

# Indonesian education system: Influencing policy to achieve results

Disability

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AusAID

Towards Inclusive WASH Sharing evidence and experience from the field



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## Program background

Since 2006, the Australian Government, through AusAID, has supported Indonesia to meet its goal of providing nine years of quality education to all Indonesian children. Since more than 95% of Indonesian children already have some years of primary schooling,<sup>1</sup> the flagship Australia Indonesia Basic Education Program (2006-2010) focuses on providing access to junior secondary education by building over 2,000 junior secondary schools in rural and remote areas of Indonesia.

Ensuring the schools provided equal opportunity for girls and poor children to access junior secondary education was a key focus of the program from the outset. At the request of the Indonesian government, and with AusAID's adoption in 2008 of the strategy *Development for All: Towards a Disability Inclusive Australian Aid Program*, attention was also given to ensuring the schools were accessible for children with disabilities. This included ensuring that the schools constructed with Australian funding were physically accessible for students with disabilities and also supporting the development of an inclusive education policy in Indonesia. This inclusive education policy has led to the training of school officials, such as principals and school committee members, and local government officials on

school-based management, including gender mainstreaming and inclusive education. This case study focuses on the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) related components of the program.

## The situation prior to program commencement

At the time the program was initiated, there was no inclusive education policy in Indonesia. Schools were not expected to enrol students with moderate to severe disabilities nor were school facilities accessible to people with physical disabilities. Schools were often located on slopes, which made access for students with mobility difficulties a real challenge. School sanitation facilities were generally too narrow to accommodate wheelchairs.

Local communities traditionally perceived that students with major physical or intellectual disabilities should be accommodated in special schools rather than mainstreamed into general schools. Families of children with intellectual disabilities were often very sensitive to the needs of their children and kept them away from formal schooling as a way to protect them.

These physical, attitudinal and institutional barriers meant that it was unlikely that more than a small minority of children with intellectual or severe physical disabilities were able to complete the first six years of primary schooling. For those students with disabilities that did attend school, it was common practice to attend special schools rather than mainstream schools.

## Provision of accessible WASH facilities in schools

School construction under the Australia Indonesia Basic Education Program was delivered in line with Indonesian government standards. At the start of the program in 2006, these standards did not cover provision for physical access for children with disabilities, including accessible WASH facilities.

### Location

- » Jakarta and rural locations, Indonesia



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**Disclaimer:** None of the children depicted in these photographs have a disability. They have volunteered to model their school's new facilities for the purpose of documentation.

<sup>1</sup> Government of Indonesia (2010) Primary School Gross Enrolment Rate. Ministry of National Education, Jakarta [www.psp.kemdiknas.go.id](http://www.psp.kemdiknas.go.id)

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**Figure 1**

A student is helped by his friend to enter an Australian-funded school in remote Central Lombok

Awalia Murtiana, AusAID



Ensuring Australian-funded schools were accessible to children with disabilities was not part of the original program design. It only began to be considered from 2007 onwards at the request of the Indonesian Ministries of National Education and Religious Affairs, at least partially because several very senior figures within the government had begun championing the cause. In 2007, the Ministry for National Education (MoNE) had also begun to draft a new Ministerial Regulation on inclusive education with the technical assistance of AusAID, signifying their willingness to move towards an inclusive education approach. In 2008, the Australian Government introduced a new policy that required all schools constructed under the Australian aid program to incorporate accessibility standards to enable access for children with disabilities (Figure 1). Since inclusive education<sup>2</sup> was already a priority for the Indonesian government, and AusAID was supporting the development of the national policy, it was straightforward to negotiate in-principle inclusion of accessibility standards into the school construction program, including sanitation facilities. Because schools constructed through the AusAID program were built in adherence to the national standards, the only way to

incorporate accessibility facilities into the school-building program was to work with the Indonesian government to revise these national standards to address existing environmental and physical barriers.

During 2008, through ongoing dialogue with MoNE, technical design guidelines were revised to include provisions for physical access for children with disabilities. Standard designs for schools were developed by the Indonesian government with AusAID's technical assistance to meet Indonesian accessibility standards. Accessible toilets were designed to allow wheelchair access and included provision of ramps, wide doorways, non-slip floors and western-style latrines with handrails. Ramps and handrails were also required on steep slopes to make all school facilities more accessible for students with disabilities (Figures 2, 3 and 4). Although the national standards were revised in 2008, their implementation was not enforced. Initially national standards were being used only in Australian-funded schools. Over the next two years, AusAID continued to advocate for the Indonesian government to replicate the designs used in the Australian-funded schools across the national junior secondary school construction program. Program advisors emphasised the cost effectiveness of building accessibility features from the

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<sup>2</sup> The Indonesian government's policy on inclusive education determines that students with all type of disabilities (physical, mental and social) should be mainstreamed into general schools.

**Figure 2**

A teacher and student demonstrate the ramp access to new toilet facilities in an Australia-funded school in remote Central Lombok

Maria Siahaaan, AusAID

**Figure 3**

A student helped by his friend demonstrates the use of ramp and handrails at an Australian-funded school in Central Lombok

Awalia Murtiana, AusAID

**Figure 4**

A student demonstrates the use of an accessible toilet in a remote school in West Nusa Tenggara—note the addition of a water bucket to overcome the lack of running water supply

Awalia Murtiana, AusAID



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beginning rather than retrofitting following construction. If these facilities were built into the design, it would have very limited cost implications. In 2010, the Indonesian government agreed to implement the disability inclusion standards for all new junior secondary schools built with Indonesian government funding.

### Support to develop Indonesia's inclusive education policy

In addition to ensuring physical access to Indonesian junior secondary schools, AusAID also assisted Indonesia to develop an inclusive education policy. This was to make sure that children with disabilities were not only physically able to attend school, but also to ensure that they were welcomed into the classroom to receive a quality education.

AusAID's program advisors worked closely with the Indonesian government's gender and inclusive education working groups to build an appreciation for and understanding of the concepts of gender mainstreaming and inclusive education and to consider how these concepts may be applied in the Indonesian context. AusAID focused on providing support to the working groups rather than pushing a particular policy position. This support culminated in MoNE passing Ministerial Regulation No. 70/2009 which requires education policies and practices to include provisions for disability inclusion.

### Impact of the program's disability intervention

Since the introduction of the Australian government policy on disability in 2008, a total of 1,275 schools constructed under the program are physically accessible for people with a disability by way of ramps, handrails and accessible toilets. A total of 1,087 students with physical disabilities and learning difficulties (573 boys and 514 girls) are now enrolled in these new schools. As over half (53.4%) of the children enrolled in these new schools come from families earning less than US\$2 per day, the program has also been successful in enabling equitable access for the most poor

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and marginalised and focusing attention on getting the last unreached 10% of children into schools.

The adoption of accessibility requirements for all new junior secondary schools in Indonesia will potentially have a nation-wide impact on children with physical disabilities being able to access mainstream schooling. This is particularly relevant for children in rural and remote communities, as special schools are mostly situated in urban areas. Furthermore, since the Ministry of National Education passed Ministerial Regulation No. 70/2009, which requires education policies and practices to include provisions for inclusive education, 64% of new schools built under the program have a school-level inclusive education policy actively supporting inclusion of girls and children with disabilities.

### Lessons learnt

A number of valuable lessons have been learnt through implementation of this program. While the program was successful in advocating policy change, implementation of the policy within schools and by local governments is still in its infancy, and there is still poor understanding at the community and school levels of the importance of mainstreaming gender and disability. Below are a number of the key lessons learnt and potential strategies to overcome these issues in future programs.

- » In this particular case, AusAID was able to achieve significant policy influence because inclusive education was already being considered within the MoNE. Having a number of supporters at senior levels within the MoNE and taking the approach of supporting government working groups rather than dictating the appropriate approach, contributed to AusAID's success in this regard.
- » Widespread views that children with disabilities attend special schools rather than mainstream schools challenged our efforts to convince local communities of the need to provide accessible WASH facilities in schools. Through monitoring visits and

surveys, it was also apparent that schools and community stakeholders did not always place a high value on provisions for access for children with disabilities.

- » In some cases, while the accessible toilets are functioning, they are underused due to misperception or lack of knowledge. In some schools, teachers prevent the general body of students from using the toilets, as they believe they should be reserved solely for students with disabilities (even when there are none enrolled in the school). In other schools, the school principal allows students to use toilets when there are no disabled students enrolled in their school. Future school building programs may need to include more socialisation and training to change these views.
- » Local communities, who are not necessarily familiar with standard construction techniques, also built schools under the program. The requirement for constructing accessible facilities such as accessible toilets, ramps and handrails is something new for most people in these communities. While the program provided field engineers on-site to assist in basic construction techniques, in some cases, these facilities were not constructed to design. For instance, in some schools, doorframes for the accessible toilets were not built wide enough to allow wheelchair access. Providing additional training on the new construction standards and increasing community awareness on the need for constructing these facilities as well as additional monitoring of the construction is needed to ensure greater compliance.
- » In larger schools constructed under the program, separate accessible toilets for girls and boys with disabilities were provided. However, an independent review<sup>3</sup> of the program assessed that one accessible toilet per school is sufficient and meets codes and standard requirements. The review found that two or more accessible toilets constrict students' access to toilets overall because it reduced the overall number of standard toilets installed (especially in schools)

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<sup>3</sup> Walter, G, Shah, F and Streader, R (2010) Australia Indonesia Basic Education Program (AIBEP): Independent Completion Report. Indonesia. [www.ausaid.gov.au/publications](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications)

- where accessible latrines were off limits to the general body of students).
- » The independent review suggested that the use of western-style pedestal toilets (Figure 4), as specified in the standard design for accessible toilets, might not be culturally appropriate. For example, in many communities a squat toilet is the norm. The review also pointed out that western-style pedestal toilets may potentially result in increased operations and maintenance costs. The review recommended that for future school construction, each school should carefully consider these factors before deciding to use pedestal toilets. Subsequently, AusAID is going to discuss with the Indonesian government an alternative toilet design for areas with limited access to running water. In communities where running water was not available, communities had provided a bucket of water to provide a pour flush alternative.
  - » The schools constructed under this program only consider the WASH access needs of students with mobility difficulties. Some adjustments should be made to the standard design to include provisions for people with other disabilities for example vision impairments.
  - » Current interventions under the program have focused on ensuring students with disabilities can access all school facilities. However, it has not addressed the challenges around getting potential students with disabilities to school. It is also yet to address the social inequalities and disadvantage that may interfere with children's learning. This highlights that a multifaceted whole-of-government solution to disability inclusion is needed, and provision of accessible facilities is not enough to overcome such attitudinal barriers to inclusive education.

» Lastly, changing perceptions and understanding within schools and communities through socialisation of policy and regulation is not sufficient to mainstream children with disabilities. Policy interventions need to be combined with dialogue on the need for systematic training for teachers.

## Conclusion

This case study has highlighted the benefits of working with government to influence policies and design guidelines around building construction as an effective way of ensuring WASH facilities are disability accessible. It also highlights that changing policy alone is not sufficient to ensure schools are now disability accessible. Policy influence needs to be one component of a multifaceted approach that also involves working with teachers and communities to increase their understanding about disability inclusion.

## References

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This case study is one of sixteen from the Towards Inclusive WASH series, supported by AusAID's Innovations Fund. Please visit [www.inclusivewash.org.au/case-studies](http://www.inclusivewash.org.au/case-studies) to access the rest of the publication and supporting resources.



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