

“MAKING IT WORK!” Good Practice case study



How early childhood education and social stimulation interventions contribute to the personal development and integration of children with vision-impairment?

Title: Inclusive Kindergarten for vision-impaired and sighted children
Organization/project: Kiki's Kids
Location: Shigatse – TAR (Tibet Autonomous Region) - CHINA
Scope: Regional (TAR)

Related articles of the CRPD

This practice relates to **article 24** concerning the right to education.

Related article of the China National Law of the Protection of Persons with Disabilities (2008)

This practice relates to Chapter 3 -**Article 22** “Education for persons with disabilities shall be developed (...) while effort shall be made to carry out preschool education (...).”

	RESPECT FOR THE EVOLVING CAPACITIES OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES PRE-SCHOOLING- EQUAL OPPORTUNITY – INCLUSIVE EDUCATION –INNOVATION- ACCESSIBILITY – EARLY INTERVENTION
<i>Vision-impaired and sighted children playing together at the Kiki's inclusive kindergarten</i>	<i>Key words</i>

Background and context

In TAR, there are **superstitions surrounding blindness** which is seen as a punishment for wrongdoings in previous lives. Kindergartens in rural area, if at all available, are too expensive for the average child. Many parents in TAR do not believe that their child with vision-impairment can take care of itself. They just make them sit in one place or tie them to a bed. Children are not allowed to move around for the fear of hurting themselves. But children need physical exercise in order to stay healthy and to develop their motor skills since they need to use their hands and fingers to learn how to read and write.

Description of the practice

Kiki's kindergarten is the first **early intervention and integration kindergarten for vision-impaired and sighted children in TAR**. The goal of KIKI's kindergarten is to provide necessary skills to young children and simultaneously **bridge the gap that exists between those who can see and those who cannot**. The vision-impaired children learn **daily living skills, tactile recognition, orientation and mobility skills, motor skills, physical training and Braille reading** and while the **sighted kids learn to accept and believe in the abilities of their vision-impaired mates** paving the way for future social transformation. The sighted children also benefit from learning basic skills in reading, writing, and foreign languages. The project is located in Shigatse, the second largest city in TAR. At

present, the kindergarten welcomes 22 children aged from 2 to 6 years old. The children spend between 3 to 4 years at the kindergarten. At age of 6, they are ready to join the Braille Without Borders preparatory school for one more year of **intensive preparation, before integrating mainstream schools.**

This concept was born from Kyila's (founder) own life experiences as a person with vision-impairment and her different childhood. Before the age of 12, she never attended school. She was at home, over-protected by her parents, who did not know a how to deal with her and her 3 siblings with vision-impairment. She had the feeling she had no childhood and that many years were "wasted". She had no interaction with the outside world. She was feeling uncomfortable meeting with sighted people. And she could feel that sighted people were uneasy too. Later when she joined the Braille Without Borders school, she discovered that the world was full of opportunities for the persons with vision-impairment. She developed this idea of inclusive kindergarten to ensure that in the future children with vision-impairment will have early-education opportunities. She wants that persons with vision-impairment and sighted persons also to learn to live together at early stage.

Process involved

- 1- Develop a clear and feasible idea: the project founder attended 1 year university studying social entrepreneurship. She could develop skills in the field of public speaking, proposal writing, fundraising, creativity, and self- confidence.
- 2- Research as much information as possible on the topic and similar projects. Develop networks; ask advice to lawyers for all administrative matters.
- 3- Find regular donors
- 4- Convince local authorities (Tibet Disabled Persons' Federation) of the feasibility of the project.

Resources required

Kindergarten staff :

- 1 director (founder) for the general management of the project
- 4 teachers (including 1 teacher trained on Montessori active methodology)
- 3 house staff (cook, house parents)

The support from Tibet Disabled Persons' Federation is necessary to get necessary autorisation. The Tibet Disabled Persons' Federation and Handicap international are referring young children with vision-impairment to the kindergarten. Regular spots were broadcasted on TAR Radio station to inform the population about the existence of the inclusive kindergarten. Radio has proven to be very efficient to reach rural areas. The project is funded by individual donors, foundations and companies (national and international).

The factors that made this practice possible

KiKi's kindergarten has formed a partnership with the Tibet Disabled Persons Federation, working toward the same goal of educating and integrating children with vision-impairment in TAR. Kiki's kindergarten is also in collaboration with Braille Without Borders. Specifically, Braille Without Borders support KiKi's kindergarten in conducting outreach programs to identify young children in rural areas, and in building networks with mainstream schools.

Some of the difficulties encountered

- Trust : At first, the trust of the local authorities was difficult to gain, because the project was innovative and the founder was young with no former experience. After a year, the local authorities have been convincing of the relevance and efficiency of the project.
- Registration : NGOs registration remains an issue in China. But currently there are openings toward registration and the organisation has initiated the registration process.
- Secure and regular funding: Funding was a challenge when the project was not actually started because there is nothing concrete to show to potential donors.
- Project location: Being far from Lhasa, medical facilities are not easily reachable when children face medial problems.
- Teaching : Teaching stimulatingly to both groups, sighted and children with vision-impairment, is not always possible.

The effects / impact of the practice

- ✓ The **development of capacity of young children is quickly visible**. At an early stage, children with vision-impairment require specific interventions and training in order to progress through usual developmental stages and grasp basic concepts.
- ✓ The project support children **preparing a life plan, with early autonomy, independence, self confidence**.
- ✓ This practice **changes the general public negative attitudes' toward disability**. Visitors' comments are very positive about the project and the capacity to learn of young kids. Parents are totally changing their outlook on the capacity of their own children.

Possible improvement

- The proportion between sighted and children with vision-impairment should be more balanced. Presently, children with vision-impairment count for the majority of the students.
- Teachers need to receive more training, especially on active reaching methods.
- A more creative curriculum, meeting the need of both children with vision-impairment and sighted children should be designed.
- Regular parents meeting and guidance should be organised to give practical support to better interact and stimulate their children.

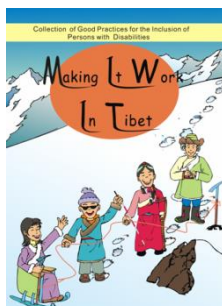
Recommendations for the replication this practice

- Quality of teaching should be high, with subject like English, to attract sighted children.
- Proper training of staff is a key starting point.
- Similar practice should be set up in every prefectures to cater the need of both children with vision-impairment and sighted children.
- Mainstream schools (headmasters, teachers and students) need to receive specific awareness on disability to be able to develop more inclusive practices and be better equipped to answer the needs of students with disabilities.



More information

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Full project report: [Collection of good practices for the inclusion of people with disabilities](#)

Criteria for the good practices: see page 8 (Part 1 of the report)

Recommendations from the good practices: Part 3 of the report