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Inclusive Education Senegal Phase 1 Findings Report

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CBPR	Community-based participatory research
FGDs	Focus group discussions
WHO	World Health Organization

Background

The World Health Organization (WHO) has estimated in 2011 that 6.4% of the children aged 0 to 14 years in Africa had moderate or severe disabilities. In 2013, the report of Plan International on four West African Countries indicated that these children were subject to discriminations at all the levels of society. Negative connotations are applied to the origin of the disability of children; the discussions generally focus on cultural and religious beliefs. In particular, it appears that the type of disability, its severity and the gender of the child are key factors influencing the discrimination. With regards to education, this discrimination against children with disabilities has also been aggravated by practical obstacles, including limited access to education due to the lack of infrastructure, of classrooms and deficiencies in teacher training on inclusive education. Disability seems to have an impact on school enrolment, the quality of education and graduation. It appears that there are gender differences in relation to accessing quality education for children with disabilities. Sightsavers requires that the project research contributes to the existing knowledge base on disability inclusion in education and, where necessary, uses that knowledge to refine a contextually appropriate and gender-responsive approach to supporting education for girls and boys with disabilities in Senegal.

Methodology

The project research draws upon community-based participatory research (CBPR), which involves respectful collaboration with the community. This methodology involves shared decision-making and ownership, and members of the community are involved in planning, gathering evidence, analysing it and sharing what is discovered. Men and women with disabilities are also actively encouraged to participate in becoming community researchers.

As well as asking specific research questions, the design of this kind of research seeks to break down social injustice and helps everyone to rethink power structures and issues. Approaching research this way identifies both enablers and barriers to effective inclusive education as identified by children with disabilities, their parents and teachers. It also helps men, women, boys and girls with disabilities to realise their potential through voice, agency and participation.

The overall aim of CBPR is to increase knowledge and understanding of the situation being studied together, to construct meaning together and to integrate this with interventions and policy change to improve the quality of life for the school community.

Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were used to collect data, facilitated by peer researchers who are linked to the schools in some way. A community researcher is someone who lives in the local area where the research is taking place, cares about the research topic and is not a professional researcher. They work alongside a professional researcher, interviewing community members and observing professional situations, enriching the research with their unique contribution. The data was recorded through a voice recorder. The verbal and written consent of each participant was obtained before each interview. Ethical permissions were given by Senegal's ethics committee.

Practical process

Sightsavers trained five teachers to facilitate five teacher focus groups and pupil focus groups, and five members of the community to facilitate parent focus groups and pupil focus groups. Three members were from a parent association with a disability focus and two were interested members of the community, all living near the inclusive schools. Schools were in Kaolack, Louga and three in Dakar. The five very different communities of Thiaroye, Rufisque, Guediawaye, Louga and Kaolack provide diversity of experience. The selected towns have economic, social and cultural environments that are often different from each other.

An initial pilot was run with three focus groups (children, parents and teachers). The parent and children focus groups lasted 30-45 minutes, and teacher focus groups lasted 45-60 minutes. All discussions were recorded in audio format and professionally transcribed.

Finally, the remaining focus groups took place, learning from the pilot. Parent groups had 10-12 participants, teacher focus groups the same, and there was average of eight children in the child focus groups. All meetings took place with the support of Sightsavers staff. Children's ages ranged from 5 to 11, parents or carers from 27 to 60, and teachers from 32 to 50. In terms of gender, there was an almost equal representation of girls and boys with disabilities and teachers in the focus groups meetings. There were fewer men than women attending parent focus groups, which was anticipated. In total, forty parents participated in the focus group meetings: thirty mothers and ten fathers. This illustrates the socio-cultural representations accounting for the traditional division of men and women's roles and responsibilities.

Limitation:

The data collection in the schools in Louga and Kaolack were delayed until 2018 due to enrolment starting in October 2017. These schools had already experienced two months of the project intervention, so were not at a strict point of baseline.

Perceptions of the inclusive education model

The right to education

It was noted by caregivers of children with disabilities and teachers from inclusive schools that children both with and without disabilities had the right to education. They agreed that disability should not prevent children from learning or from attending school. One parent in Kaolack suggested that the right to learning helped children to acquire knowledge which in turn could improve their work opportunities, *'It is very important to study because it allows us to acquire knowledge and with this knowledge, we can work to meet our needs.'*

One teacher explained that it was the duty of teachers to create awareness about disabilities amongst the children without disabilities in their class. She stressed there is no difference between those with and without disabilities and as such they are equal with the same right to education, *'We help children, we try to integrate them; we have made the children aware from the beginning and have put them in the group, there has been no awkwardness. All teachers should make their students aware... that they are all equal and that they have the same right to learn and to be free at school and that they must help each other.'*

One parent also emphasised the importance of educating parents of children without disabilities so that they were aware that children are the same, with the same rights to education and learning.

Equal treatment and respect

Teachers, caregivers and children with disabilities suggested that one of the most positive outcomes of inclusive education was that children were treated equally and with respect. This was seen to encourage learning for children with and without disabilities, and it was noted that children with disabilities who received the same education as those without disabilities could attain high levels of education. One parent from Kaolack explained *'Being disabled can happen to any of us, and those with a disability deserve more attention than the others, or at least as much. We must give them work to do, schoolwork, housework so they don't feel different from the others. Some even have their CEP (Primary School Certificate), their bac (high school diploma) and will be able to go to university.'* A teacher from Louga confirmed, *'As the name indicates, this is an inclusive class. There is no discrimination and children learn together. Children work at the same time and we have the same programmes! We take the children together and at the same time with no differentiated hours.'*

It was noted that seeing children with and without disabilities being educated side-by-side also impacted the wider community and reinforced the importance of social inclusion. It also supported those people with disabilities to feel more empowered in the community. As one parent in Kaolack affirmed, *'Yes... I am pleased knowing that the autonomy needed for children with disabilities is finally going to happen, and that there won't be any more difference between those who are disabled and those who are not.'*

Participants noted the importance of inclusive education with regards to key principles of respect, equality and non-discrimination. In a number of FGDs, children with disabilities and teachers agreed that allowing children of all abilities to learn together ensures that children are respected and do not face discrimination *'It has allowed respect for the children', 'there is no discrimination'*. One girl with disabilities agreed, *'what I like is that we are treated like the others, not differently, and people play with us as if we were all the same.'*

Types of disability

Despite having outlined the principles of non-discrimination in inclusive education (see above), teachers suggested that the success of this education model was dependent on the type of disability. In Thiaroy, teachers suggested that when children have only visual impairment (and no other related conditions), then the likelihood of success in inclusive education was greater than those with other disabilities. In discussing the case of a student with a physical disability, one teacher described, *'This is the case of Bachir, who had a problem with his hands and could not hold things correctly. This impacted him negatively and, in the end, he left. We regret it because we did not want it to happen that way. No one is held to the impossible, we did what we could.'* Another teacher in the same school outlined a similar case with a student who had Cerebral Palsy and who did not manage to progress in the school in the same way as other children with disabilities, *'Here I can give the example of a student I had in CP (first year of primary school) and until now, he has difficulties to understand and retain information. Apart from that, the others are doing well.'*

One teacher proposed that children with disabilities should be screened prior to entry into inclusive education so that the extent of their disabilities and condition for learning could be considered.

Group learning

Learning as a group whilst using the same materials for children with and without disabilities was found by most teachers to be a fundamental reality and challenge of inclusive education. One teacher in Louga explained, *'Children work at the same time and we have the same programmes! We take the children together and at the same time with no differentiated hours.'*

Some teachers expressed difficulty with managing the difference in time it takes all the pupils in a class to do a task. They shared examples of children with multiple disabilities taking much longer than other children in the class, and that juggling this was challenging with large class sizes.

Accepting children with disabilities

For parents of children with disabilities, knowing that their children would be accepted into inclusive education schools came as a great relief. Prior to enrolling in the schools, it was reported that children were often kept at home and did not frequently engage with their peers or have access to stimulating play or appropriate materials. Parents in Kaolack outlined how, prior to their children's admittance into the inclusive education school, the children had just

stayed at home. As one parent outlined, *'Before, he didn't do anything like the other children, but now he studies and knows the same things as the others, and it is a very good thing.'*

In Kaolack and Louga, parents and siblings of children with disabilities recalled negative experiences at other schools. One parent in Kaolack suggested the her child's previous schools did not have the correct materials to assist her child's learning: *'I registered her several times at other schools, but she didn't stay long, because the paper they use is not good for her eyes.'* Whilst in Louga: *'We are really satisfied with the effects the school had on her because before she went to school, she was always roaming outside without us knowing where she was.'*

Stigmatisation was a difficulty in the school environment and some children experienced frustrating attitudes. For example, one girl stated, *'What I dislike most is that when I get into the school, all the schoolchildren I meet and who were playing stop their activities and go to watch me.'* Her experience was similar outside of school, *'In the street people call me the blind girl, which I don't like at all.'* The perception of disability seemed to be a real hindrance to the enrolment of children. Children struggled with the gibes of their classmates. As one child explained, *'I have no problem apart that my classmates used to make fun of me. Sometimes, some schoolchildren used to punch me and run. (...) Some children would rush upon me sometimes as they were joking, they laugh at me and sometimes they punch me and run.'*

Integration of children with and without disabilities

Parents and teachers noted the importance of inclusive education for the integration of children with and without disabilities. The inclusive model, it was suggested, ensures that children with disabilities have access to local schools and provides opportunities for mixing with non-disabled peers. A parent from Guédiawaye concluded, *'We must remember that the aim of inclusive education is above all social inclusion of disabled people! So that a disabled child is able to go out of his home to go to the neighbourhood school, to share a classroom with so called able-bodied children.'* Another parent from Guédiawaye suggested that without the inclusive education programme, his son would not have been able to be integrated in school and attain such high level diplomas, *'I am best placed to testify on that because when my child was coming here, he was small, and today he was able to integrate the Pikine Est school. Without a good education, he would never have been able to integrate Pikine Est and to study for his diplomas.'*

It appeared that increased integration at school had also contributed to improved social cohesion and acceptance outside the classroom. Children without disabilities were found to have assisted their disabled peers in the playground and walking to and from school. Teachers reported that this level of integration had given them peace of mind, *'Children help and guide their disabled friends in whatever they need, and I have peace of mind in that regard.'*

Support to parents and students

Peer support was noted, which consists of children without disabilities living near the school who volunteer to go with their classmates with disabilities from and to the home. As described by this student, *'I have a friend, he comes every morning and we go together to school and after class we go together back home'. Children with disability are supported by their classmates and supervised and helped by their teachers.*

In relation to teacher support, a child explained *'He was my school master from the beginning (CI) to the last class of primary school (CM2). He even used to buy clothes for me. He used to assist me normally. With the Braille method, he used to create things that nobody else used to create, and on this point, he used to really help me.'* Many parents confirmed that in addition to the positive support their children received at the integrated schools, they too felt supported and were thankful for the help they received from the teachers. Parents in Kaolack explained, *'I get a lot of support from the school and they supervise my child as they should, I can only thank them and pray for them', and, 'me, I am just happy for all you do for my child, because whoever helps them (children) also helps their parents, so thank you very much.'*

One teacher from Thiaroy confirmed that supporting parents was an important part of a teacher's role, concluding that, *'Our role is first to help these children to be in class in a sustainable way... [and] make parents aware that the children are vulnerable on the surface but also that they should not overprotect them.'*

Various support from the community for children with disabilities and their families was cited, including for transportation, medical consultation and food. One child shared, *'Now that I am in secondary school, it's very complicated to go to the college, so some members of my community proposed to guide me there as it's very far.'*

Experiences of the inclusive education programme

Student experiences

Across all field sites, students' discussions most frequently centred around their experiences of inclusive education. Although a number of challenges with accessibility and mobility were noted, all students reported having positive experiences of inclusive education. These experiences most frequently related to the cleanliness of the school; organisation of school and teachers; provision of all necessary materials; quality of teaching/education and the ability to learn on a level playing field with peers.

The majority of students reported that they enjoyed their inclusive school and being treated well by students and teachers. As one student in Louga described, *'Nobody says or does unpleasant or hurtful things.'* Students appreciated the chance to engage, learn and play with their peers who did not have disabilities. Parents also confirmed how happy their children had become in the inclusive learning environment. One parent described: *'I find him to be happier, he missed that because it so happens that I had registered him in a non-specialised school, but I had to remove him after a month. I was very sad the day the headmaster told me that their school wasn't adequate for him and I had to go and pick him up, because really, he was starting to feel integrated in the school. And then one day someone told me about this place, and I registered him, he is so happy that he tells me absolutely everything that he does at the school. It makes me so happy.'*

Progress in learning and ability

Most parents reported that their children had made significant progress after enrolment at an inclusive school and confirmed that they had noticed a *'very positive change'* in their children. As one parent from Louga concluded, *'It is not long since he started to study, but his knowledge differs from ignorance.'* A teacher from Thiary explained, *'Of course, after the end of each class, an evaluation is done and we realise that in spite of the difficulties, the daily objective is always met. And the expected result is that in class, not only they have understood, but they also manage as well as the other students. As a result, with this experience the student's average grade can really be above expectations. We can then say that we have reached our objective. They then feel proud in spite of the ordeal. It is through this sort of difficulty that we are able to transfer the message and help the child understand.'*

Parents also observed that their child's ability to participate and interact had increased after attendance at an inclusive school. Some noted, for example, that their child had started to become more social and involved, and others indicated that their child had become more independent, taking care of their own personal hygiene or helping at home (in the kitchen). A parent in Guédiawaye explained, *'Before she started school, my daughter was very lonely, and she always stayed in a corner by herself. She didn't participate in any activity. After registering her at school, we noticed a radical change. She is more open now, more*

sociable, she participates in educational debate, she moves around when before she would stay by herself, she is less fearful and does activities we did not really think about before. Frankly, she has improved a lot.'

A couple of parents confirmed that due to their attendance at the inclusive school, children with visual or physical disabilities had gone on to successfully attain higher levels of education.

Barriers for developing the inclusive model

Capacity of teachers

Personal experience

The teachers who participated in the study were teachers at inclusive schools in their community, although not all teachers involved had children with disabilities in their classes. Teachers explained that they spend significant amounts of time outside school hours ensuring that children with disabilities were understanding lessons correctly, *'to see if learnings are mastered.'* Teachers discussed using weekends, lunch breaks and time after class to follow up with students as necessary, preparing lessons and transcribing materials into braille.

In addition to their time commitment, one teacher in Thiaryoy explained that teachers often used their own money to purchase additional learning resources for the children with disabilities whom they were teaching.

Role of teachers

In discussing their role, teachers articulated a wide range of responsibilities including: providing children with a good education; providing moral, physical and financial support to children with and without disabilities; accompanying children with disabilities to the bathroom; supporting parents; providing capacity building skills; and following up with students at home.

Training

Teachers emphasised the importance of receiving additional competency training and skill development. They clearly articulated the insufficiency of the inclusive education training they had received. Across all field sites, teachers identified the need for increased and improved training. Although most teachers had received 10 days training and additional capacity building sessions of up to five days, it was reported that *'it is not sufficient'* and *'training must be strengthened and must become continuing education.'* One teacher explained, *'Teaching in an inclusive education class is not an easy task for us teachers, especially if the impaired children are blind. Because, we have had only 15 days training. This time has not allowed to train us in classroom practices. Yet, that is what is important, because these practices are our daily activity in the classrooms. I feel that the duration of the training is short and remains too theoretical.'*

One of the teachers involved in the FGD discussion in Louga who teaches in a non-inclusive class recalled that she had not received training in inclusive education nor in how to conduct an inclusive class. However, she now had a child with disabilities in her classroom.

Parents from Guédiawaye and Kaolack also recommended that teachers should receive longer and more in-depth training to ensure that they could *'carry out training and strengthen*

capacities, because you can't teach or inform others of what you don't know; so for all those concerned to be able to teach and inform others correctly, we need more training and sensitisation campaigns on the radio and other means.'

Parents also noted that children with disabilities would benefit from qualified classroom assistants who could provide additional support to ensure children were learning *'at the same equal level'* as children without disabilities.

In addition, some parents noted further support needed for the family, *'When she comes back home, my blind daughter takes her slate to study, but her elder brother tells her that he cannot help her because he knows nothing about Braille writing. Something should be specified here: What is written in Braille should be also written in black normally, so that people at home could be able to help her. But that is not the case.'*

Motivation

Teachers discussed the need for their commitment to and motivation for working with children with disabilities to be better recognised. A number of teachers suggested that such motivation could come in the form of training certificates to distinguish them from other teachers who were not involved in the Sightsavers project, *'We would like our commitment to be recognised for example by being graduated. At the moment nothing differentiates us from teachers who are not in the project.'*

Financial motivation was identified by teachers and parents as an important means to encourage teachers to continue working with children with disabilities and advancing their skills. Parents in Kaolack agreed that teachers should be supported financially because *'caring for able-bodied children is not easy and it is even more difficult for children with disabilities.'* In Guédiawaye one parent articulated concerns that without adequate financial motivation, teachers would leave inclusive education systems and therefore *'the government must reconsider inclusive education and its true value.'*

Material resources

Lack of resources

Teachers reported that the schools lacked appropriate materials and educative resources for children with disabilities and viewed this as an additional barrier to providing truly inclusive education. As one teacher explained, *'There is the adaptation aspect in inclusive education, parts of concepts and instructions must be re-adapted, but it is difficult for us without adequate materials.'* Whilst another in Louga reported, *'If the material is lacking, there will be inconsistencies in the teaching of inclusive education.'* Many teachers confirmed that they were dissatisfied with existing resources and concluded that the lack of material resources held students back, prevented teachers from doing their job adequately and made it harder for them to meet expectations. Parents also stressed the importance of schools being equipped with appropriate indoor and outdoor resources for children with disabilities, emphasising that they had particular or specialised material needs.

As well as lacking safe and appropriate playing materials and teaching aids, caregivers also mentioned the lack of toilets and sanitation facilities. This could be particularly difficult for the

children and resulted in them having to rely heavily on their teachers for assistance. Similarly, they reported that more needed to be done to ensure easy mobility of children with disabilities in schools, and emphasised that the lack of adequate seating, ramps, paved and tarmacked access ways and mobility canes prevented schools from becoming truly inclusive.

One teacher in Kaolack explained, *'Adequate chairs and desks are needed to prevent their educational equipment from falling, ramps are necessary to allow them easy access to classrooms, and also paved driveways so that wheelchairs can move easily. Without these improvements, schools are not yet fully inclusive, but I do think that schools are striving towards these improvements.'*

The availability of adapted materials was highlighted by teachers as a critical component for ensuring that students with disabilities could learn at the same speed as their peers. This was particularly true for children with visual impairments. Teachers in two schools found teaching theories of geography and geometry particularly challenging without specialist resources. As one teacher in Thiaroy explained, *'In geometry, teaching activities include the creation of shapes, maps, etc... Teaching methodologies for this subject when taught to children without disabilities cannot be utilised for children who are blind. Specialist educational equipment is required.'* It was also expressed by parents that caring for children with disabilities is costly. The orthopaedic equipment and materials are not affordable.

Appreciation for existing materials

Children with disabilities more frequently expressed an appreciation for the material resources which they had received, or which were available at their school. In Louga, two students agreed that they were pleased and satisfied with the materials which had been provided by the school. One explained, *'What I like the most is that every day we are being helped more and more and we feel like the education that we receive is very good. We were given school materials to help us with our studies'*. The other reported, *'Our teachers are great, they provide us with a good education, they are really at our disposal, doing everything for us. They give us tablets and all the necessary equipment.'*

Distance and Accessibility

Parents, teachers and students across all field sites confirmed that accessibility was a primary challenge in ensuring school attendance. One parent in Thiaroy highlighted their concerns about their child crossing a busy road, *'I have a child and my main concern is crossing the national road to join the school. So, I always take him to school and pick him up every day, otherwise he will not be able to return.'* Another parent in Louga suggested that the journey on foot was laborious: *'Frankly the school is far away, and my child is struggling enormously to make this journey! It is only his courage that pushes him not to give up. I ask him to use his cane, but it is very difficult for him. The distance might not seem very far, but he has problems getting around and walking.'*

Parents, caregivers and students suggested there was a significant need for children with disabilities to have safe transport options and to be given additional guidance on how to move around safely, particularly in relation to walking alone, and crossing busy roads.

For students, accessibility and their need for assistance was a dominant issue. They highlighted the need for constant accompaniment when crossing roads, their reliance on others [notably strangers] and their need to have trust in people. Students from Guédiawaye explained, *'Now that I am in college it has become complicated to go to [name of school], so sometimes people offer to guide me because the [name of school] is far from my house. On the outward journey as on the return, I receive help from good-willed people to cross the road in order to go to study or go home', and 'I appreciate that they take time to help me to avoid falling into holes or any other obstacle encountered on the street or to avoid cars. Parents and neighbours have always helped me.'*

Gender Considerations

Facing difficulties

Parents frequently reported that children with disabilities face multiple difficulties. Some suggested that girls and boys with disabilities faced the same problems, whilst others felt that girls with disabilities experienced different challenges to boys with disabilities. One parent from Kaolack suggested that girls with visual impairment had more 'psychological' challenges with their disability, while boys with the same disability were 'more at ease' about it. A parent in Thiaroy suggested, *'Boys and girls with disabilities do not have the same difficulties because girls are deemed to be more fearful and therefore avoid taking more risk.'*

Parents and teachers found girls to be more physically and emotionally reliant on others, *'they tend to be more attached to their parents'* and they also perceived girls to be more fearful than boys. One parent affirmed, *'She is more afraid of hurting herself than the boys. This fear makes her disability heavier to bear.'*

Coping and acceptance

In relation to their ability to cope with their disability, only one parent believed that girls were more 'able' to cope than boys, on the basis that girls, with or without disabilities because, *'In a general context...girls understand faster than boys.'* In contrast, other parents suggested that it was harder for girls to live with their disability because it was harder for girls more generally to cope, *'...because girls don't usually finish a school degree due to early marriage.'* One parent from Thiaroy suggested that parents need to pay closer attention to the attitude of girls with disabilities than boys: *'Always watch over the attitude and the behaviour of a young girl in her integration into current life (their youth, the way of eating or dressing).'*

Gender was not widely discussed by teachers, apart from in the Kaolack field site. There, teachers agreed that boys were *'more comfortable, more liberated and accept their disabilities better'* than girls with disabilities. One teacher affirmed, *'In my classroom, from the start the boys were integrated, but we had to make lot more effort with the girls, especially with S who was always crying, so we tried to calm her down with sweets and drinks. Now she loves school and doesn't even want to stay at home on weekends.'*

Despite reports that boys were more independent and liberated than girls, all of the students involved in the discussion, regardless of their gender, reported that they receive help and assistance from parents, teachers and others. One boy in Kaolack suggested, *'They help us a lot because in past times those disabled could only go begging or something like that, but now they teach us to read in Braille and do other things that will be useful to us.'* While a girl in Rusfique affirmed, *'there is no difficulty in school.'* In describing themselves, however, boys in Guédiawaye more frequently saw themselves as autonomous despite the challenges they faced accessing the toilet.

In discussing their disabilities, girls with disabilities appeared more accepting that their disability was an act of fate and frequently suggested that their disability was the will of God.

One girl in Louga explained, *'My illness is congenital because it was God who wanted me to be unable to see with one of my eyes.'*

Influence of gender on the future

In thinking about the future, parents identified that girls were more vulnerable than boys. Girls with disabilities were thought to face more difficulties living and maintaining a 'normal' way of life. It was considered harder for a girl with disabilities to find a husband and there were concerns that girls with disabilities may be more at risk of being sexually exploited. The parent of a child with physical disabilities in Louga explained, *'We tried everything so that she could bend her knees, but we had to resign ourself and believe in God, and every day I see that her feet become more deformed with walking. Now she can't put her heel down anymore because her feet are deformed. A woman not being able to bend her legs is a serious problem, especially if she is growing up and has a husband.'* One female student in Kaolack also suggested that proximity was an issue, she explained that *'There is proximity, we sit three or four at a desk instead of two, I think it would be better if this changed.'*

Students appeared less worried about their future than their parents and instead they appeared to be focused on continuing their education to the best of their ability. A boy in Kaolack affirmed, *'Now it's up to us to do what is required of us and make more effort for better results.'* Various children, boys and girls, expressed that inclusive education is an important lever for their integration and socialisation, enabling them to achieve their full potential.

Improving parent – teacher relations

Strengthening home-school links

Participants agreed that for the sustainability of the inclusive education programme, and for the benefit of the children involved, links between parents and teachers needed to be strengthened to facilitate integration of home and school life.

Parents highlighted the need for consistent communication between parents and their child's school and although the majority were satisfied with the levels of communication they had received in the past, they insisted that there was always scope for communication mechanisms to be improved. The following account from one parent in Guédiawaye was representative, *'Communication is good, but you can always demand more. We are informed of everything related to children, meetings, seminars, internships to better help children at home, and in all these activities we are really involved. We can always improve within the limits of what its humanly possible to do.'*

Teachers and parents stressed the importance of regular parent-teacher meetings to strengthen links between them. Parents reported that frequent meetings fostered better understanding, *'to be aware of everything that happens in time'* and would help teachers to know *'who is the parent of which student and being able to deal with each case properly.'* Despite acknowledging the benefits of regular parent teacher meetings, some parents admitted that they had never attended such sessions. Similarly, one teacher in Thiaroy explained, *'I've never been to a meeting and I've been here for the last year but only the parents of the children with visual impairments and I are in touch and we call each other when I see something abnormal. If the child is not present at school, the parents call me to tell me why or I call them.'*

Formation of parent associations

School parent associations and committees were found to play a crucial role in education and school-related matters amongst teachers and parents. Some parents reported that school committees should include more active involvement of parents of children with disabilities, to ensure their needs were adequately represented. One parent in Kaolack commented, *'I think that a parents' association would be ideal to facilitate the relationship between parents and teaching staff. It would make it possible to be aware of everything going on in time and to do the right thing; it would also allow us to know who the parents are of each pupil enabling us to deal with each case as it should be.'*

Parents in Thiaroy and Guédiawaye highlighted that parents of children with disabilities should have greater representation on their school's parents committee. One parent in Guédiawaye suggested that at least one parent of a child with disabilities should be present on the committee, *'One parent is able to pass on the grievances of many parents of children with disabilities.'* In Thiaroy, one parent suggested that a separate committee for parents of children with disabilities should be created to help improve conditions, *'I would like us to create a committee of children who are blind, its role would be to improve conditions for their*

fellow pupils because if we want to study the phenomenon as a whole, we risk harming the minority.'

Ownership and the role of government

Several parents and teachers highlighted the absence of effective government services to support children with disabilities and their families. It was proposed that improved infrastructure, supported by the government, would ensure that inclusive education would become more sustainable.

Teachers also affirmed the need for state-developed inclusion policies, 'an inclusive State policy', and for schools to be recognised in government and state policy, such that inclusive education programmes would 'exceed Sightsavers' and become part of state-managed education programmes.

In assuming a greater role in the management of inclusive education programmes, several parents and teachers hoped that the state would increase ownership of the inclusive education model. One teacher suggested, *'For the project to be sustainable, the State must own in it, because the children with visual impairment in general live in destitute families and the equipment used is too expensive.'* Alongside state ownership of the programme, it was highlighted that greater ownership should be fostered at the community level (see below). In Kaolack, one parent explained, *'We cannot entirely depend on the redevelopment project. We are from Kaolack and we must stick together to improve certain things in the school so that in a year or two, other children with disabilities apart from the children who are blind can also attend.'*

Community awareness and engagement

When discussing the sustainability of the project, and of inclusive education more generally, parents and teachers explained the importance of engaging the community. In order to generate support for the programme, they agreed that awareness and sensitisation campaigns would need to combat ignorance; create awareness about disabilities and ability of children with disabilities; provide information about inclusive education; and have targeted communication channel through media and door-to-door campaigns. One teacher in Kaolack reported, *'There is lack of awareness and collaboration, the people do not know that there is an inclusive school in Kaolack. So, we need to educate them to emphasize this.'* Another teacher explained, *'It must be based on awareness and communication, because if the community is not well informed it would be a little difficult to carry out an inclusive education project, especially in the suburbs; so you always have to build on a great awareness before starting any project whatsoever.'*

Parents suggested experimenting with the 'Ndeye Daara' system, a well-known local enterprise, as a way of making inclusive education more sustainable. One parent explained, *'We have approached the enterprises in the community where our inclusive school is, so that they could support us.'*

Several participants agreed that in generating awareness about inclusive education, the general population should also receive more information about disability. This would likely

make them more accepting because, *'a disability can happen to anyone, so if the population does not react, it may be a lack of awareness.'* In order to engage the community around disability, social inclusion and inclusive education, participants emphasised that parents and teachers should combine efforts and form a committee to ensure that, *'the whole surrounding population should be well informed, because you never know when a student with a disability can find himself alone outside, and a well-informed society will be able to handle these types of situations.'*

Some participants suggested setting up associations that could run income generating activities. Others want to take advantage of the corporate social responsibility of enterprises around their school. *'I think we should create associations that would generate revenues. That will allow to run a school canteen for handicapped children, and then solving their transport problem.'*

Recommendations made by children with disabilities, their teachers and parents

Recommendations made by children with disabilities (non-gender specific)

- Provide us with materials for geometry and drawing, notebooks and books
- Help us to have school buses
- Keep working on creating canteens at our schools
- Work towards having the option of boarding at school
- Help us to get around more easily

Recommendations made by teachers (non-gender specific)

- Strengthen inclusion teacher training by expanding it to include classroom practices
- Develop continuing programme delivered by professionals trained for this purpose
- Organise knowledge exchange with other schools committed to inclusive education
- Award teaching diplomas certifying received training in inclusive education
- Improve means to meet costs required by inclusive education (parents are often in extreme poverty)
- Advocate for assistance with transportation of some children with disabilities to and from school
- When enrolling, check if the disability affecting the child is associated with other disorders
- Plan for the implementation of a similar project in secondary schools that will receive students with disabilities coming from inclusive primary schools
- Strengthen sensitisation of the whole community to help with participation and mobilisation of the Sightsavers project
- Advocate for local and government authorities to provide the conditions for sustainability of the project
- Source provision of adapted teaching materials in sufficient quantities

Recommendations made by parents of children with disabilities (non-gender specific)

Advocate for a Braille specialist to support blind children, who are in need of reinforcement in Braille

Look for funds for the purchase of a regional Braille printer to support the production of textbooks

Seek provision of a school bus for those with particular difficulties in getting to and from school

Advocate for an operational canteen

Advocate for a well-qualified school-home supervisor

Consider boarding options

Establish a parent (of children with disabilities) association to make advocacy efforts

Gender-specific recommendations from participants

Stay present to complexity: avoid homogeneity e.g. complexity of gender and type of disability

Support girls with disabilities to build confidence and resilience

Help communities to see girls with disabilities as capable

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