



LUMOS

INDONESIA CASE STUDY

Global Thematic Review on Education

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia,² the world's fourth most populous country, has taken positive steps to develop its social welfare system. Despite this, child welfare services continue to be underfunded and lack capacity, and children removed from parental care are commonly placed in institutions.³ Children with disabilities are at particular risk of institutionalisation.⁴

In 2011, Indonesia's National Standards of Care for Child Welfare Institutions were published and disseminated; the Standards were aimed at preventing unnecessary separation of children and families, supporting reunification of separated children and their families wherever possible, and transforming residential institutions into centres supporting children and their families.⁵ However, implementation has been hampered by the absence of a robust network of community-based services – including accessible, inclusive education – and insufficient numbers of trained professionals.⁶

Despite these challenges, progress is being made. A Perkins partner programme based in Java provides an example of how a multisectoral approach, involving both the education and social care sectors, can enable inclusive education and care reform as mutually reinforcing processes. It also highlights how institution staff can be trained and redeployed to other types of services as part of a care reform process.



FINDINGS

What are the barriers to inclusion in education for children with disabilities?

In Indonesia, almost 3 in 10 children with disabilities never enter school, compared to 0.4% of children without a disability. Those who do start school are far more likely to drop out, and only 26% complete secondary education (compared to 62% of children without disabilities).⁷

“People don't see children with complex disabilities as capable of learning and contributing. If nobody knows how to teach the child or how to support the child, it looks like the child can't learn. In reality, the child's not learning because nobody knows how to teach the child.”

-Perkins staff member, Asia & Pacific Region

Indonesia has robust inclusive education policies, but individual school policies vary widely and create barriers to inclusion. For example, some schools accept only children with mild intellectual and socio-emotional impairments and others only children with physical disabilities, while few are willing to include children with hearing and sight impairments.⁸ Even in these schools, children with disabilities are sometimes viewed negatively and prejudicially.⁹

“For children with complex disabilities who are in school, often they're just sitting in the back of the classroom doing nothing – in my mind, that is not true inclusion. If I think of really what is an inclusive setting, it's a setting that supports children as valued and participating members of their family, school and community.”

-Perkins staff member, Asia & Pacific Region

Additional barriers to accessing education for children with disabilities stem from shame felt by families, leading them to hide children away and keep them out of public spaces.¹⁰ Early intervention specialists, who could work with families to mitigate these issues, are rare, especially in rural and remote areas.¹¹

“I've seen over and over again the difference that appropriate early intervention and family support can make for children, their families, and indeed for their communities.

Children develop the skills to successfully participate in community and inclusive school programs. Families develop the belief that their child can learn and they see positive possibilities for their child's future. And communities see all of their children – including children with complex and multiple disabilities – as valued and participating members of their community.”

-Perkins staff member, Asia & Pacific Region



How can residential care staff support and enable the change process?

To tackle barriers to inclusion, Perkins has provided training and mentoring for Javan residential care staff, who have in turn provided an education outreach programme to over 400 children living in the community and their families since the project's inception. The trained staff also help build the capacity of other local care and education services to effectively include children with disabilities within community settings. Teaching teachers how to work with children with disabilities, and helping them to see what is possible, has encouraged and enabled schools to meaningfully include children with disabilities. This has demonstrated to families, communities and service providers that meaningful inclusion is both possible and beneficial.

"We can often see that belief systems and attitudes shift, once the families and the care staff and the educational programme staff learn how to appropriately support and facilitate learning for the child. And then they're like, 'Oh, this child can learn!'"

-Perkins staff member, Asia & Pacific Region

Ensuring access to community-based supports and services for children with disabilities and their families addresses many key drivers of residential admissions and can prevent unnecessary separations of children and families. This important outcome was demonstrated through the Javan programme, which noted that no new children (within the programme's scope) with known families were admitted to residential care services during 2022.

The initiative has also benefitted the newly trained residential care staff in terms of their personal and professional development.

"It makes them feel that they're important... and they could be a role model. And they could be a professional in this sphere."

-Perkins staff member, Asia & Pacific Region

Staff consultation, engagement, training and redeployment should always be an integral part of care reform planning. Lumos and our partners have consistently found that involving staff and ensuring they contribute to the care reform process and be part of the solution provide excellent opportunities for them and their own families, whilst retaining the knowledge and expertise that experienced workers can bring.¹² [The Moldova Case Study](#)¹² (part of this series) also highlights the positive impact brought by resourcing and capacity-building service providers to meaningfully include children with disabilities in community-based education settings.



CONCLUSIONS

- The case study demonstrates how residential care staff can, with appropriate training and capacity-building, be redeployed to become educators in the community and to provide community-based programmes for children with moderate and profound disabilities.
- The case study shows that ensuring access to community-based supports and services for children with disabilities and their families addresses many key drivers of residential admissions and can prevent unnecessary separations of children and families.
- It also highlights that a multisectoral approach is important, to allow staff to be redeployed to roles which may traditionally fall under another sector – in this example, residential care staff providing education – to holistically meet the broad range of often-interconnected educational and social needs of children and families.
- Empowering and strengthening families to support and participate in the education of their children is an essential element of ensuring children with disabilities are not excluded from education.

ANNEX

Methodology

Research for this case study comprised:

- Desk research
- Key informant interviews with eight interviewees, who were:
 - o Perkins staff
 - o Staff in residential care services and community-based schools who received training and support from Perkins to provide education to children with disabilities
 - o Parents of students with disabilities connected with the Perkins programme

Perkins provided additional information and reviewed the draft case study.



REFERENCES

1. Perkins is a global organisation working in education services for children and young adults who have complex and multiple disabilities. They have worked in Indonesia for over 30 years, with the goal of enhancing community and school programmes to provide learning, care, and support so that children with disabilities can remain with their families. Perkins works with local partners to build supportive, child-focused systems, transforming orphanages into outreach and day programs, enhancing the quality of education and community programs, and supporting families to keep their children at home. Perkins supports seven programmes in Java to model sustainable community-based alternatives to residential care, with partners acting as allies in deinstitutionalisation processes.
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