

Inclusive Education Policy Developments Federal Level

Background

Nigeria has the most out-of-school children worldwide: 10 million (UNICEF, 2012). Most of these children aren't in school because they are poor or because they are girls, have a disability or are from a minority ethnic group. Nigerian Education Ministry efforts to get all children into school will fail unless schools welcome and support the children who are missing out.

Increasingly, policy-makers, non-governmental organizations, educationalists and activists recognize that good quality education for all children can only be achieved through schools that welcome and accommodate all children without discrimination and gender disparities. The Nigerian Government has the main responsibility for making education accessible and beneficial for all children. National education policies and systems are therefore a key target for reform and designing clear strategies to make their education systems inclusive.

What's keeping children out of school?

In most cases children are out of school because the education system itself doesn't let them in. Discriminatory cultural attitudes, inaccessible schools, language barriers, lack of teacher training and a rigid curriculum are just some examples of what keeps children out of school. Lack of support for children affected by poverty, hunger or health issues excludes even more.

What do we mean by inclusive education?

The thinking behind inclusive education originally focused on education for children with disabilities. Inclusive education strategies address wider exclusion issues, such as gender, marginalized groups etc., to improve learning for all children.

There is no single model for an inclusive school or education approach. Inclusive education ensures that the education system adapts to the child so that they can achieve their full potential, rather than expecting the child to adapt to the system.

ESSPIN's Approach

Achieving inclusive education is not about isolated initiatives or a one-off event. It is a dynamic, constantly evolving process. Inclusion needs to be part of basic education sector planning rather than a separate or secondary concern. Governments and donor agencies need to review education plans and implementation to ensure they prioritize and monitor disadvantaged groups.

esspin

Education Sector
Support Programme
in Nigeria



www.esspin.org

ESSPIN initially supported states in the formation of Inclusive Education Committees in all six states to:

.....
lead inclusion work

.....
take decisions through active participation from State Ministries of Education and State Universal Basic Education Boards, stakeholders, a wide range of civil society organisations and international development partners

.....
develop inclusive education policy and implementation strategies

.....
guide and support the implementation of inclusion in the state

.....
lobby for funding at national and state level

ESSPIN team efforts in close cooperation with the IE committees have taken place at several levels – with MoE/SUBEB (policy, reforms and planning) and with local authorities at Local Government level (strengthening systems, building capacity and targeting planning). The emphasis placed on each of these levels always depended on the local political, social, economic and cultural context. Regular workshops, meetings and capacity building trainings have taken place in every state since 2011 with Inclusive Education Committee members and key education stakeholders. The last round of the workshops were organised during the first part 2016. The aim has always been to increase awareness and advocate for inclusive education, to formulate inclusive policies and plans. During this last round of workshops a greater emphasis was placed to lobby on implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy Frameworks as well on developing sustainability plans for the government to take forward the inclusion work. As a result, Inclusive Education Committee members with the support of civil society groups continue to conduct regular meetings and workshops to raise awareness on inclusive education especially at the SUBEB, MOE and LGEA level.

Policy Developments at State Level

All ESSPIN-supported states have in place an inclusive education policy and/or a strategy with actions targeting disadvantaged children and reaching out to all marginalised groups. The policies developed by State Ministries of Education and IE Committees with support from ESSPIN involve clear objectives and strategies with a set of planned activities to respond to diversity and the education needs of all children. These state policies developed are generally practical and outline clear responsibilities for schools, SUBEB departments and SMOE, as well as other ministries and departments. Different emphases are found in different states: for example, in Kaduna, State IE policy now mandates that Albino children should be exempted from school uniform rules to allow covering up to protect themselves from the sun.

These policies have already started to create enabling inclusive learning environments, which promote ALL children's enrollment, participation and achievement.

States have been promoting inclusion through:

.....
Diversity of approach; flexible and adaptable to needs of the child and context, state specific targeted intervention

.....
Considering inclusive education as a process, not an end-point

.....
Development of IE measurable indicators agreed at state level

.....
Civil Society and Government Partnerships

.....
Direct support of School Based Management Committees on inclusive education, action and advocacy for marginalised children

Focusing on maintaining attendance and addressing quality and not only access

Increasing teachers capacity, listening to communities, and responding to children's needs

Identification of and tackling the needs of the most marginalised by SBMCs and CSOs

Key achievements on Inclusive Education Policy at Federal Level

A National Policy on Inclusive Education has been finalised by the Federal Ministry of Education and is now awaiting approval from the next Joint Consultative Committee on Education (JCCE). The policy was developed in close cooperation with the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC,) National education Research and Development Council (NERDC), National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), National Commission for Mass Literacy (NMEC), Civil Society and ESSPIN partners after numerous consultations at National and State Level.

National Dialogue on Inclusive Education

In June 2016 a national dialogue on inclusive education was organised to provide the conceptual clarifications on inclusive education, increase awareness on the importance of inclusive education, introduce the policy and share best practices of its implementation in Nigeria.

The dialogue provided a platform for initial discussions among educational stakeholders, teachers, parents, civil society representatives and international development partners at Federal Level on the strategies and resources that can best support inclusive educators and those who support them in all the states in Nigeria. As inclusive education gets increasingly taken up within international policy discourses, and reinforced by the Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 4) it has become imperative to explore and identify best practices that respond to diversity and unequal contexts of schooling for marginalised children in Nigeria.

The communiqué developed at the end of the national dialogue clearly stated some key recommendation to support the implementation process of the inclusive education policy such as:

There is the need for advocacy and sensitization to policy makers and relevant stakeholders on IE.

Related to (i) there is a mechanism already in place across all states of Nigeria for broad sensitisation of communities on inclusive education through School Based Management Committees (SBMCs) the membership of which includes the traditional and religious institutions. Provide resources for SBMC training/refresher training on roles and responsibilities including IE.

Capacity development by training and retraining of regular and special teachers on inclusive teaching methodologies

Identify, employ and develop the capacity of Inclusive Education Desk Officers to work alongside Gender and other relevant Desk Officers within SUBEB Departments of Social Mobilisation and linked to School Services Departments.

UBEC's Involvement in Implementing Inclusion

The National Policy on Education (NPE) 2014 lays great emphasis on issues of Special Needs Education. Furthermore, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act of 2004 also emphasises on the need to institute special interventions, as such it mandated UBEC to mobilise and enlighten stakeholders on how to ensure their commitment and participation in the Basic Education delivery process so that the objectives are realised especially at the State, LGEA and Community levels.

In order to accommodate special needs education, the Federal Government of Nigeria, approved 2% of 2% of the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) to UBE Commission to support States to cater for the education of children with disability, which the Commission has been disbursing since 2005 to SUBEBs and to selected qualified private providers.

Throughout the course of ESSPIN several attempts have been made to revise the funding guidelines in line with promoting inclusive education. However, these efforts are only forthcoming after the development of the Federal level Policy on inclusive education where UBEC was actively participating on the course of all the development process.

Based on the outcomes of the 2015 monitoring reports from all Nigeria's 36 states for the 2013 fund disbursement, an interactive workshop was held with all the State Desk Officers in Kaduna in July 2016. The workshop aimed to challenge UBEC's response to the education of children with disability in Nigeria.

ESSPIN's representative introduced the Draft National Policy on Inclusive Education and elaborated on how UBEC funding could be linked to the policy implementation targets and vision. Some of the key outcomes of workshop communiqué included:

existing schools and classrooms should be modified to increase access and accommodate all children with disability

UBEC mandates States to include Special Needs Education training in the Teacher Professional Development Programme (TPDP) plans as approved by the National Council on Education (NCE) 2009

UBEC should solicit through the Federal Ministry of Education - Inclusive Education Policy upward review from 2% to 5% CRF allocation for Inclusive Education as obtained in ECCDE

The way forward for UBEC – Recommendations

More awareness on inclusive education needs to be carried out in all the 36 States in order to address the difference in concepts of 'special needs' education and inclusive education

The plans for special education should be linked to the provision and targets of the National Inclusive Education Policy

The data gathering/monitoring systems for the 2% UBEC funding should be assessed by; reviewing the instruments UBEC is currently using, reflecting if the data gathered is enough to tell the story on how UBEC is supporting children with disability?

The reporting lines between States and UBEC level should be clearly set out bearing in mind that coordination of activities is key to make proper use of the small amount of funds available.

Most importantly SMOEs and SUBEBs should work closely together to support children with disability in the special and mainstream/regular schools

The existing funding guidelines should be reviewed using an inclusion lens; What is this funding covering? Are there other needs/gaps of how this funding could be utilised better? Can this fund also be disbursed to the mainstream/regular schools to meet the needs of children with disability enrolled? Are these guidelines clear and robust enough to support the current needs of marginalised children in the States?

For further information, please contact ESSPIN on:

Email: info@esspin.org

Phone: +234 (0) 8058008284