Finland are defined as needing some kind of additional support during their compulsory education; the numbers are lower in other Nordic countries. Most of this support is given by the students' own class teacher or subject teacher and by special needs teachers (so called part-time special needs education that is usually given simultaneously during the regular lesson). Support is organized in strong collaboration and interaction with parents.

APPENDIX 2

REGIONAL PREPARATORY CONFERENCES ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:
OUTCOMES AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONSRegional Preparatory Conference for the 48th session of the International Conference on Education (ICE)—Europe and the North American Region (Riga, Latvia)⁵⁷

The one hundred and eighty-five participants from thirty-five countries and nine international organizations and educational NGOs, meeting on 24–26 February 2008 in Riga, Latvia, in the Regional Preparatory Conference for the 48th session of the International Conference on Education (ICE) “Inclusive Education: from Policy Dialogue to Collaborative Action”, considered that inclusive education is a core element in fostering convergence at the local, national, regional and global levels.

Given the importance of inclusive education for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the EFA/Dakar goals, as well as for education for sustainable development, social cohesion and successful responses to new opportunities and challenges worldwide, the Conference participants called upon the Ministers of Education of European and North American countries to fully participate in the 48th session of the ICE. Ministers of Education are invited to share their countries’ experiences (including specific aspects, priorities, achievements, challenges and future prospects) with other countries and regions of the world, in order to contribute to the advancement of the concept and practices of inclusive education.

Discussions in the Riga Preparatory Conference showcased the richness of strategies and tools to foster inclusive education in the context of European and North American countries, as well as achievements to date as a result of outstanding initiatives and effective partnerships. Countries also shared various challenges concerning inclusive education ranging from attitudinal aspects to resources and organizational constraints. In the conclusions of the Conference, the four sub-themes of the ICE 2008 were addressed.

1. Approaches, Scope and Content

The Conference participants understood that inclusive education addresses not only different learning needs, but also the broader concept of social inclusion. In spite of the different possible understandings of, and approaches to, inclusive education, there was common agreement among the participants that it means giving all learners equal opportunities to take part in high-quality and relevant education, and to develop their full potential regardless of gender, social and economic status, ethnicity/race, geographical location, special learning needs, age, religion, etc. Equality, full and open access to a high-quality and relevant education ought to be supplemented by equality in terms of positive educational outcomes, i.e. the learners’ competencies for life.

Under the broad concept of inclusive education, the following aspects and dimensions should be given priority:

⁵⁷ The Regional Preparatory Conference for the 48th session of the ICE (Europe and the North American Region) in Riga, Latvia was jointly organized by the IBE, the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia. This section is based on the final document entitled “Conclusions of the Roundtable Discussions”.

- Encouraging States to promote a rights-based approach to education;
- Establishing institutional frameworks of inclusive education (responsibilities, implementation, financing, etc.);
- Ensuring the participation of students, parents and other stakeholders in decision-making processes and in the implementation of inclusive education policies;
- Accommodating curriculum and teaching modalities to effectively respond to students' different contexts, learning styles and needs;
- Assessment procedures addressing the various developmental needs of individuals;
- Promoting learning environments which foster constructive interaction and participation in learning processes;
- Teacher education focusing on improved outcomes for students, the well-being of learners and the “whole development of a person”;
- Linking formal, non-formal and informal learning experiences more effectively.

It is considered that national visions on, and strategies of, inclusive education ought to be based on constructive consideration of different tensions and dilemmas surrounding theories, policies and practices for addressing differences in education and within the broader societal context. It is important that countries identify their specific problems and be prepared to face new emerging challenges.

In this area, the Riga Conference participants suggested the following questions be addressed at the ICE 2008:

- How to be inclusive about inclusive education? All countries ought to have the right to participate in the effort of refining the concept of inclusive education and coming up with their diverse solutions.

2. *Public Policies and Inclusive Education*

Legal steps have been taken in many countries represented at the Conference to ensure legislative and institutional support to inclusive education. Such efforts are usually embedded in long-term national strategies and supported by European and/or international conventions and declarations (i.e. the UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action in Special Needs Education, 1994; the UN Convention on Rights of People with Disabilities, 2006). Efforts are also being made to promote positive attitudes towards diversity and inclusion, and to integrate inclusive education into the public agenda.

The experiences of European and North American countries also demonstrate the value of meaningful, transparent and effective partnerships between the State, private sector and civil society, including teachers' organizations, with a view to reaching common societal goals.

It is considered that countries need to identify legal, institutional, administrative and financial leverages to foster inclusive education in a sustainable way. Educational stakeholders are called upon to make the best use of cost-effective strategies for promoting

inclusive education based on the advantages of traditional and new technologies including information and communication technologies (ICTs), the creativity of schools and communities, as well as coherent and multidimensional approaches along the education system continuum. Given the important role of teachers in facilitating and promoting inclusive education, teacher education and training presents an important challenge. Finally, open-mindedness and acceptance of diversity as an asset are at the heart of inclusive education.

In this area, the Riga Conference participants suggested that the following questions should be addressed at the ICE 2008:

- How to bridge research, policy and practice in support of inclusive education and how to overcome gaps occurring between intent, planning and practical realization of educational innovations?
- How to set priorities and ensure appropriate steps towards inclusive education?
- How to use existing international tools and assets to promote inclusive education more effectively (i.e. through networking, sharing, international platforms, strategic partnerships)?
- How to engage in effective partnerships between the State, private sector and civil society at local, national, regional and international level?

3. *Systems, Links and Transitions*

In most of the participating countries, links between formal, non-formal and informal education are being strengthened in the perspective of lifelong learning. It is considered that curriculum, assessment and classroom practices ought to reflect the principles of inclusive education.

In this area, the Riga Conference participants suggested the following questions be addressed at the ICE 2008:

- How to foster inclusive education across the education system (from early childhood to tertiary levels) and find appropriate solutions for particular stages in need of more attention, such as secondary education and technical and vocational education and training?
- How to cater for equal opportunities and access while also envisaging equal outcomes?
- How to balance intellectual, social and emotional development, and how to cater for competencies needed in private, public and professional/vocational areas?

4. *Learners and Teachers*

Inclusive pedagogy is being undertaken to provide tailored solutions, based on parents' and students' free choice and in co-operation with other stakeholders. Schools and communities (civil society institutions, parents, NGOs, employers and other stakeholders) work together to foster social cohesion, intercultural understanding and participatory citizenry.

In this area, the Riga Conference participants suggested the following questions be addressed at the ICE 2008:

- How can effective practices be identified and implemented by taking into account local contexts, conditions and actors?

- How to educate teachers and educational administrators to integrate the theory and practice of inclusive education in their schools and communities?
- How to make best usage of all possible means, especially ICTs in promoting inclusive education?

The Conference participants expressed their gratitude to the organizers and partners for the opportunity given to engage in strengthening interregional dialogue on policies and practices of inclusive education, thus contributing to international efforts to reach Quality Education for All.

Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Conference for the 48th session of the International Conference on Education (Bali, Indonesia)

The “Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Conference for the 48th session of the International Conference on Education”, organized from 29 to 31 May 2008 in Bali, Indonesia, was attended by 160 participants, from twenty-three countries—including ambassadors, ministers, vice-ministers, policy-makers, educators, curriculum specialists, teacher-trainers, as well as representatives from inter-governmental bodies, civil society organizations and NGOs. Proposed by the Indonesian Government at the International Bureau of Education (IBE) inter-governmental Council meeting in January 2008 and supported by all Council members, this conference was a part of the consultative process among UNESCO Member States with regard to the 48th session of the ICE, which is entitled “Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future” (25–28 November 2008, Geneva, Switzerland).

The participants expressed their deep gratitude to the Indonesian Government’s Ministry of National Education, Indonesia’s National Commission to UNESCO, the UNESCO Regional Bureau in Asia (Bangkok) and the IBE, for organizing this regional conference which provided an excellent opportunity and a productive setting to discuss and exchange visions, strategies, practices and experiences around inclusive education.

Social exclusion, Inclusive education and EFA goals

Asia and the Pacific Region have plentiful examples of diverse and fruitful experiences and strategies, which conceptualize and implement inclusive education policies and programmes. Inclusive education is progressively understood as a key human rights-based approach towards the realization of the EFA goals, thus an issue of growing policy concern throughout the region. Inclusive education as an approach seeks to address the individual learning needs of all children, youth and adults with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. It involves modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies in education and responds to and appreciates diversity amongst human beings. Inclusive education entails profound and progressive changes throughout the education system, with respect to the curriculum objectives, content and assessment tools, schools’ vision, principals’ leadership, relations with the community, teachers’ roles and classroom practices. It is an on-going process of removing barriers to learning, and of promoting the engagement, empowerment and participation of communities, schools, principals, teachers and learners.

Among other relevant aspects, inclusive education refers to long-term educational policies and their articulation with other on-going social policies from different ministries responsible for social services; the provision of lifelong opportunities (from early childhood

onwards) through a flexible and adaptable inclusive curriculum in formal, non-formal and informal learning environments; and the diversification of teaching practices to effectively address learners' diversities. The role of the curriculum is crucial as it should provide the conceptual framework and the tools to address the specific needs of different learners coming from diverse cultural and social backgrounds. The empowerment of communities within a sound decentralization process is highly relevant to understand and to take care of learners' diversities.

In a more general sense, the discourse around inclusive education implies addressing the challenges towards attaining more inclusive societies (social inclusion) by coping with the lack of access to basic social services and to learning opportunities. Inclusive education implies social inclusion and vice versa, as guaranteeing effective learning conditions and opportunities are ways of addressing the problems, among others, of poverty, marginality, ethnic and gender disparities, HIV and AIDS, and residential and social segregation. The role of the government is essential to ensure the effective provision of education as a public good, facilitate a dynamic relationship between the national and local levels in developing and implementing policies, and promote a strong collaboration among different stakeholders.

It is recognized that the learning that takes place in school environments in the region is far from satisfactory. Low achievement levels are reported and the minimal levels of learning are not acquired as defined by individual countries. In an era of globalization, it is critical to enhance and democratize learning opportunities, especially in environments where inequity, exclusion and marginalized groups are of great relevance. In the rapidly changing and increasingly competitive world, inclusive education is an essential approach to achieve high-quality equitable education.

To effectively and decisively encourage the challenges around inclusive education, it is absolutely essential to increase the resources allocated to education as well as to better distribute and use the existing ones. It implies, among other aspects, targeted support to marginalized groups or those who are excluded, and investments directed for example, to very poor families (conditional cash transfer) and to alternative modes of delivering instructions in formal school systems, such as the use of self-learning modules for working children and for those living in conflict-affected societies.

The role of the ministries of education should be strengthened with regard to monitoring, supervising and evaluating policies and programmes on inclusive education—for example, to capture data on the profile of the excluded groups, to identify students/children and resources in order to provide services, to disaggregate data of those children who are in difficult situations and to design and implement indicators for measuring progress in inclusive education.

Within the broader conceptualization of the interfaces between social inclusion and inclusive education, the participants acknowledge the need for:

- i) further specifying and giving content to the role of inclusive education as a guiding principle within the EFA framework;
- ii) sharing and disseminating inclusive practices that prove to work at different levels – i.e. educational and curricula structures, school models and teaching practices; and

- iii) strengthening the role of UNESCO as a provider of intellectual leadership on how to foster and carry out a broader conceptualization of inclusive education, and exploring the creation of a clearing-house on effective evidence-based inclusive practices.

The participants strongly recommended that these issues be brought up by the Asia-Pacific Ministers of Education during the 48th session of the ICE.

Topics to be addressed and inputs for the 48th session of the ICE

The regional conference identified nine main topics to be discussed during the 48th session of the ICE.

The topics are:

1. children with disabilities;
2. HIV/AIDS and health;
3. minorities (ethnic, linguistic and religious);
4. migrant children;
5. refugees and internally displaced populations;
6. social exclusion;
7. gender;
8. disaster risk reduction (DRR) education; and
9. enhanced learning.

These topics were addressed in relation to the four sub-themes of the 48th session of the ICE: (a) approaches, scope and content; (b) public policies; (c) systems, links and transitions; and (d) learners and teachers, from the perspective of going from visions to practice, by identifying issues and discussion points and by making suggestions. Participants strongly emphasized the urgent need for allocating resources to effectively implement inclusive policies.

1. Children with Disabilities

The inclusion of children with disabilities in education has been on the international agenda for many years and is now gaining increasing attention. These children remain, however, the largest and most significant group being excluded from mainstream education in many Asian countries. This indicates a strong need for formulating policies to effectively monitor the full implementation of inclusive education for children with disabilities. There is also a need to discuss the following concerns, issues and suggestions during the ICE.

- Formulation of policies that will help to clarify and define inclusion in a broader way, taking into account gender, ethnicity, class and other issues along with disability.
- Formulation of policies to ensure that segregation is not practised in inclusive classrooms.
- The need to establish a database of children with disabilities both in and out of school in the Asian Region so that the progress of inclusive education can be effectively monitored.

- Formulation of policies regarding class size, examinations and standards, which currently act as a few of the many barriers to inclusion.
- Issues related to the capacity-building of teachers and parents as well as the children with disabilities.
- Issues related to equipment, resources and facilities and their importance in facilitating inclusion.
- The role of special schools in supporting inclusion.
- The role of child-centred teaching as a strategy towards inclusion.
- The practice of inclusive education at all levels, from kindergarten to higher education, and the importance of early interventions and remediation.
- Issues related to collaboration among different departments and agencies in order to ensure effective inclusion.

2. *HIV/AIDS and Health*

Inclusive schools must welcome all children, and enable them to play, learn and grow up together along with their siblings and peers. Discrimination and exclusion of children affected by or infected with HIV/AIDS or other health conditions must therefore be prevented. Protection and anti-discrimination laws, policies and regulations need to be issued. Close collaboration and co-ordination between all concerned ministries, authorities and community-based organizations and groups will ensure that these are implemented. The following issues must be further addressed at the ICE:

- HIV-related stigma and the discriminatory attitudes and practices that prevent children from accessing quality education.
- Access for children and youth affected by and/or infected with HIV to quality education in their home communities (i.e. in the nearest schools together with their other siblings and peers).
- Access to quality HIV prevention and response education for all children and youth—including reproductive health, sexuality and sex education, as well as drug prevention education in both formal and informal settings.
- Access to child and youth-friendly health services, free and voluntary testing and counselling services and treatment for HIV, as well as other related opportunistic infections.
- Issues related to the media's potential role for promoting HIV prevention and response education by informing the public about HIV, as well as helping to correct myths and misconceptions related to it.

- Education and health institutions must guarantee that the HIV status of children and youth is treated with confidentiality in order to allow them to take their decision as to whom, when and how they would like to disclose their HIV status.

3. *Minorities*

Asia and the Pacific have thousands of ethno-linguistic groups whose mother tongue is not an official language of the country in which they live. In these groups, parents have, in general, a desire to see that their children are able to achieve success and be integrated in an increasingly globalized society, through knowledge of national and international languages, without losing their ethno-linguistic identity.

Language is sometimes a major barrier to quality education. It is recognized that the language issue is closely interlinked with issues relating to culture and religion, therefore requiring a holistic approach. Depending on the context of individual countries it is recommended that the following issues are explored at the ICE:

- Development of a legal framework that allows for local flexibility and adaptation.
- Curricula and content development that encourages local adaptation in order to increase local relevance.
- Proactive recruitment policies for teachers' training in order to increase the capacity of the minority groups.
- The role of the education system in inter-cultural/religious dialogues to promote increased understanding and tolerance.
- The progressive introduction of mother-tongue-based instructions in the early years of primary education as a means of gaining mastery of national and international languages.
- Provisions should be made for the incorporation of official, national and/or international language instruction, along with instruction in one's mother tongue.
- Governments and multilateral organizations should devote resources towards the hiring and training of speakers of minority languages as teachers, and the creation, printing and distribution of bilingual and/or multilingual materials.

4. *Migrant children*

Regardless of their status, all children of migrant workers should be encouraged to pursue education.

5. *Internally Displaced Children (IDC)*

The category of internally displaced children essentially refers to refugees, children in conflict situations, transition/post-conflict situations and environmentally-displaced

children. The role of education is essential to promote and facilitate IDC reintegration into their communities of origin. The issues mentioned below need to be discussed at the ICE:

In school camps:

- Psycho-social support for children should be provided in order to facilitate their adaptation to their new environment.
- The children should be taught in their mother tongue and, depending on the context, refugee children should have opportunities to learn the host nations' language.

In mainstream schools in host nations:

- Refugee children should have equal access to education in host nations. In order to make this possible, international support may be required.
- In order to avoid bullying and discrimination from other children, teachers and parents, awareness-raising and sensitization sessions about refugees should be organized in schools and communities.
- Orphaned children's needs should be considered within the framework of inclusive education policies and programmes.

6. *Social Exclusion*

There is a need to build awareness for understanding the nature, relevance, scope and implications of social exclusion (faced by different marginalized groups) in various contexts at the national and regional levels. The following issues should be the focus of discussion at the ICE:

- Continued efforts to address social exclusion for various marginalized groups within the school and society.
- Access to quality education for children affected by war, civil strife and natural calamities.
- The need to review existing national level provisions for marginalized groups.
- Monitoring mechanisms so that the existing provisions, such as scholarships, reach the target group of marginalized children.
- Establishment of mechanisms to ensure the quality of education in faith-based schools so that the competencies developed and subjects taught are pertinent and relevant to the needs of national development.
- On-going support to teachers and other stakeholders for providing equal opportunities for full and meaningful participation of all children.

7. *Gender*

It is recognized that at the core of inclusive education are issues related to gender and education. Gender-based discrimination is a major barrier to learning in the Asia and Pacific Region. Gender awareness and sensitization is needed at all levels of the education system, in order to become truly inclusive. The following issues need much discussion at the ICE:

- The need for gender disaggregated educational data and additional qualitative and gender-sensitive indicators.
- The development and/or implementation of supporting legal frameworks to protect the right to education for all, specifically addressing protection against gender-based discrimination.
- The necessity for the integration of gender awareness and sensitization into mandatory pre- and in-service trainings, as well as into the content of educational materials.
- Gender equality guarantees in education in terms of enrolment, retention, survival and curricula.
- Pro-active recruitment strategies to address gender imbalances among teachers, principals and education system officials.
- The role of the education system is to challenge actively cultural, religious and social traditions that are gender discriminatory.

8. *Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Education*

These recommendations deserve greater attention at the ICE:

- Natural disasters represent a major cause of exclusion of children from the education system, as they deny them access to education.
- Particularly, marginalized children living in disaster-prone areas, as well as children displaced as a result of a disaster, should be allowed equitable access to education. Also, effective temporary school provisions should be implemented immediately after disasters occur.
- Governments have the responsibility to provide all children with the necessary knowledge about disasters, including the risks and vulnerabilities and related competencies through the integration of disaster risk reduction into the school curriculum, as well as through non-formal and informal education, so as to better protect and prepare themselves, their family and their community for disasters.
- In order to achieve the objectives of “Education for All,” the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) by 2015 and the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of Universal Education, it becomes imperative for governments to ensure school safety through the enforcement of building codes and the development of disaster-resilient school buildings.

- DRR education should be recognized as a crucial component of inclusive education and be discussed as a major policy issue.

9. *Enhanced Learning to Achieve Quality of Education*

These recommendations merit further discussion at the ICE:

- Improvement in learning, based on the involvement of multiple stakeholders at national and regional levels.
- Diversification and improvement of policies and strategies, so that learners are prepared to face the rapidly changing world.
- Preparation of frames and tools to assist in the measurement of qualities in learning.
- Encouragement of the establishment of communities of practices as settings for knowledge-sharing on research studies with regard to learning.

Regional Preparatory Conference for the 48th session of the International Conference on Education, Arab Region (Beirut, Lebanon)

The 40 participants from 13 countries (Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Palestine Autonomy Territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Yemen), six international organizations and NGOs, met on 25 - 27 August 2008 in Beirut, Lebanon, in the Regional Preparatory Conference for the 48th session of the International Conference on Education (ICE) “Regional Seminar on Quality Education for All: No Exclusion and No Marginalization”.

The Conference participants expressed their thanks to the organizers UNESCO Regional Office for Education in the Arab States (Beirut Office) and the Lebanese National Commission, as well as to the partners, the International Bureau of Education (IBE-UNESCO) and the Division for the Promotion of Basic Education (ED/BAS-UNESCO), for the opportunity to engage in strengthening interregional dialogue on policies and practices of Inclusive Education and thus contributing to international efforts to reach quality education for all.

During the conference, based on five main themes,⁵⁸ the participants reached consensus on issues within the following areas to move forward on an agenda around a broadened concept of inclusive education. It was underlined that Inclusive Education is a guiding principle to further accelerate the attainment of EFA goals under a holistic perspective; moving beyond its narrow conceptualization as special needs. Discussions showcased the richness of diverse strategies to foster Inclusive Education in the context of

58 The Conference covered the following main themes: Regional Perspectives on EFA (quality and inclusive education); Global Perspectives (international frameworks) and New Trends on Inclusive Education (a broader conceptualization, its content and scope); Government and Public Policy Issues and Challenges (implementation of policies for disabled children and schools); Teacher, Learner and Learning environments (differentiated instruction inside the classrooms, inclusive participatory approaches towards quality education, the UNICEF Friendly Schools initiative, inclusive education and the need for a relevant and flexible curriculum); Systems, Links and Transitions to attain inclusive education (programmes for excluded children, education of rural girls, links between formal and non-formal educational provisions, such as the Community Learning Centres, and partnerships for inclusive education).

Arab countries. Countries also shared various challenges concerning Inclusive Education ranging from attitudinal aspects to resources and curricular constraints. In the conclusions of the Conference, the four sub-themes of the ICE 2008 are addressed.

1. Approaches, Scope and Content

The Conference participants understood and recognized that inclusive education implies moving beyond a narrow conceptualization of inclusion of children with special needs. At the regional level, participants also observed the lack of a human rights perspective in addressing inclusive education. Presently, in the Arab region the integration model of mainstreaming is prevalent, which remains far from promoting participatory and inclusive approaches at the school and the classroom levels (i.e. the removal of barriers for participation in the learning processes). Participants also underlined that inclusive education should be viewed as assisting children in their individual and collective struggles, by providing them with the tools to make sense of a changing world marked by social transformation and conflict, and by encouraging them to contribute to peaceful development. The composite catalyst for change was considered as relating to school autonomy, curriculum reforms and classroom and school-based management, which would also promote implications for teachers training.

Under the broad concept of Inclusive Education the following aspects and dimensions should be given priority:

- Clarifying the concept (meaning and content) of inclusive education, not only to be associated to students with special needs.
- Investing more in infrastructure and equipment so as regular schools accommodate the needs of students with special needs.

2. Public Policies and Inclusive Education

The Conference participants observed the challenge of social exclusion, especially in relation to disabled people. With regards to this challenge, participants agreed that a participatory approach would be most effective; for example, through the engagement and involvement of parents in the learning process of their children in inclusive schools.

With regards to public policies in support of Inclusive Education, the following proposals should therefore be given priority:

- Raising social awareness about the need to foster a broadened concept of inclusive education.
- Encourage participatory policy making.
- Promoting and enact legislation for all categories of students (free compulsory education) and reflect them in national strategic plans.
- Providing adequate funds to education (more financial and human resources), particularly for attaining free compulsory education to all learners including students with special needs and those who are marginalized.

- Investing more in schools facilities and equipment for all learners.
- Facilitating the access to ICT in schools and its incorporation into the curricula.
- Strengthening the links and partnerships between the governments, civil society and international organizations, in order to carry out inclusive education policies and programmes.

3. *Systems, Links and Transitions*

The Conference participants agreed that regular schools based on inclusive approaches are effective ways of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving EFA. However, there is great resistance towards accepting heterogeneous learning environments. In addition, it was noted that present curricula are not adapted to a broadened concept of inclusive education, maintaining a clearly separated special education curricula, which has no links with the curricula implemented in regular schools. Participants also observed that curricula are in many cases, a strong source of exclusion as they fail to motivate and engage students in the process of learning.

With regards to such challenges, participants stated that the articulation of non-formal education programmes within the framework of life-long learning is progressively seen as a core strategy to address the problems faced by the education system in the Arab region. In most of the participating countries, links between formal, non-formal and informal education are being strengthened from the perspective of life-long learning. Participants also pointed out that the lack of literacy programmes within the framework of life-long learning is a big issue in the region, and clearly evidences the difficulties encountered in attaining a comprehensive and holistic vision of the educational system and putting this vision into practice. However, the example of the Multi-purpose Community Learning Centres (MCLCs)⁵⁹ was used to illustrate an on-going best practice.

In the framework of the subtheme system, links and transitions, the following proposals should be given priority:

- Developing more flexible curricula to accommodate all learners, including non-formal curricula.
- Strengthening the role of citizenship education, Maths and Science, and ICT.
- Achieving non-discriminatory gender curricula.
- Encouraging and empowering parents, students and communities to get involved at the school level, especially for non-formal education programmes.

59 The MCLCs are local centres that empower community members by providing them with life-long learning opportunities to become self-reliant and improve their life quality. These centres are organized and managed by the local community. MCLCs target, among others, out-of-school children, youth and deprived women. They can function as a venue for community learning and various development activities. Activities are flexible and participatory. Moreover, MCLCs can be part of already existing clubs, dispensaries and schools. Locations are accessible to all members of the community. The MCLCs, currently implemented in countries such as Lebanon and Syria, seeks to benefit from UNESCO experiences around the world, in particular the experience of the Bangkok Office in Asia and in the Pacific in Community Learning Centres and the experience of the UNESCO Education Sector with regard to education for adolescent girls.

- Diversifying assessment criteria and the methods, for example, by changing the exam-oriented assessment criteria, and putting more emphasis on the formative component of evaluation.

4. *Learners and Teachers*

The Conference participants noted that best practices of inclusion mainly come from institutions of the civil society. Participants agreed that the diversification of instruction is at the core of attaining equal opportunities and quality education. It implies, among other things, permanent interaction with peers, diversifying the learning materials and the assessment criteria, providing a more flexible curriculum that allows to the student to opt to do diverse activities. This implies the progressive breakdown of a centralised curriculum, a long and strong tradition in the Arab region. Implementing a child-centred curriculum within the human rights perspective engages, motivates and builds confidence in the learner. The experience of Child Friendly Schools (CFS)⁶⁰ in Lebanon is a good example of trying to foster such a school model which openly relates to the community based on a flexible curriculum.

When discussing challenges, participants noted the lack of trained teachers that are able and available to implement inclusive education practices. Problems hindering this process include (i) serious teacher shortages; (ii) lack of pre-service teacher education addressing diversity; (iii) lack of in-school support to orient and assist teachers in diversifying pedagogical practices to effectively respond to students' expectations and needs and, (iv) in general, lack of incentives to engage and motivate teachers.

With regards to preparing learners and teachers for an inclusive setting, the following proposals were identified as a priority:

- Providing mobile (specialized) teachers to support teachers in regular schools to address diversity (i.e. using the “Teachers’ Manual on Differentiating Instruction in the Classroom” elaborated by the Beirut Office).
- Diversifying instruction methods and teaching styles to effectively respond to all learners’ diversities, taking into account the many ways students learn and their different capacities (for example, multiple intelligences).

Regional Preparatory Conference of the African region for the 48th session of the International Conference on Education, (Yaoundé, Cameroon)⁶¹

The Preparatory Conference of the African region was held from 17 to 18 September 2008 in Yaoundé, Cameroon. This conference was held in preparation for the 48th session of the International Conference on Education (ICE) which will take place from 25 to 28 November in Geneva, Switzerland. The preparatory meeting brought together high level officials from the Ministries of Education of 11 African countries (South Africa, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique and

⁶⁰ The CFS provides quality education and cares for the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of every child. It is structured around four components: school rehabilitation, quality education, community mobilization and communication, support and advocacy. It currently covers 81 schools in Lebanon.

⁶¹ This document is the Final Document of the Regional Preparatory Conference of the African region.

Nigeria). The Yaoundé Conference, organized in conjunction with the International Bureau of Education (IBE) sought to arrive at a common and shared vision in Africa on inclusive education, taking into account the various national contexts of the continent.

Participants in the conference thanked the government of the Republic of Cameroon, the Cameroon National Commission for UNESCO, the UNESCO Office for Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Chad, the Regional Office for Education in Africa (BREDA), as well as the International Bureau on Education of UNESCO (IBE-UNESCO) for their faultless organization of this conference which provided a forum for the participating countries, to consider, brainstorm and exchange their experiences on inclusive education.

Situation in Africa

Since the World Forum in Dakar (2000), progress has been made toward Universal Primary Education (UPE). The world net school enrolment rate (NSE) rose from 83 per cent in 1999 to 86 per cent in 2004. The mean primary school enrolment rate in sub-Saharan Africa increased from 55 to 65 per cent.⁶²

In order to enhance primary education, policies to abolish school fees, increase teacher training and introduce incentives in the teaching profession as well as for marginalised young people, have begun to bear fruit, corresponding entirely to the spirit of inclusive education which is crucially important to African countries.

However, despite the progress made toward EFA in sub-Saharan Africa since 2000, there are still over 33 million children who do not attend school in the region. A good number of countries may not achieve universal basic education by 2015.⁶³ The rate of student transition to higher education today is still below 10 per cent; the remainder enters working life with the little education acquired.⁶⁴ Over the next 20 years, countries face the risk of being unable to provide lasting post-primary education to more than 15 per cent of young learners.⁶⁵ Social, gender and regional (urban/rural) inequalities continue to persist; families are not sufficiently involved; less than 10 per cent of disabled children attend school.⁶⁶ Education has not been sufficiently enlarged to include all social and cultural groups (e.g. with conventional, exam-orientated curricula) and, from this perspective, in-depth reform is necessary.

Main themes

1. Inclusive Education: From Theory to Practice

Inclusion is a considerable challenge to African school systems where the lack of human and material resources is often quite common. There is a need to introduce an inclusive education system through the design of appropriate strategies, which enable a re-contextualisation and widespread application of the concept of inclusion. It requires a paradigm shift and progress toward educational systems and schools that provide

62 Global Monitoring Report 2007, Paris, UNESCO, 2007

63 *Ibid.*

64 Papers and discussions at the high level Regional Seminar on Basic Education in Africa, Kigali, Rwanda, 25-28 September 2007.

65 *Ibid.*

66 Balescut, J., Eklindh, K. 2006. Historical Perspective on Education for Persons with Disabilities. Reference Document for the World EFA Report, 2006.

opportunities for all (access, process and results). Inclusion can be understood as a principle aimed at enhancing Education for All (EFA), by seeking appropriate ways and means of achieving equity and quality. The following points were highlighted:

- The values and philosophy of inclusion must be reflected in the attitudes of teachers and all education stakeholders.
- Educational systems must encourage the emergence of a framework for inclusion.
- Curricula should be adapted to inclusion-oriented policy.
- Policy guidelines relating to teaching should provide teachers' working conditions conducive to inclusion.
- Teachers must use effective teaching/learning and pedagogic methods that include all the learners.
- The family and community in the broad sense of the word must be involved for inclusion to be successful.
- The designing of an individualised education plan that responds to the needs of each and every learner, with the different resources necessary for inclusive education.
- Teacher training is one of the key tools in the implementation of inclusive education.

2. *Public Policies, Increased Basic Education and Education for All (EFA)*

Relevant discussions enabled participants to agree on a number of priorities to be included in policies with a view to better integration of inclusive education:

- The recognition that each and every child has the right to education.
- A sense of ownership of the notion of inclusive education in its broad sense, and a design of strategies in keeping with the cultural, social, religious, economic and political context.
- The need for countries to formulate multi-sectoral and inter-ministerial educational policies (the relationship between social inclusion and inclusive education) involving all stakeholders; to develop legal and institutional frameworks; and to establish institutions using these frameworks and policies with the necessary resources for inclusive education.
- The need to step up teacher training to provide them with tools necessary for taking care of children with special needs.
- The need to build and support schools.
- The need for communities to be involved in school management.
- The need to open schools in neighbourhoods in the rural areas.
- The introduction of indigenous languages in teaching in order to encourage the advancing of inclusion.

- The development of bilingual schools.
- The participatory approach of communities in curriculum development.
- The involvement of parents in the educational process.
- The prioritising of education for girls.
- The necessity to take non-formal basic education (NFBE) into account as a strong factor in inclusive education.

3. *Democratising Basic Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*

Access to primary education (MDG2), still needs to be democratised, while basic education still needs to be broadened and diversified, 8 years after the Dakar Forum. Colonial educational institutions with their focus on the emergence of an elite have remained the same, despite the introduction of mass education. In order to break loose of the elitist system and adopt inclusive education, the principles and basis of our educational system must be reviewed. The following points were highlighted:

- The need to provide access for all to a basic education of 9-10 years within a perspective of life-long learning. Education must be diversified in order to facilitate links and school models (overcoming separation and facilitating the transition between early childhood care and education, primary and secondary education.)
- The importance of learning contexts that favour learning which is child-centred with a flexible curriculum that is adapted to the learner's needs.
- The need to move away from the traditionally selective approach which emphasises a rigid organisation of subjects and exams. Curricular change is needed (towards objectives, structures; organisation of subjects and modes of evaluation, for example) based on competency-based approaches which recognises and rewards learning.

4. *Managing Linguistic Diversity*

In this context, the following elements were underlined:

- The crucial role of the school in terms of linguistic and cultural diversity (recognising, understanding and responding to diversity).
- The necessary means for enhancing the value of the great richness of the linguistic diversity in the African continent within an educational context.
- The difficulty of promoting national languages due to their great variety in certain countries.
- The willingness of African leaders to bring the school closer to its socio-cultural environment through the delegation of decision-making powers to schools.