



THE NATIONAL  
RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

# ISSUES PAPER

## CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES MUST BE CONSIDERED IN ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Jeremy Goro  
Kilala Devette-Chee

[www.pngnri.org](http://www.pngnri.org)

Issues Paper 34

### Abstract

The implementation of inclusive education (IE), which provides opportunities for children with disabilities (CWDs) to access education, has been problematic in most developing countries. This report analyses the current implementation of IE in Papua New Guinea (PNG). Policy documents from the National Department of Education (NDOE), and the international treaties and conventions the country has signed associated with IE, as well as the current status of its implementation were reviewed. The findings show that PNG has several policies with disabilities. However, relevant government agencies have not been able to implement the policies properly. Inclusive education has been poorly funded, which makes it difficult to educate children living with a disability. Implementation of education policies associated with IE has concentrated on Special Education Resource Centres (SERCs) as implementing agents. This contributes to problems associated with implementing IE in the mainstream. SERCs were supposed to support teachers as they implement IE for children with disabilities. However, current schools and related public infrastructure have not been built with the intention of providing access for children with disabilities. Teacher training and general preparedness have focused on mainstream and generalised teaching, particularly teacher-centred pedagogy. Some teachers are willing to teach children with disabilities. However, they do not have the capacity to train the children. This report makes recommendations for improved policy and public provision of IE, which should improve services provided to children with disabilities in schools.

inquire  
inform  
influence

January 2020

**This page is intentionally left blank**



## CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES MUST BE CONSIDERED IN ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

**Jeremy Goro and Kilala Devette-Chee**

Education as a human right has been recognised and affirmed in various national and international declarations such as the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 2000 Biwako Millennium Framework and the 2013 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Torombe, 2013). PNG also has a local National Special Education Policy and Plan (NDOE, 1993), updated in 2003 (NDOE, 2003). PNG's *Universal Basic Education Plan 2010–2019* (NDOE, 2009) and *PNG Vision 2050* (Government of PNG, 2009), also support special education in the country. While the general approach to the education of CWDs is critical, the need to have clear understandings of the terms used is also paramount in order to provide essential education services for CWDs. It is necessary to differentiate between special education, integrated education and inclusive education in context.

According to Sightsavers (2011), special education<sup>1</sup> refers to the method where children with a disability are educated separately from the mainstream. They may receive specialist education at home, or are educated in other places such as a hospital or Special Education Resource Centre or even in special centres where children with a disability are given special treatment apart from the rest of the children. Special education may be necessary to support children with multiple disabilities and reflects the thinking of orthodox medical models of disability (Sightsavers, 2011). Such notions can treat the education of people with a disability as medical remedies for correction, or to correct the disabled function.

On the other hand, integrated education refers to the integration of children in mainstream schools regardless of their disabilities (Sightsavers, 2011). However, the focus is still on their disability. Children with disabilities can be seen as problems in integrated mainstream schools.

<sup>1</sup> [www.sightsavers.org](http://www.sightsavers.org)

In contrast, the IE approach is about the child's right to participate and benefit in education on an equitable basis with other children (Sightsavers, 2011). Inclusive education stresses the importance of schools providing basic needs, such as adaptive devices, for children with disabilities to learn. A premium is placed on the full participation by all students including (but not only) children with a disability, and upon respect for their educational and wider social, civil and cultural rights. Resources are used to encourage this participation rather than provide additional and separate activities (Sightsavers, 2011). Inclusive education approaches refocus schools on providing equitable participation of children together and uphold the rights of all to education.

This paper discusses the current implementation of IE in PNG with reference to policy documents from the NDOE and international treaties and conventions that the state signed up to, particularly the rights of CWDs to education.

### History of special education and inclusive education in PNG

At the end of 1990, the Congregation of Christian Brothers (PNG) Inc. established a new agency, Callan Services, to help educate CWDs. Prior to this, very little had been done or known about the special needs of CWDs or school-aged children with special needs who actually went to school. Following a November 1991 survey, a Special Education Report revealed that many children with special needs were not in school. This initial report was very much in the spirit of the 1991 UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the 1988 UNESCO Consultation on Special Education (Tamarua, 2012).

A study carried out by Tesni (1999) revealed that in 1991–1992 Callan Services was already doing ear screening programs in schools. Callan Services discovered that some children with severe to profound hearing loss were attending regular schools, often without any specialist support or even the teacher's knowledge of their hearing difficulties. After

1991, several Non Government Organisations (NGOs) began providing services to people with special needs. According to records held at the Melanesian Institute (2014), SERC activities were classified under special inclusive education (IE) and community based rehabilitation (CBR). Although inclusive education was mentioned, the services were more or less special education in nature as the CWDs were segregated and camped at the centre to treat them. It was also reported that CBR's main function was to identify CWDs and refer them to SERCs for services.

While this was going on, the 1993 government resolution to adopt a policy on Special Education became the first PNG National Special Education Policy (PNG Country Report, 2008). This opened the way for CWDs to access education. This policy specifically defined how children living with disabilities were to access regular schools, but the term 'Inclusive Education' was not used. The three main key features of the policy were:

1. That where feasible, children with special needs should attend regular schools along with their peers;
2. that teachers be trained through pre-service and in-service courses; and
3. that the Department allocates funding for Special Education activities.

The National Special Education Policy (NSEP) is one of the special documents that PNG has formulated in connection with international conventions that advocate for education for CWDs and provide the cornerstone of how that can be achieved across all levels of education in PNG. The NSEP and its revision in 2003 are based on a philosophy that all children, in particular children with special needs and not limited to children with disabilities, have equal rights to education.

Callan Services established a pre-service inclusive teacher training course at St Benedict's Teachers' College in Wewak from 1991 to 1993 (PNG Country Report, 2008), the first course of its kind in PNG. Other colleges tried to follow, but only half were able to recruit specialised lecturers from overseas to teach inclusive education, therefore many student teachers missed out.

Furthermore, there are no official statistics about people living with disabilities. However, according to World Health Organization, 15 percent of the world's population have some kind of disabilities. This means 975,000 people in PNG live with some form of disability out of a population

of 7.5 million people as stated on the official website of the PNG National Disabilities Resources and Advocacy Centre (NDRAC).<sup>2</sup> This represents 13 percent of the total population. The report further revealed that only two percent of PWDs receive some form of services from the government while 11 percent have never received any services.

Traditionally, disability has been regarded as a social embarrassment, as a problem to members of the family. PWDs could be discarded by the family and some would end up trying to survive on the streets. This negative attitude transfers into education. One typical example is from a study of sampling attitudes towards children with a vision impairment (Drekore (2013), who found that most people see blind people as valueless. In addition to cultural barriers, the school environment has not been constructed to accommodate CWDs and it is almost impossible to find any public amenities, services or infrastructure allowing access for PWDs. CWDs were institutionalised in SERCs (Mambo, 2011). Barriers to CWDs going to school included negative social attitudes as mentioned above, the schools' built environment, financial challenges and teachers' preparedness (Torombe, 2013). A study by the University College London and the University of Goroka (UCL, 2016) found that both the teachers and principals doubted parents' willingness to send their CWDs to inclusive schools. Teachers held the perception that parents generally thought that it was not worth it, as they believed their children would be unable to learn.

One of the most important aspects of the NSEP was the mandating of SERCs as the main mechanism through which the education of children with disabilities would be supported. In particular it outlined that the 'primary role of a resource centre is to in-service and support field teachers in their role as inclusive teachers' according to the National Special Education Policy and Plan (NDOE, 2003). Clearly the main role of SERC would be to support teachers as they implement inclusive education for children with disabilities. It was not the policy intention to have SERC become the primary institution responsible for educating CWDs.

However, prior to 1993, CWDs were kept in the SERCs throughout the country. The multiple roles of SERCs may have led to fragmented provision and uncertainty from teachers and parents over what they could expect from centres, making the system difficult to monitor.

Between 1994 and 1999, international NGOs such as the Christoffel Blinden, Save the Children Fund and the British Red Cross had become involved, supporting local requests

<sup>2</sup> <http://ndrac.weebly.com/disability-in-png.html>

for the provision of support services for CWDs by providing funding for personnel (expatriate and national), buildings, and vehicles (Tesni, 1999). According to Melanesian Institute (2014), over 100 CWDs were seen at Mt Sion SERC in 2013. Furthermore, school screening by Callan Services in 1998–1999 confirmed these findings and the scale of the need to be addressed in the community. They found most disabilities are related to hearing impairment and vision impairment. However, deaf adults generally had a positive role to play within rural communities, were allowed to inherit, and often married and contributed to village life, whereas people with certain other disabilities did not have these privileges (Melanesian Institute, 2014).

By 2008 the number of SERCs had increased to 23 operating in 17 provinces. Appendix 1a shows a list of SERCs in the country. Appendix 1b shows the increase in the number of CWDs identified and receiving services throughout the country (Tamarua, 2012). Although the number of CWDs who were receiving services increased from 1994 to 2011, there is no data to show the types of services received.

### Inclusive education framework in PNG

While the implementation of IE has been poor, PNG's commitment to IE through its policies and signatories to international conventions are many. The national Constitution declares that all citizens have the same rights, privileges, obligations and duties irrespective of race, tribe, place of origin, political opinion, colour, creed, religion or sex (National Disability Policy, 2015). Some of the policies that recognise IE include:

- Papua New Guinea National Special Education Policy, Plans and Guidelines of 1993, which was updated in February 2003.
- *PNG Education Act* No. 13 of 1995.
- Papua New Guinea Department of Education (2004). *Achieving a better future: A National Plan for Education 2005–2014*.
- PNG Universal Basic Education Plan 2010–2019.
- *Papua New Guinea Vision 2050* also calls for the empowerment of PWDs and recognises their rights through inclusion in mainstream social and economic life.
- National Special Education Plan (NESP) 2004–2013.
- Papua New Guinea National Policy on Social Protection 2015–2020.
- Papua New Guinea National Disability Policy

2015–2025.

In addition, Papua New Guinea is also a signatory to the following:

- 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (domesticated as *Lukautim Pikinini Act*, 2009).
- 1990 World Declaration on Education For All (EFA), adopted in Jomtien, Thailand.
- 2000 Biwako Millennium Framework (BMF) for Action, agreed in Dakar, Senegal.
- 2013 Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities.

These policies and commitments make up a framework on disability that has evolved from a health/welfare model approach to a more inclusive and rights-based model. It summarises the process required to integrate and mainstream disability into our national development framework in order to improve disability development indicators. The framework is based on principles of non-discrimination and empowerment (National Disability Policy, 2015).

### Ten-year financial and budgetary framework

The National Disability Policy recognised that there was no clear financial or budgetary framework, or flow of resources to secure the policy's visions and outcomes. Funding levels outside the IE, disability health services and current Disability Division in the Department for Community Development and Religion operations were limited and ad-hoc. While the Universal Basic Education Plan (UBEP 2010–2019) recognises a ten-year financial and budgetary framework for the Department of Education, it does not have any budget specifically for IE, covering primarily salaries and operational costs from 2010 to 2019 (NDOE, 2009) (see Appendix 2).

The National Education Board (NEB) endorsed the Policy and Guidelines for Special Education (NDOE, 2003) covering a broad range of areas. Aspects of special education that will be reviewed in the near future include:

- Curriculum and instructional strategies;
- appropriate teaching materials such as assistive devices;
- teacher preparation;
- roles of SERCs;
- parent education and community involvement; and

- progress of special education and funding.

Yet the NDOE Special Education Unit is clearly understaffed with only three staff.

While the original Special Education Plan was well ahead of its time in terms of the global IE movement, it is now 25 years old and is in urgent need of an update. Much of the language and parts of the provisions are not in line with a rights-based approach and require review for compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Special education policy is all about special education and SERCs, and limited attention is given to IE. SERCs are the only institutions responsible for providing special training for teachers to adapt to inclusive teaching in mainstream schools. Furthermore, SERCs are focal points for identification and assessment of disabilities and place CWDs into mainstream schools alongside able-bodied children.

## Methods

This study used a desktop review. It used a systematic literature search by keyword using Google Scholar. It analysed policy documents from the National Department of Education (NDOE) and the Department for Community Development and Religion and some documents from the international treaties and agreements in order to highlight local achievements towards international benchmarks. Other studies completed by local researchers were also analysed to locate gaps in the provision of educational services for CWDs in PNG. Secondary sources from the Melanesia Institute were also used in the report.

## Findings

### Special education data

There is no accurate, extensive or reliable national data of PWDs at the moment. However, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) global estimates, 15 percent of any population have some form of disability, which matches or exceeds global estimates (National Disability Policy, 2015). That would mean that there are over one million people living with a disability, which represents 15 percent of the total population of PNG. The report further revealed that only two percent of the PWDs receive some form of services from the government while 13 percent have not received basic services. With inaccurate data, an extensive study is required to determine the actual status of CWDs so that appropriate programs can be further developed and

funded.

Research by the University College London (UCL) and the University of Goroka (UOG)<sup>3</sup> showed that the number of CWDs in mainstream schools is very low (less than one percent) compared to the number of CWDs likely to be living in the community. This is most likely because most CWDs are either not going to school at all or are going directly to the SERC as a preferred place of learning for the parents, and the attendance numbers are not correlated.

On the other hand, although the research was not able to verify the accuracy of reported enrolment numbers by screening students, it is likely that schools actually have higher numbers of CWDs than they are reporting. This indicates in part that heads of schools have little experience in disaggregating child enrolment data by disability and are most likely not keeping track of this kind of information. Direct training of headteachers in how to identify and record CWDs will be needed to support the accurate completion of new school census forms.

This research also indicates that there may be serious disconnections between mainstream schools and SERCs in the way CWDs are registered. Judging by parents' responses in focus groups, they clearly see SERCs functioning as special education facilities for CWDs rather than being a resource to support IE for mainstream schools and teachers.

From a policy perspective, it is also true that SERCs as educational facilities are absent from mainstream educational plans (for example they are not described in either the current Universal Basic Education Plan or the National Education Plan).

### Access to school buildings

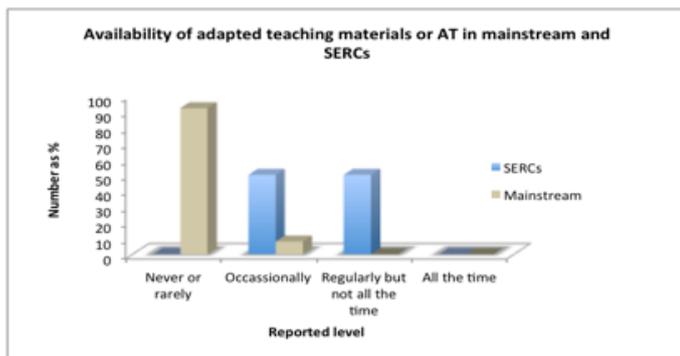
Most of the present-day buildings were built during pre-independence and early post-independence days, before 1993 when the National Special Education Plan, policies and guidelines were endorsed. Since independence, the numbers of students in schools have increased by 300 percent (NDOE, 2009). The huge increase in enrolment is due to a population growth rate of 3.1 percent and the government policy of Tuition Fee Free Education according to the PNG Medium Term Development Plan III (DNPM, 2018).

However, the huge growth in children accessing education has not included the participation of CWDs. There are several causes of this ranging from social discrimination

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lc-ccr/projects/png>

to the built infrastructure in schools. One reason is that mainstream schools, according to the study by UCL and UOG,<sup>4</sup> never or rarely have adapted materials or access to assistive technology. It also shows that although SERCs have more access to this kind of support they do not do so on a permanent basis. Even SERCs do not have access to adapted materials and assistive technology all the time.

**Figure 1. Assistive resources in SERCs and mainstream schools**



Source: Study by UCL and UOG<sup>5</sup>

Figure 1 shows that mainstream schools have few adapted teaching materials to make any progress positively in the inclusion of CWDs

### Teachers' preparedness for inclusive education

Since 1993, the three main key features of inclusive policy were:

1. That where feasible, children with special needs should attend regular schools along with their peers;
2. That teachers be trained through pre-service and in-service courses; and
3. That the Department of Education allocates funding for Special Education activities.

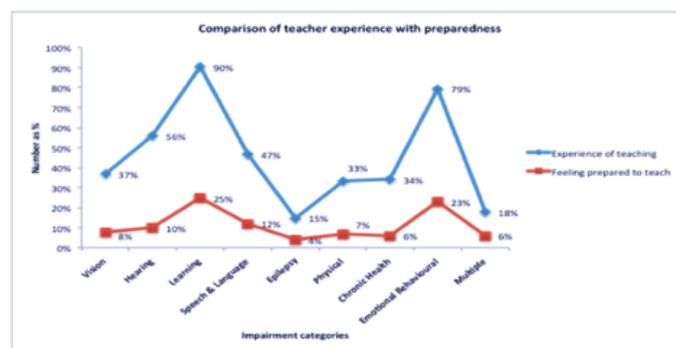
Following this, all teachers' colleges were asked to teach IE to all student-teachers. However, only 50 percent of the colleges have been able to recruit lecturers from overseas to teach IE (Tamarua, 2012). There are teachers and principals in the system who have encountered children with a range of different impairments, but the majority of experiences reported seem to relate to those with 'learning disabilities' and 'emotional behavioural disorders'. They are least likely to report having experiences of children with epilepsy, multiple impairments or chronic health conditions. This raises

<sup>4</sup>This was part of the study done by UCL and UOG in 2015 titled, *Review into educational services to the children with disabilities in PNG*.

<sup>5</sup><http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lc-ccr/projects/png>

questions about how children are labelled and the extent to which teachers are aware of some types of disabilities. It suggests that teachers have not been well prepared for inclusion and that, despite reporting experiences with children with a range of different impairments, there are very few mainstream teachers who feel confident and prepared to teach CWDs in their class. In fact, 88 percent of mainstream teachers agreed that '[they] do not have the knowledge and skills required to teach students with disabilities'.

**Figure 2. Teachers' preparedness for inclusion education**



Source: Study by UCL and UOG

### Financial challenges

Most of the NGOs and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) operating in the country providing education services for CWDs are self-funded or funded by donor agencies such as the European Union (EU) and Japan International Corporation Aid (JICA). The PNG government concentrates on universal basic education (UBE), paying little attention to the IE sector. Appendix 2 shows the comparison between the amount of funding allocated for UBE 2010–2019 and for inclusive education for the same period. The total projected ten-year budget for UBE shows that IE represents only 0.34 percent of the national education budget projection. For 2018, the figure is 0.32 percent, which clearly confirms that IE is being neglected in the country.

### Poor policy implementation

PNG has enacted policies and has signed up to several international treaties relevant to providing education services to CWDs. For example, in 1993 the NDOE adopted policies of special education. Later they adopted a National Special Education Plan (NSEP) 2004–2013 (NDOE, 2003). However, there are missed linkages between policy and implementation. The government has

failed to make available anything approaching sufficient funding to educate CWDs. Rather, it has been left to civil society organisations to implement. The great majority of government documentation refers to special education, and there has been little specific mention of policy or approaches on fully IE, although there has been change in the language used more recently. Implementation has been concentrated on SERCs as implementing agents. This concentration on SERCs might have worked if they had developed as intended and as stated in the NSEP that the primary role of a resource centre is to in-service and support field teachers in their role as inclusive teachers.

A SERC was supposed to support teachers as they implement IE for CWDs. It was not the policy intention to have SERC become the primary institution responsible for educating CWDs, segregating them from the mainstream. The Department for Community Development and Religion (DFCDR) has policies directly linked to the welfare and inclusion of PWDs in mainstream social and economic life, but they place very little emphasis on IE. Both the NDOE and DFCDR have budgeted little for effective inclusion in mainstream schools, and under-invested in the SERCs.

It is also clear that current schools and related public infrastructure have not been built with the intention of providing access for CWDs. Teacher training and general preparedness have focused on mainstream and generalised teaching, particularly teacher-centred pedagogy. Teachers have not been adequately trained to teach CWDs, although most teachers have expressed their willingness to accept the challenge of teaching CWDs. There is insufficient and inconsistent data on CWDs in schools in the Education Management Information System (EMIS) of the NDOE, and insufficient data on CWDs not going to school in communities. Research in 2016 (UCL, 2016) found that less than one percent of children enrolled in schools were recognised as living with a disability, although the 2010 National Census of Papua New Guinea recorded over one million people living with disabilities which represents 15 percent of the population. In any case there is no disaggregation of the data at school level to identify the individual needs of CWDs.

## Discussion

The policies and treaties signed to provide education services to CWDs provides opportunities for most disadvantaged and vulnerable school-aged children in PNG to access education. PNG NSEP (NDOE, 1993), updated 2003 (NDOE, 2003)

in line with the UN declaration of child rights have paved the way for the adoption and implementation of IE in mainstream schools. However, there is no accurate, extensive and reliable data on the general population living with disabilities in the country. The claims of the lack of accurate and reliable data also supports the findings of the recent research by the University College London and University of Goroka in 2016.<sup>6</sup> There were very low (less than one percent) enrolment of CWDs in mainstream schools. According to Drekore (2013), the number of children with a vision impairment in school was estimated to be 0.15 percent, which is also below one percent. The findings might be attributed to the fact that most parents prefer to enrol their children in the SERCs. One parent in Madang stated:

My son has [a] profound hearing impairment (deaf). He is the only boy in the family of three girls. I enrolled him at the Madang SERC, where he did his preparatory education. He did quite well in academic work and received awards. This has changed my view about my child. I came to realise that he can do things like other children and even more. This SERC has brought me hope and I will do whatever I can to support my son [she cried while saying this]. (Shared by a parent in the focus group discussion, Madang).

From many focus group interviews conducted with parents in other centres, they also shared the same preference. One in Rabaul stated:

Most mainstream schools in the country do not have the appropriate infrastructure for CWDs. Most of the built environments were designed and built for able-bodied children. This makes inclusion very difficult for schools who are struggling to build more infrastructure to accommodate an increasing enrolment of able-bodied children in schools. Since 2012, with the government of PNG embarking on a Tuition Fee Free (TFF) policy, enrolment has increased by 162 percent by 2017 and 300 percent since independence (DNPM, 2018). This increase does not specify the number of CWDs in schools which creates confusion to make any concrete statements on the status of IE. There should be more inclusive facilities built in schools to allow more CWDs to enrol in school.

Currently, schools are faced with financial constraints as the Department of Education prohibits schools from charging additional fees. In addition to the built inclusive facilities, availability of adaptive teaching materials (assistive devices) are important to implement IE.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lc-ccr/projects/png>

Data from the study by UCL and UOG (2016), shows that even SERCs do not have access to adaptive materials (ADs) and schools never or rarely have any. This can be a huge disincentive for inclusion into mainstream schools. UCL and UOG (2016) also showed that teacher training colleges have only one unit in the entire three year program on special education. There was no specialised training for teachers colleges for primary teachers. However, teachers are encouraged to take up further studies at the UOG, and Divine Word University to do a specialised degree in Special and Inclusive Education. This is also an impediment to IE as not all teachers will have an opportunity to take up further studies. The colleges need to provide ample units in their pre-service education program to prepare teachers inline with the three main features of the NSEP where it stated explicitly:

1. Children with disabilities (CWDs) should attend regular schools along with their peers;
2. Teachers should be trained through pre-service and in-service courses on IE, and
3. The Department of Education provides funding for special education activities.

According to Tamarua (2012), only 50 percent of the colleges were able to recruit specialised lecturers from overseas to teach IE while most colleges did not implement IE training in the colleges. As a result of lack of training, there are teachers and principals in schools who have encountered children with a range of impairments, but the majority of their experiences were related to ‘learning disabilities’ and ‘emotional behavioural disorders’. They are least likely to report having experiences with epilepsy, multiple impairments, or chronic health conditions (UCL, 2016). This suggests that teachers have not been prepared well for inclusion and that, despite reporting experiences of children with impairments, there are few teachers who feel confident and prepared to teach CWDs. Despite their overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards the inclusion of CWDs in mainstream schools, the research suggests that even if teachers have had some training in inclusive and special education, they still perceive the barriers to education as being with the child, not the teacher (or indeed the environment). While this is possibly how learning happens in PNG (Guthrie, 2012; Hahambu et al., 2012), it leads to a deflection of responsibility around learners. Huge diversity is already the norm in classes across PNG. However, within the education system, there are compartmentalised approaches to diversity – instead of inclusive approaches. While there is a need to shift to a child-centred approach, this will likely take time, so in

the interim, teachers need to be taught how to work within the current pedagogical system to ensure a diverse range of learners are included.

Inclusive education requires more resources from inclusive infrastructures to adaptive devices and teaching aids. IE is also student-centred teaching which also makes teaching more labour intensive. While most IE implementation is carried out by NGOs and CSOs through self-funding or is funded by donor agencies such as the European Union and JICA, the Papua New Guinea government has not paid much attention to funding deficiencies. Appendix 2 shows the comparison between the amount allocated for Universal Basic Education Plan 2010–2019 (NDOE 2009) and for IE for the same period. It shows that from the projected ten-year allocation, IE has not received much for other programs except for salaries. Further, for 2018 alone, IE was only allocated 0.34 percent of the total allocation for UBE, which was not enough for implementation of IE in mainstream education. The government needs to invest more into IE to achieve its goals of UBE and education for all including CWDs.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in the light of discussions in this paper:

### Awareness of rights of people with a disability

There should be more awareness carried out focusing on the rights of people with a disability. The framework of the national policy on disability calls for the “removal of barriers and make rights real” through:

- Promoting the rights of people with a disability by networking with NGOs, CSOs, the PNG Assembly of Disabled Persons and other disability organisations;
- Improving intervention by early identification and assessment of disabilities through child clinic programs; and
- Involving PWDs in regular programs in sports and community engagements.

### Building inclusive facilities in mainstream schools

There should be more inclusive facilities in school and public amenities to improve access by PWDs. The government must work together with the other stakeholders and service providers to implement infrastructure improvements that will enable both disabled and able-bodied children to participate in schools.

## Shift emphasis to inclusion rather than special education across education policy and practice

The current methods of teacher training perpetuate the disincentives to inclusion. Teachers are overwhelmingly positive to the idea of the inclusion of CWDs in mainstream classes, but rarely experience it in practice. Therefore, in order to give all education stakeholders a clearer understanding of what inclusion is, the following recommendations are made:

- Harmonise and standardise how the education of CWDs is included across the pre-service teacher training curricula;
- Mainstream IE across pre-service curricula so that teachers understand how to manage an inclusive classroom;
- Include updates on IE via in-service training days; and
- Improve specialist teacher training (in-service) and ensure all SERC teachers have a qualification in Special Education (e.g. diploma or equivalent), as per policy.

## Teacher training programs and practice need to shift away from current teacher-centred pedagogy to a child (learner)-centred pedagogy

Suggestions as to how this may be achieved include:

- Make the definition of inclusion culturally and nationally relevant to include the diversity of learners in PNG; and
- Mainstream teachers need to be able to identify difficulties, rather than assess impairments, and understand the processes of referral (e.g. to a SERC). This should entail a shift away from the current focus on the condition, rather than the difficulties with learning that the child may have.

## Provide focal points for disability in each province to develop links across services

There needs to be greater collaboration and cross-sectoral linkages in order to move away from the onus on the education sector taking most of the responsibility for CWDs. As our results indicate, most CWDs are unlikely to be formally assessed in the education system in the first place. *The National Disability Act* suggests having Provincial Disability Committees, but we suggest taking this a step further and having Disability Focal Points (DFP) in each province who can help mainstream disability issues across sectors including health, early childhood development and education, and community development. This would support the earlier identification and assessment of CWDs, as well as earlier

intervention and support. This would need resourcing but is in line with the National Disability Policy.

## Increase funding for inclusion

For new plans and policies to be implemented successfully, funding is the key element. The government through the NDOE must allocate enough funding for IE and mainstreaming. Funding should be made for:

- writing a Special Education Gazette for capacity building for teachers;
- providing an inclusive curriculum and instruction technology and assistive devices;
- providing inclusive infrastructure in schools;
- setting up a special education unit subject in schools; and
- improving SERC functions and capacity building.

## Conclusion

Clearly a number of issues are affecting the inclusion of CWDs as highlighted in this paper. This includes the attitudes and awareness of communities, access to classrooms and appropriate teaching and learning materials, lack of specialised teachers with specialised skills and adapted devices to contribute to learning. Nevertheless, there are some success stories of CWDs, which are included. The government through the Department of Education needs to review and revise the current National Special Education Policy and Plan using a collaborative and consultative process working with NGOs and CSOs; develop an action plan; allocate resources to build inclusive infrastructure; and instigate regular reviews with accountability mechanisms. This should be in line with existing commitments to international human rights frameworks which the state is already party to. This will lead to the improved access of CWDs to education.

## References

- Department for Community Development, Youth and Religion. (2015). *Papua New Guinea National Disability Policy*. Port Moresby: Author.
- Department of National Planning and Monitoring (DNPM). (2018). *Medium Term Development Plan III 2018–2022*. Port Moresby: Author.
- Drekore, A. J. (2013). The education of children and young people with vision impairment in Papua New Guinea. (Professional Doctorate (Research) thesis). James Cook University. Retrieved from <http://researchonline.jcu>

edu.au/31798/

- Guthrie, G. (2012). The failure of progressive classroom reform: Lessons from the Curriculum Reform Implementation Project in Papua New Guinea. *Australian Journal of Education*; 56 (3).
- Hahambu, C., Brownlee, J.M., and Petriwskyj, E.A. (2012). Elementary teacher education in Papua New Guinea: Towards a culturally connected perspective of teaching. *Australian Journal of Education*, 37 (4).
- National Department of Education (NDOE) (1993). Special education plan and policy, guidelines for special education. Waigani, Papua New Guinea: Author.
- National Department of Education (NDOE). (2003). National Special Education Policy and Plan. Port Moresby: Author.
- National Department of Education (NDOE). (2016). *National Education Plan 2015-2019*. Port Moresby: Author.
- National Department of Education (NDOE). (2009). *Universal Basic Education Plan 2010–2019*. Port Moresby: Author.
- Mambo, A. J. (2011). *Exploring teachers' perceptions of the implementation of inclusive education in a regular primary school: A Papua New Guinea study*. Wellington: The Victoria University of Wellington.
- UNESCO. (2008). Inclusive education: The way of the future (International Conference Centre, Geneva. November 25-28/2008).
- Melanesian Research Institute. (2014). *A work in progress: Inclusive education in PNG* (Point Series No. 38). Goroka: Melanesian Institute.
- National Disability Resources and Advocacy Centre. (undated). Disability in PNG. Retrieved from <http://ndrac.weebly.com/disability-in-png.html> (accessed 25 September 2019).
- Sightsavers. (2011). *Making inclusive education a reality*. Retrieved from <http://www.sightsavers.org/>
- Tamarua, J. (2012). *State of special education activities in PNG*. Port Moresby: Department of Education.
- Tesni, S. (1999). *Case study: Papua New Guinea — the provision for children with hearing impairment and deafness in an 'inclusive' system*. Port Moresby: Department of Education.
- Torombe, R. (2013). Teachers' experience in implementing inclusive education policy in Papua New Guinea: A case study of two primary schools in the National Capital District. Waikato, NZ: The University of Waikato. Retrieved from <http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/>
- University College London. (2016). Review of approaches to educational services to children with disabilities in Papua New Guinea. Retrieved from <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lc-ccr/projects/png>
- Reviewing approaches to education services for disabled children in Papua New Guinea (Policy Brief). Retrieved from [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/epidemiology-health-care/sites/epidemiology-health-care/files/review\\_of\\_approaches\\_to\\_education\\_services\\_for\\_children\\_with\\_disabilities\\_in\\_png\\_policy\\_brief\\_2\\_.pdf](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/epidemiology-health-care/sites/epidemiology-health-care/files/review_of_approaches_to_education_services_for_children_with_disabilities_in_png_policy_brief_2_.pdf)
- WHO. (2009). Western Pacific Country Health Information, Retrieved from <https://hiip.wpro.who.int/portal/Reportspublications/TabId/83/ArtMID/1151/ArticleID/152/Default.aspx>

**Appendix 1a: Number of registered SERCs in Papua New Guinea by 2003**

Name of SERC	Location/Province
1. Aitape SERC	Aitape, Sandaun
2. Alotau SERC	Alotau, Milne Bay
3. Buka SERC	Buka, Autonomous Region of Bougainville
4. Gerehu SERC	Gerehu, National Capital District
5. Red Cross Special Education	Port Moresby, National Capital District
6. Chesire Home Centre	Hohola, National Capital District
7. St. Johns Ambulance SERC	Port Moresby, National Capital District
8. Mt Sion SERC	Goroka, Eastern Highlands
9. Mendi SERC	Mendi, Southern Highlands
10. Mt Hagen SERC	Mt Hagen, Western Highlands
11. Wabag SERC	Wabag, Enga
12. Migendi SERC	Migendi, Simbu
13. Simbu SERC	Kundiawa, Simbu
14. Kiunga SERC	Kiunga, Western Province
15. Kavieng SERC	Kavieng, New Ireland
16. Kimbe SERC	Kimbe, West New Britain
17. Rabaul SERC	Rabaul, East New Britain
18. Lorengau SERC	Lorengau, Manus
19. Vanimo SERC	Vanimo, West Sepik
20. Wewak SERC	Wewak, East Sepik
21. Madang SERC	Madang, Madang Province
22. Morobe SERC	Lae, Morobe Province
23. Daru SERC	Daru, Western Province

Source: Melanesian Institute (2014). Inclusive education in Papua New Guinea: A work in progress, Melanesian Institute, Goroka.

**Appendix 1b: Records of children with disabilities receiving services in PNG**

Year	Male	Female	Total
1994	518	506	1,024
2007	2,428	3,290	5,718
2009	2,809	3,692	6,501
2011	3,215	4,285	7,500

Source: National Status of Special Education Activities in PNG since 1994.

**Appendix 2: Comparison between funding allocated for UBE Plan 2010–2019 and Inclusive Education**

**Appendix 2a: All costs for UBE plan implementation, 2010–2019**

Year	UBE Interventions K'000s	Salaries K'000 s	Leave Fares K'000s	Admin. Requirements K'000s	Totals K'000s
2010	364.491	476.150	18.029	73.629	932.299
2011	464.644	520.386	19.216	83.265	1.087.511
2012	588.247	569.057	20.647	93.112	1.271.063
2013	682.003	622.560	22.336	99.866	1.426.765
2014	783.779	691.752	24.874	107.640	1.608.045
2015	861.364	780.861	28.373	118.102	1.788.700
2016	903.689	877.749	32.317	129.660	1.943.415
2017	903.702	985.903	36.909	142.604	2.069.118
2018	985.003	1.091.422	41.625	152.571	2.270.621
2019	972.704	1.191.490	46.048	161.679	2.371.921
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7,509,626</b>	<b>7,807,330</b>	<b>290,374</b>	<b>1,162,128</b>	<b>16,769,458</b>

Source: Universal Basic Education Plan 2010 -2019, p. 73.

**Appendix 2b: Special needs education requirements, 2010–2019**

Year	Study K'000s	Salaries K'000s	Operational Costs K'000s	Totals K'000s
2010	535	2,594	1,038	4,167
2011	553	2,840	1,136	4,529
2012	0	3,107	1,243	4,350
2013	0	3,396	1,359	4,755
2014	0	3,710	1,484	5,194
2015	0	4,051	1,620	5,671
2016	0	4,420	1,768	6,188
2017	0	4,820	1,928	6,748
2018	0	5,133	2,053	7,186
2019	0	5,467	2,187	7,654
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,088</b>	<b>39,538</b>	<b>15,816</b>	<b>56,442</b>

Source: Universal Basic Education Plan 2010–2019, p. 70, Table 54.

## Acknowledgements

This paper was made possible by the Government of Australia through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. We would also like to acknowledge the Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre of University College London (UCL) in the United Kingdom for being awarded the contract, and the leading team of Dr Maria Kett, the Assistant Director, and Dr Marcela Deluca for their guidance. We want to also thank the hard-working energetic team in the Division of Curriculum Studies and Special and Inclusive Education at the School of Education under the headship of Dr James Aiwa for assistance in data collection and interviewing. We thank Lorraine Wapling (PhD student – UCL, UK) for helping to analyse focus group interview data and initial discussions, and Peter King – Capacity Support and Advocacy Advisor of the Asia South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE), Australia, for his thoughtful advice putting the ideas together. Finally, but importantly, our gratitude and thanks go to Associate Professor Eugene Ezebilo, Deputy Director Research PNG NRI, for a final review and insightful comments which helped us to refine this paper.

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jeremy Goro worked as a Senior Tutor and Lecturer in the Curriculum and Research strands in the School of Education at the University of Goroka from 2014 to 2016. He was the Lead Instrument Designer and Data Analyst in the project “Reviewing approaches to educational services to children with disabilities in Papua New Guinea”, a collaborative research project between University College London (UCL) and the University of Goroka from 2013 to 2016. Most of the work on this paper is compiled from his work with the research team and other document sources from the National Department of Education and the Department for Community Development and Religion. He is currently a Research Fellow in the Universal Basic Education Research Program (UBERP) at the Papua New Guinea National Research Institute (PNG NRI).

Dr Kilala Devette-Chee is the Senior Researcher and Program Leader in the Universal Basic Education Research Program at the PNG NRI.



Research for this Issues Paper was funded by support from Australian Aid. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Australian Government.



THE NATIONAL  
RESEARCH INSTITUTE

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

*inquire, inform, influence*

The National Research Institute, PO Box 5854, Boroko, Port Moresby, National Capital District 111, Papua New Guinea; Telephone +675 326 0300; Email: [pngnri@pngnri.org](mailto:pngnri@pngnri.org)

This and other PNG NRI publications are available from [www.pngnri.org](http://www.pngnri.org)

The National Research Institute encourages readers to reproduce material from NRI Issues Papers, as long as they are not being sold commercially. As copyright holder, NRI requests due acknowledgement and a copy of the publication. For online use, we ask readers to link to the original resource on the NRI website.

The views presented in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of PNG NRI. © The National Research Institute 2020