



Establishing a national institute and local centres for Inclusive Education in Uganda

Major lessons learned

Long term involvement in establishing a specialised institute with increasing research capability, coupled with a nationwide network of service centres working directly with children, is unique and has proven sustainable in terms of institutional and financial aspects. Both structures are now integrated into the budget of the Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports.

However, new legislation and an expanded target group demands further technical capacity development and increased funding.



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Background

Since 1991, primary school teachers and other professionals have been trained in how to teach children with special needs at the Uganda National Institute for Special Education (UNISE).

Since 1992, a nationwide network of centres at district level has addressed and coordinated special needs education locally (Special Needs Education/ Educational Assessment and Resources Services – SNE/EARS).

In 1997 Uganda endorsed the Universal Primary Education policy, and in line with the Education for All initiative the projects expanded their target group from children with disabilities to also include orphans, traumatised children, HIV positive children and others with special needs. A new Basic Education Policy for Disadvantaged Children was endorsed in 2002, which increased the demand for training of staff at all levels.

Location:

Uganda

Title in Danish:

Undervisning af børn med særlige undervisnings-behov, 'Special Needs Education-SNE', 'Educational Assessment Resource Centre-EARS' og 'Uganda National Institute of Special Education-UNISE'

Year of implementation:

1991-2003

Funding:

UNISE: DKK 14,8 mill (USD 2,3 mill)

SNE/EARS: DKK 49,8 mill (USD 8,1 mill)

Main objectives of the two projects

UNISE and SNE/EARS have been two separate, but mutually supportive and interdependent projects.

- Before the merger with Kyambogo University in 2003, UNISE's central responsibility has been to train teachers in inclusive education (offering degrees, diplomas and certificates) but also to develop curricula and materials, to backstop staff at the SNE/EARS centres and to carry out field-based research in Inclusive Education. The departments were:
 1. Adult and Community Education
 2. Community Disability Studies
 3. Distance Learning Programme
 4. Foundations of Special Needs Education
 5. Hearing Impairment Studies
 6. Learning Difficulties
 7. Visual Impairment Studies
 8. Early Childhood Learning and Assessment Centre
- The decentralised network of SNE/EARS centres at district level is responsible for supporting the teaching of children with special needs in ordinary school settings, involving health, social work and community participation. As such, the project combines education sector interventions with social sector concerns. Financing of the SNE/EARS structure is now included in government budgets at both central ministerial level and district levels.



Some challenges during the lifetime of the projects

In the 12 years of implementing the two projects, various challenges emerged as strategies and activities developed and demand changed:

UNISE

- To continuously develop capacity for training teachers and other personnel to not only cater for people with disabilities, but for all kinds of persons with special educational needs. This challenge was further exacerbated by the policy on Universal Primary Education (1997) and the Basic Education Policy for Disadvantaged Children (2002)
- To establish sustainable institutional and individual capacity for in-country field-based operations research with an emphasis on special needs education and rehabilitation.
- To expand and plan for all stages in materials development beyond Braille books and some models for equipment to assist children with physical disabilities.
- To plan for the high demand of the recently developed distance learning programme in terms of adequate capacity for developing teaching materials, supervision and funding.

SNE/EARS

- To respond to an increasing demand for services while maintaining and developing technical capacity.
- To build capacity for outreach workers in the local centres to not only rehabilitate individual students, but also work with whole classes, classrooms and teachers.

A survey was carried out among District Education Officers, District Inspectors of Schools, and heads of special needs education at district level in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and Sports, UNISE and the NGO National Union

of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU). The most important requirements for successful inclusion of learners with special educational needs at district level were identified as:

- Adequate teaching/learning materials;
- Sensitisation in general.
- Modification of environment.
- Adequate funding.
- More professional teachers trained in special needs education/inclusive education.
- Flexible and relevant curriculum and examination system.
- Parental support and involvement.
- Involvement of all stakeholders.
- Realistic pupil-teacher ratio.
- Monitoring and supervision.

Reaching sustainability and establishing new linkages

- Before Danish support was phased out in 2003, it was agreed to integrate UNISE with Kyambogo University (on the outskirts of Kampala).
- Uganda has guaranteed that UNISE and SNE/EARS activities will be integrated into the budget of the Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports.
- Since 2002 the Uganda National Association of the Deaf, together with the Danish Deaf Association, has cooperated with UNISE on the preparation of a sign language dictionary and establishment of a two-year education for sign language interpreters. The first class of interpreters graduated in 2004. UNISE has established linkages with many other external research and development institutions.
- SNE/EARS and the County of Copenhagen have collaborated on education of children with special needs. The institutional linkage is considered very important for the qualitative programme development by all participants.

Further Reading:

[Inclusion of Learners with Barriers to Learning and Development into Ordinary School Setting: A Case for Uganda](#). Survey results reported by Kristensen, K. et al. in *British Journal of Special Education*, vol. 30, nr. 4. 2003

Uganda:

Education Enhancement Projects at Kyambogo University
<http://www.kyambogo.ac.ug/html/educprojects.htm>

Ministry of Education & Sports
<http://www.education.go.ug/>

Danish Embassy, Kampala

<http://www.danishembassyuganda.co.ug>

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