Summary of evaluation report of the project Living Together, Learning Together: A Child’s Right To Quality Inclusive Education

This is a summary report of the full final evaluation conducted by ASPS in December 2017. This summary report was drafted by Mags Bird, Mission East.

Project outline

Project - Living Together, Learning Together: A Child’s Right To Quality Inclusive Education

Funded by – CISU (Civil Society in Development), Denmark

Project partners – Mission East, Bridge of Hope

Project period - July 2016-Jan 2018

Project location - Tavush, Armenia

This project is an extension of a former implemented project: “Living Together, Learning Together: A Child’s Right To Community-Based Inclusive Education, in Tavush”. That project has laid the ground for a replicable model of comprehensive approach to inclusive education on a province level, aiming to be transferrable to the national level in the future. In order to consolidate the achievements reached at one marz level and advocate for its replication in other areas of Armenia, the current project was designed with the following objectives:

1. By the end of the project, the right of CWD/SEN to inclusive quality education is enhanced in Tavush both in schools and by strengthened support from psycho- pedagogical support services.
2. By the end of the project, the Network of 77 Tavush Parents’ Support Groups becomes a strong civil society actor in advancement of the basic human rights of CWD/SEN at school and community levels.
3. By the end of the project, the consolidated model of Universal Inclusive System of Education (UISE) is promoted by civil society for replication in other Marzes of Armenia.

The project was implemented in Tavush marz, between July 2016 and January 2018.
Evaluation report summary

The headline finding is that this project has been successful in achieving the majority of its objectives.

The project worked to implement a pilot of a Universal Inclusive System of Education (UISE). Working in 82 schools in Tavush Marz, the project’s objectives encompassed not only material change in schools in the target area, but also the establishment of a model of UISE capable of replication nationwide and its acceptance at government level as a model to help it in its achieving its own goal to make all schools inclusive by 2025.

The main tasks of this evaluation were to provide an independent assessment of the effectiveness of the project; the nature and extent of partner and civil society involvement; to assess project sustainability, and to make short and long-term recommendations, particularly in respect of the projected roll-out of the model throughout Armenia.

The independent evaluators find that, of the three immediate objectives, one (objective number 3) of the immediate objectives has been achieved completely, one (objective number 2) has been achieved for the greater part (although not perhaps through the means envisaged), and one (objective number 1) has achieved the wording of the objective, even if the evaluators have some concerns about objective wordings.

The independent evaluators expressed some concerns over the wording of objectives in the project. It has been possible to achieve the project objectives, while still leaving some variables potentially not tackled satisfactorily, and some wording has not helped monitoring and evaluation.

Nevertheless, taking into account local circumstances, and the socio-cultural-economic context within which the project has worked, the evaluation finds conclusively that material and beneficial differences have been made in schools in the target area, and that the model of UISE has been implemented/piloted, developed, proved, and acknowledged at topmost policymaking level as appropriate for nationwide replication, which is a substantial and significant achievement.

The project was implemented through a partnership between Bridge of Hope and Mission East. The achievements of the project show the strength and effectiveness of that partnership.

The project rationale is coherent and clear, and it has performed strongly in the areas of capacity building. Through this and other factors, the evaluators find the prospects for sustainability to be very good, and confirm their agreement that the UISE model is appropriate for replication, taking into account the comments made in the report.

The evaluation offers a number of recommendations, which are designed to complement existing work and ideas, and to further enhance the model.
Evaluation methodology

The evaluation was undertaken by ASPS consultancy service, as a qualified independent evaluator based on a competitive tender process. The evaluation was carried out using desk research, review of project documentation and PESTL analysis; and - in a 4-day field visit- Focus Group Discussions, Key Informant Interviews and a stakeholder mapping exercise. Some flexibility was used in interviews e.g. discussing with two people at a time rather than individually due to time pressure of the evaluation.

Selected comments from the evaluators

Under objective 1, one of the project indicators refers to ‘access’ to mainstream schools for Children with Disabilities / SEN. While Tavush schools demonstrate evidence of improved capacity for inclusive education, and access is established in the sense of willingness to welcome CWD/SEN, physical accessibility (for example for children with mobility problems) remains a challenge for many schools. Project partners are aware of this, and further investment including in building adaptations will be needed for full long-term accessibility.

The Bride of Hope resource centres are a key element to the success of the project, and have built up a high level of goodwill and trust in the communities they serve, providing educational, therapeutic and recreational services with expertise.

Effective advocacy to promote the educational rights of CWD/SEN is taking place. However, the involvement of parents (via Parent Support Groups) as advocates could be further strengthened.

The Universal Inclusive System of Education model developed has been validated by a civil society conference and replication has begun in Yerevan. However, given the difference of context, it would be pertinent to monitor if further adaptations are required. As the model is rolled out further in Armenia, involvement of a greater range of civil society actors will also be useful.

Selected Recommendations

A full list of evaluation recommendations is available on request.

Selected short-term recommendations

- Responsibilities for education and rehabilitation support for CWD/SEN is separated between different agencies; better coordination between children’s PP support and rehabilitation services in a holistic, child-centred approach should be considered.
- Provision of speech therapy in schools (and in BoH centres) was requested by parents
- BoH and Arabkir centre could benefit from developing links with Community-Based Rehabilitation Networks
- Review of PP staff training is recommended, to further improved professionalism.
- Parent Support Group role and implementation should be reviewed, to strengthen this element
- An IE working group could be explored for exchange and support on IE between different organisations at national level.
Selected long-term recommendations

- More detailed definition of ‘inclusion’ and what constitutes an inclusive school including measurable outcomes and outcome indicators could strengthen national roll out.
- All data should be disaggregated by type of disability/SEN and gender for a more refined understanding of barriers faced by children with disabilities.
- Accessibility audits of all schools, carried out by DPOs, should be carried out to define changes needed to ensure accessibility. Overall DPOs should be more involved in school inclusion evaluation.
- Monitoring of finalised IEPs, and their understanding (especially by parents) is relevant to ensure effectiveness of this tool.
- In keeping with the concept of social inclusion from childhood into livelihood, continued work on transition and support for CWD/SEN into post-education employment is relevant by all parties.
- An overarching partnership agreement (non-project specific) between Mission East and Bridge of Hope will be useful to share long-term vision and objectives.

Conclusion

Mission East and Bridge of Hope would like to thank all those who contributed and continue to contribute to the success of this project in ensuring inclusive education in Tavush Marz, including teachers, schools, families of CWD/SEN, resource centre staff, and representatives of government authorities as well as other organisations. We are happy to work together so that each child has the opportunity of a better future.

Mission East and Bridge of Hope are happy to continue their collaboration in ensuring the rights of CWD/SEN to inclusive educational opportunity in Armenia, including via the follow-on project in Yerevan ‘Living Together, Learning Together, phase 2’ (2017-2019).