

# National Consultation on Inclusive Classroom, Social Inclusion/Exclusion and Diversity: Perspectives, Practices and Policies

A National Consultation on Inclusive Classroom, Social Inclusion/Exclusion and Diversity: Perspectives, Policies and Practices was organized on 7-8 September, 2010 at New Delhi by Deshkal Society and UNICEF India in partnership with European Union, DFID, Save the Children, Room to Read, Care India, National Council for Education, Research and Training (NCERT), Care India, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), National Foundation of India and Sulabh International Social Service Organization. The national consultation was a part of the project on “Classroom Curriculum, Social Inclusion/Exclusion and Diversity: Voices from the Margins” implemented during 2008-10 by Deshkal Society with support from and in collaboration with UNICEF India. The project involved dialogue generation and network building with various stakeholders in the elementary education sector through organizing regional consultations in the following seven states:

- Jharkhand
- Uttar Pradesh
- Orissa
- Assam
- Rajasthan
- Tamil Nadu
- Maharashtra



A national report on Inclusive Classroom, Social Inclusion/Exclusion and Diversity: Perspectives, Policies and Practices, was also released on the occasion. The report has sought to explore, identify and discuss key issues and challenges in elementary education in India, and suggest inputs that need to be addressed by policymakers and practitioners to promote inclusive classrooms, ensure meaningful and successful school participation of children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, and enhance their learning achievements. The report identifies the following key areas that need to be focused on by policymakers and practitioners.

- Recognizing social diversity within classrooms
- Developing socio-economic profiles of diverse learners
- Developing contextualised inclusive teaching-learning practices and processes
- Regular evaluation and feedback on the impact of teaching-learning practices
- A greater focus on diversity issues in teacher education and training programmes
- Promoting diversity in the elementary teaching workforce
- Developing an organic school-community relationship



The project and the national consultation were part of, and organically linked to the processes initiated through an international conference on School Education, Pluralism and Marginality: Comparative Perspectives organised by Deshkal Society in New Delhi in December 2007 in collaboration with UNICEF. Since then, Deshkal Society has consistently taken initiatives and made persistent efforts towards dialogue generation, development and promotion of the agenda in collaboration with regional partners and multiple stakeholders in education. This has been extended to the national level with the support from national and international level organizations.

The Consultation provided an opportunity for discussion among multiple stakeholders in elementary education on the following key questions which had emerged in the process of regional consultation across seven states.

- How do we go about engaging teaching-learning practices in an unequal classroom where there are children of diverse backgrounds?
- How do we strengthen the capacity of the contemporary teaching-learning practices and processes to promote healthy relationships between teacher-children and children-children relationship in a diverse classroom?
- How do we empower teachers and children to engage in dialogue as a means of developing greater sensitivity to differences and understanding “others”?
- How do we nurture teachers’ and children’s abilities to respond to “other” children’s needs with an attitude of reconciliation and respect for diversity?

The key themes covered by the consultation were:

- Overview of the policy documents mainly, NCF, NCFTE, RTE from social diversity perspectives
- The social, cultural and economic context of children’s development, inclusive classroom and diversity
- Teacher education, diversity and inclusive classrooms
- Best practices and innovations in addressing the concerns of inclusion and exclusion in the classroom from across the states
- Learning together, moving ahead: Strategies, recommendations and programmes for the future

