Achieving disability-inclusive education within Samoa

Through the Pacific Education Development Framework (PEDF) approved by all Pacific Island Education Ministers in 2009, special and inclusive education are seen as a priority across the region. To achieve disability-inclusive education within Samoa, schools, Ministries, non-government and disability people’s organisations and communities need to work together to ensure equality of access for children with disabilities to education.

The Pacific-INDIE has been developed collaboratively as part of a research project commissioned by the Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Pacific-INDIE is an important framework for supporting the development and implementation of effective Monitoring and Evaluation frameworks to measure disability-inclusive education.

Samoa has been one of the four key countries involved throughout the whole development process and in trialing draft versions of the indicators.

Samoa is now in an excellent position to use the indicators to help establish disability-inclusive practices across the nation.

Samoa: country context

Samoa is a community based country with broad extended families. The culture and church are closely interlinked. Samoans value people with disabilities. They are proud of their progress towards inclusive education.

The indicators will contribute to the progress and the quality of inclusive education in Samoa. They will make sure it moves forward and is relevant for all children.

We recognise that our involvement will pave the way for quality education for children with disabilities across the Pacific.

“I want children with disabilities to have a better chance than I did.”  
– DPO representative

“It’s not the culture that is a barrier, at the heart of it we have an inclusive society, but we don’t have the systems to support it. We need to embed the indicators into all systems in Samoa.”

– Associate Investigator

Partnered Organisations

Funding body
Samoa embraces inclusive education

The indicators will help Samoa in many ways:

- The development of the Samoan inclusive education framework and policy.
- Change the mindset of teachers and parents of children with disabilities to recognise their potential. Teachers use more interactive learning and do not limit their teaching.
- Help teachers to think and act creatively to explore other ways to better support children with learning disabilities.
- Improve outcomes for students with learning disabilities in trial schools.
- Broadening teachers’ understandings of inclusive education to include children with learning difficulties (previously referred as “slow learners”).
- The indicators will increase monitoring and reporting. If anything, it will make schools and Ministries more accountable and vigilant about data collection. More reliable data will be available so we can have more evidence-based decisions for support which is tailored towards children with disabilities.
Challenges for Samoa

- To get teachers to recognise the value of using the indicators to gather data to track the progress of children with disabilities.
- Collecting disability-related data on a regular basis from all schools.
- For schools to be resourceful for starting inclusive education using what is available in “their backyard”.
- Having enough teachers with enough knowledge and a good mindset about inclusive practices so they can better support children with disabilities.
- Making all teachers champions of inclusive education.

“So no-one is left behind.”

“The indicators created the opportunity to meet children and parents of children with disability. We don’t usually meet and talk and share thoughts about inclusive education.”

– Principal
Future directions for Samoa

- Encourage schools to start their own support groups for parents of children with disabilities.
- Conduct ongoing advocacy training for parents to support their children with disabilities.
- Include the indicators in Implementation Action Plans for inclusive education and national disability policies.
- Use the disability-inclusive indicators to frame Ministry survey questions so that we can get reliable and relevant data about children with disabilities.
- Include national training about the indicators for teacher professional development on inclusive education.

“Make it everybody’s responsibility.”

– Principal

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In partnership in Samoa with:

Ministry of Education Sports and Culture
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Ministry of Health
Nuanua o le Alofa (DPO)
Loto Taumafai Society
SENESE Inclusive support Services
Aoga Fiamalamalama
Special Olympics Samoa
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