



## Knowledge hub - Collection of best practices

### Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) \*

Itinerant Teachers

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented \*

Togo and Burkina Faso

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to \*

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) \*

Humanity & Inclusion

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. \*

Itinerant teachers, supporting children with visual, hearing and intellectual disabilities, support mechanism

6. What makes it a best practice? \*

Children with more complex needs who may otherwise drop out or never enrol in school are supported to stay in regular classrooms, through the support of an itinerant teacher.

## Description of the best practice

### 7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? \*

Examples such as mobile and itinerant teachers who have specialist skills to support and mentor class teachers and provide ongoing support to students with specific needs have been successful in a number of small-scale initiatives such as in Burkina Faso and Togo, with ministerial involvement (Humanity & Inclusion, 2021) . This system has also been piloted in other countries supported by HI such as in Nepal , Cambodia , Mali and Sierra Leone. Itinerant or mobile teachers have specialist skills in supporting children with different types of disabilities or needs and they move between different schools supporting learners and their teachers. On average , in

Togo and Burkina Faso they have a caseload of around 25 students across a number of schools (e.g. 5 per teacher) . In Togo, itinerant teachers support children with physical disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and/ or sensory disabilities; in Burkina Faso, itinerant teachers support children with visual impairments, though there is interest in expanding the approach to serve other types of disabilities. This approach to support inclusive education was implemented because there was a problem of drop outs amongst children with disabilities and it was recognised that only children with mild to moderate sensory impairments were able to continue to stay in schools in the region. There was therefore a need to do more to support children with more severe sensory impairments, and also to support children with intellectual disabilities who were identified as a group at high risk of drop out, or never attending school.

## 8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation?

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Humanity & Inclusion initiated Togo's model in 2010, in northern Togo in Dapaong. Since then, the system has spread to a total of 10 areas, and in 3 areas HI is not the implementing partner. In Burkina Faso, it started in 2016 and has now spread to 6 different geographical areas.

Depending on a child's needs, itinerant teacher support includes additional explanation of lesson content, sign language or braille assistance, help with homework ( working alongside families) , and transcribing student responses to exercises and exams. Itinerant teachers also support the lead classroom teacher, coaching the teacher on inclusion strategies, collaborating to plan inclusive lessons, and providing instructional support, though the mainstream school teacher remains the primary facilitator of inclusive instruction for targeted children . There are several stages to the implementation of this system. After the identification of a child with a disability and his/her referral to a school, it is essential to observe and assess the child's needs in order to decide on the support that the itinerant teacher will provide. The use of the IEP ( individual education plan) is essential; it gives the opportunity to bring actors together (parent, teacher, itinerant teacher, principal) and set objectives.

The relationship between the regular teacher and the itinerant teacher must be very strong. The modalities for collaboration and their respective roles in the classroom have to be determined. The most successful children with disabilities are those who are supported by the itinerant teacher at school and at home. This also strengthens the contribution of families/parent.

A key aspect is the need for education ministry involvement from the outset. In Togo, HI liaised with the Education ministry to ensure that the ministry of education government teachers should be itinerant teachers, with HI providing training, but with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and Literacy paying the salaries of itinerant teachers. This focussed on sustainability of the action from the start. In the 2020-2030 Education Sector Plan, validated in June 2020, the itinerant teacher approach was mentioned in its education strategy. The ministry of education has also adopted HI's braille, sign language, and inclusive education training manuals for use nationwide, which support training needs. In togo over 600 children are currently being supported whereas in Burkina Faso, the system is much smaller with only 39 children being currently supported, and it is in the early stage of institutionalisation. However. there is strong government support for the approach, due to a greater institutionalisation of inclusive education, especially given the dedicated department for inclusive education at the Ministry of Education and strong community structures for inclusion.

## 9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? \*

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and Literacy in Togo has now adopted the itinerant teacher approach as part of its national model, and the approach has also been integrated into the country's education sector plan.

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and Literacy continues to pay the salaries of itinerant teachers. However, although there is now a focal point at the Directorate of Preschool and Primary Education (DEPP) who monitors the implementation of the itinerant teacher model, the position has no real decision-making power. A national inclusive education cluster has been established and should be used for decision-making and information sharing with ministry officials (general secretary, minister, etc.) in order to ensure stronger ownership and political and budgetary commitment.

An assessment was carried out in 2 districts in Togo ( Kara and Savanahh regions) , where 688 girls and boys with disabilities (54% being girls) now receive support from itinerant teachers. Children have been tracked from 2010 and the data shows that the percentage of beneficiary pupils who drop out is very low (below 10% on average for children with disabilities; 7% for pupils with hearing disabilities and 9% for pupils with visual disabilities). In 2020, 43 pupils with disabilities supported by itinerant teachers sat for the primary education completion exam and all pupils with visual or hearing disabilities (26 pupils in total) passed. For children with intellectual disabilities (17 pupils), the success rate was 88%. The success rate for all pupils with disabilities is higher than the average for the five inspectorates covered (86% success rate on average).

There has been a strong impact of this best practice on beneficiaries and their communities, and indeed their teachers. Qualitative data shows that there has been a strengthening of the role of parents in their children's education, strengthening of the relationship between parents and their children (parents talk more with their children and reassure them), an improvement in children's socio emotional skills " my daughter is no longer withdrawn", and overall an improvement in the link between parents and the teaching team due to increased meetings and home visits including the class teacher and the itinerant teacher.

## 10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? \*

In Burkina Faso, the initiative is too small to scale up at present as there are only 39 children in the system. The overall objective of the National Inclusive Education Strategy (SNDEI) revised in 2018 setting out strategies for the development of inclusive education from 2018–2022 has no mention of the itinerant teacher system in the strategy so it is early days for scale up. The Director for the Promotion of Inclusive Education, Girls' Education and Gender (DPEIEFG(5) admits that there are shortcomings regarding the ownership and recognition of the system by the State. Hopefully this will develop in time, as the system is scaled up in more and more areas. However, in Togo, there have been more replicable and transformative results. Further recommendations include: a need to invest sufficiently in the training of the itinerant teachers recruited, a pre-service training plan developed with the participation of the inspectorates and special schools, a long-term practical course in a special school or a school with strong experiences of supporting children with complex needs, if one is available (3 to 6 months, for instance) before they start working; and continuing education should be ensured throughout (development of adapted tools and materials, retraining, etc.). Another key lessons learnt is that empowering participating teachers to be innovative is a fundamental ingredient of the model's success, as is involving people with disabilities in the community sensitisation and identification process. While government education inspectors have been trained to monitor and support itinerant teachers in Togo which is a strength to the system given that ongoing capacity building is an issue, one interviewee ( from the case study research) reported that fully transitioning training expertise from HI trainers to the state remains a challenge. Allowing more experienced itinerant teachers to become trainers would address this need, and would also provide professional development opportunities for itinerant teachers.

## 11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a “best practice”. What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented “best practice” or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? \*

This is a best practice as it helps bridge the gap for how to support children with more complex needs in mainstream schools. Before this system is introduced it's important to provide stakeholders with information on the system and roles.

It is a good idea to organize study tours to see what is done in practice, and also to raise awareness amongst decision makers from the outset and throughout the implementation. This is important not only to make later decision making for scale up more smooth but also to speed up the scaling process. During the implementation of the pilot, Identify and train specialized teachers who already have a background on working with children with particular disabilities and who understand the importance of inclusive education within mainstream schools. Then pilot the system for a year, before carrying out an assessment, to enable the system to be more formalised. After the pilot, monitor and evaluate the system and make sure it's adapted to the context . The issue of proper training is crucial not just a pre-service training plan for the itinerant teachers themselves, including practical aspects but also principals and regular teachers need to be sufficiently educated and trained. It is important to raise the awareness of all pupils in the classrooms where itinerant teachers work. Also children with disabilities will need a period of adjustment to accept the presence of an adult at his or her side at school, and sometimes at home for some periods. It is important to have regular discussions with the child about his or her feelings; it is also important to ensure that the itinerant teacher does not do too much and does not make the child overdependent on him/her. Thus, the itinerant teacher should not substitute for the teacher, but more of a support to both the child and the teacher.

## 12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. \*

UNESCO, 2020a

<https://asksource.info/resources/itinerant-teachers-innovative-and-personalized-tutoring-system> ( Humanity & Inclusion 2021) <https://asksource.info/resources/experiences-implementing-inclusive-education-west-africa-and-madagascar> ( Educate a Child et al, 2020)