

International Consultation on Good Practices and Strategies to Eliminate Caste-Based Discrimination

Description of the practice:

What was/is the background to the practice? Describe any key events or actions that led to it?

Dalit children and youth in 0-19 years constitute 47% of the Dalit population and hold the future of Dalit community. Visibility gained on Dalit human rights issues in the civil and political arena are yet to translate into social and economic rights and it is here, education becomes critical. Education is not a right in itself alone, but also a critical right to access and enjoy other rights. Any discussion with the Dalit families and community makes it evident that they are concerned about the education of their children, as evident in the increased enrolment of children into schools. As a large number of Dalit children are dependent on government schools for education. Government schools are the first public space accessed by Dalit children towards thinking for their liberation from vicious cycle of poverty and age old caste based inequalities. But the practice of untouchability and caste based discrimination do not welcome Dalit children in to schools which results in to huge drop out among Dalit child. Dalit children and family have repeatedly reported that stigmatized social identity of Dalit children which leads to widespread discriminatory and hostile behaviour by the teachers and other students coupled with inadequate support from the government agencies and lack of quality of education at the school level creating highly unfavourable conditions for Dalit children to continue studies at the school level.

It is the human rights of a Dalit child that he/she access educational rights and entitlement along with developing long lasting friendships, healthy competition in the schooling years. But Dalit children are denied these opportunities owing to caste based exclusion. Experiential accounts, discussions with Dalit and other marginalized children and some studies report them. The revised SSA framework have already documented different forms of practices of caste based exclusion in the schools.

However these issues are yet to figure in programme design and planning by policy makers and do not find mention in the programme strategies for implementation or monitoring. While they are critical constraints, we recognize that the discrimination, humiliation and exclusion experienced by Dalit and other marginalized children go a long way in their high dropout rates and their inability to access substantive education levels that can enhance their participation and decision making and promote economic and social mobility.

The Right to Universal education has been recognized in our constitution and special provisions for Dalit. Recently passed as an act, The 'Right of children to free and compulsory education Act, 2009' (Act 35 of 2009) in August 2009 takes this agenda forward and is an opportunity for translating some of the objectives into actions. Section 8 and Section 9 of RTE Act 2009 clearly says that "every schools and local administration has to ensure that child belonging to disadvantaged group (i.e. SC/ST) are not discriminated against and prevented from pursuing and completing elementary education on any grounds". Section 12 also provides for 25% of seats to be provided for children of disadvantaged/weaker sections in private schools.

Thus, Centre for Social Equity and Inclusion (CSEI), also as a member of National Advisory Council (NAC) on RTE

1. Monitors the provisions and entitlements to Dalit children by the state, laying the foundation for community monitoring and accountability
2. Envisages to evolve and pilot tools and methodology for tracking exclusion in schools and promoting inclusion and advocate for the use of the same with other civil society organizations/government at state and national levels
3. Engages with the children, teachers, administrators from general caste communities and with state to promote non-discriminatory and inclusive schooling for all children and will attempt to strengthen the buy-in of influential people and leaders in the state and national level
4. Use the lessons from this process and seek out opportunities to advocate equity and inclusion in the RTE frame and processes at the national level

What was/is the title/name of the practice?

Promoting Equity and Inclusion for Dalit children and youth

What was/is the aim/purpose of the practice?

- Monitors the provisions and entitlements to Dalit children by the state under RTE act 2009 towards laying the foundation for non discriminatory education along with community monitoring and accountability
- Promoting inclusive schooling to address caste and gender based discrimination and developing school level inclusive activities and plans
- Working with students from general castes and teachers to promote diversity and inclusion in schooling process
- Development of tools, materials and modules to track exclusion and promote inclusive schooling
- Advocacy at state and national levels to institutionalize methodology, mechanisms and strategies towards building a “non discriminatory child friendly school”

What was/is the target group(s)?

The pilot activities directly works with 5 Dalit headed NGO partners in 50 government elementary schools in 5 districts in the state of Bihar. Dalit children from class I to X and XII will be covered in each of the schools here. In addition other children, teachers from the same classes in the same schools and the SMC members will also be reached for promoting inclusive education in the schools.

The Dalit community from the 10 panchayats, particularly Dalit youth, will be directly reached through the engagement at the Education Resource Centres. This will provide opportunity to influence all parents and other children too at the community levels.

Other Dalit and non Dalit led organizations to create awareness on RTE and to promote the equity and inclusion provisions in the Act through training, exclusion mapping tools and IEC materials on diversity and inclusion in schools.

The pilot practice is directly engaging in advocacy efforts with Dalit leaders and other policy makers at the national and state level to influence them towards promotion and strengthening of the equity and inclusion provisions under the RTE act 2009.

The piloting is bringing the lessons to the National Advisory Council of the RTE to influence and guide in the promotion of equity and inclusion and implementation of the RTE at the national levels.

Who were/are the partners involved (e.g. community based, NGO-based, government institutions, and other related stakeholders)?

Dalit led NGOs along with state and non state actors who has direct and/or indirect impact on promoting equity and inclusion for Dalit children in schooling process.

What was/is the duration of practice?

We are in to first year of this pilot project

Legal and institutional frameworks:

Please explain the legal and institutional framework of the practice, if needed with inspiration from the following guiding questions:

- How did the practice meet the criteria of non-discrimination, equality, and inclusion? Did the practice link up to a national and/or international human rights framework? How was this linkage achieved?

- Did the practice involve advocacy, lobbying and involvement of the media; if yes, then how?

- Did the practice specifically address the situation of Dalit women or other women affected by discrimination based on work and descent? How was this done?

- Were there any other positive targeted measures?

Answer:

The practice in the pilot project is directly linked to “The Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009”. This pilot project seeks to

* Develop exclusion mapping tool along with inclusive methodologies/activities

* Build inclusive principles and guidelines to address caste based exclusion in schooling

* Advocate for an “Inclusive education frame” under RTE act at national/state level along with Dalit children, youth and community

As RTE act already recognises the practices of caste based exclusion in schooling process, this pilot project engages with all the relevant stakeholders to develop principles and guidelines on inclusive education under the section 8 and 9 of the act. For this purpose, the project is engaging with state/non state actors and media to highlight discriminatory practices along with inclusive methodologies towards getting it recognised at all levels.

Implementation of the practice:

Please describe how the practice was implemented, if needed with inspiration from the following guiding questions:

- What was the tangible impact of the practice (on the policy environment and/or as an actual change on the ground)?

- What were the implementation methods, means, and strategies to make this practice a success? What made it possible to effectuate a change? Can you identify the key factors of success which may be replicable?

- Did the practice involve a dialogue with affected communities and was it a participatory process? If yes, then how?

- Is the practice sustainable? If yes, then how and if no, then what can be done to sustain it?

Answer:

Inclusive Education Ideology - A Process of Change Over Time

First, it is important that we discuss the necessity for and ideology behind inclusion and also discuss the markers that help us to navigate the road map toward inclusive education. Inclusion is a progression that we will initiate and set in motion. Following six step process provides a framework in which to set goals and form an effective school development plan along with teachers,

community and children from all communities. There is no set-in-stone, one-fits-all blueprint. Instead, we will follow a self-initiated plan that we can custom-tailor to school's own necessities.

Second, it is important that we emphasize that this is a process of change which takes time. As you come to understand, explore, and implement the ideology, benefits, and methodology of inclusive education, a change in the school culture will gradually emerge. You will come to see education through an inclusive lens. Part of this process is a self-reflection that you complete; you constantly find more about how to improve the quality of school for all children and how to make feel everyone in the school community confident in the ability and leadership of the school.



Third, let us discuss the process briefly. Initially, we will have an opening conversation about teachers' thoughts and views on inclusion where there are no wrong answers. Next, we will help conduct a self-evaluation through a series of focus group discussions and questionnaires. Then we will review the data from the evaluation and prioritize areas that need to be strengthened. We will set goals and implement inclusive activities and practices to achieve these goals. Finally, we will observe the effectiveness of our efforts, and then the process continues with another self-evaluation at the start of the following school year. Any new school community members may join the process after conducting the initial dialogue.

Fourth, it is also important to remember that this process is not overly complex and does not make the job difficult; in fact, it makes teaching and school management easier, livelier, more exciting, and more creative as long as effective resources and focus are maintained and utilized as we will discuss.

Finally, we want to emphasize that this process is owned by every stakeholder. We are there for support, guidance, and resources.

We have developed seventeen indicators of Inclusion that will be reviewed through the above mentioned process and priority of inclusive activities will be implemented accordingly.

Following are the “Seventeen Indicators of Inclusion”

Part One: School Community Engagement

1. Our school is a welcoming place for all students and parents.
2. Teachers and parents meet regularly to discuss problems.
3. Teachers and parents form cooperative relationships.
4. The school works toward 100 percent child attendance from the school community.
5. The school coordinates and establishes relationships with local and nearby communities.

Part Two: Respect, Confidence and Dignity in School

6. All students are treated equally and valued equally.
7. All students feel that their opinions and views are valued.
8. Staff and school culture enable students to feel confident and motivated.
9. Everyone feels a sense of ownership of the school.
10. The school is a respectful place of education.
11. The school facilities are clean and accessible by all pupils.

Part Three: Inclusive Teaching Methodology

12. All students support each other while they are learning in the classroom.
13. Teachers plan lessons that appeal to the learning needs and styles of all children.
14. Teachers use creative, relevant lessons to grab and hold the attention of all children.
15. All students gain a sense of purpose and enjoyment from lessons
16. Students are actively engaged in the learning process
17. The school ensures that all children succeed and receive an effective education.

Successes and challenges:

Please describe the successes and challenges to implementing the practice, if needed with inspiration from the following guiding questions:

- *What were the conditions for success (what is the history, what was the capacity of the actors, what were the social, economic and political conditions)?*
- *What were the key challenges and obstacles to success? How were these removed?*
- *How was this practice innovative?*
- *Identify three key recommendations for similar practices/initiatives that can be replicated in the future. How could the process have been improved and sustained?*

Answer:

The practice is fully placed within the mandates and aspirations of the state in ensuring education as a right to all children, particularly girl children, Dalit and other vulnerable children.

The practice closely associates with the teachers and head teachers, school administration in building mechanisms to address caste and gender based discrimination in schools and make education more equitable and inclusive.

We are actively engaging in showcasing the strategies and lessons from the practice with other civil society organizations and the state

Lobby and advocacy efforts with the state and political leaders are be to use some of the strategies and lessons more widely in the education system

The continuity of the civil society organizations, the Dalit youth leaders and the children who pass through the process will ensure that the idea will be taken forward

Publicity:

Can IDSN use this case publicly, e.g. on an open conference website or in a conference report?

Yes