

Inclusive and Quality Education for All

Lessons from
Effectiveness Reviews
of Misean Cara Education Projects



Background

There are few who would argue that a quality education is essential to each individual's overall development, to availing of both career and personal opportunities. But, while primary school enrolment in developing countries is at 91%, there are still 57 million children not attending school. And, according to UNESCO¹, if current trends persist, only 70% of children in low income countries will complete primary school in 2030, a goal that should have been achieved in 2015; universal primary completion will be achieved in 2042, universal lower secondary completion in 2059 and universal upper secondary completion in 2084. Even for those who access the system, the often poor quality of the education provided means that, today, over 114 million young people lack basic literacy skills, with 60% of these being women.

In 2015 and 2016, Misesan Cara commissioned effectiveness reviews of eleven education projects across five countries. This current document summarises the two consultants' reports, and identifies lessons learned to inform future work.

Delivering Results

At an overall level, the consultants found:

- All the projects were highly relevant to the context in which they operated, and to the needs of a range of beneficiaries.
- While focussed on education, all projects were attempting to address more fundamental issues of poverty and discrimination, seeing education as a way out of a life of vulnerability. This is entirely consistent with the holistic missionary approach to development.
- Enrolment and attendance rates were high across all projects – reflecting both the high level of need for the services provided and the good reputation of the projects themselves.
- Nearly all of the projects were well linked in with other stakeholders or service providers. This made possible, in many cases, access to additional resources or services.

At the level of individual projects, the following results in particular were noted:

- In one project in Zimbabwe, expertise developed by the project in the area of Accelerated Literacy & Numeracy Education has been shared with other organisations in Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia and

Kenya. And the project's methodology has directly influenced a new UNICEF programme, which is now being implemented nationally. Observations from the project show that the majority of children gain confidence and are prepared to enter mainstream education after one year. *Zimbabwe 2015*

- In Peru, home visits by teachers to families of children with special needs are helping to break down barriers, promote acceptance and reduce discrimination on the part of the wider community. *Peru 2015*
- An accelerated learning project in Manila, the Philippines, is targeted at teenagers who have left formal education, but there has also been success in bringing parents back to education, thus creating a double benefit of enhancing the parents' self-esteem and ensuring ongoing support for the children's education. *The Philippines, 2015*

**"Enrolment and attendance rates were high across all of the sampled projects. This speaks both to the high level of need for these services and for their reputation as trusted providers of good quality education."
Coffey, 2015.**



Sr. Perpetua Gomba, Project Director (second from left), with members of the Classic Leatherworks Group at Tongogara Refugee Camp, Zimbabwe. After training provided by Misesan Cara member organisation, Jesuit Refugee Services, the Group is now running its own business. In 2015 and 2016, the group produced shoes for children attending the secondary school in Tongogara Camp. Zambia 2016a.

¹ Global Education Monitoring Report, 2016

- In Zambia, a project for children with special educational needs has become a centre of excellence, recognised by the government and by other educational institutions. The project has successfully campaigned for children with special needs to have a writer assigned to them when sitting examinations. Through their skills training programme, the project organises work experience, and was successful in bringing about a change in hiring practices at a local supermarket, opening up the opportunity for people with special needs to be hired (see Box 1). *Zambia 2015*
- In South Africa, the introduction of a peer mediation approach to dealing with conflict in five schools reduced the levels of conflict between learners themselves, and between learners and teachers. This resulted in the traditional punitive justice approach to managing conflict being replaced by a new approach, focused on resolution. Overall, there are reports of improved behaviours and increased self-confidence. *South Africa 2016a*
- The provision of vocational training for over 150 people living in a refugee camp of up to 12,000 inhabitants led to over 70 businesses being set up, providing both an occupation and an income for the participants. *Zimbabwe, 2016a*
- The building of new classrooms in one school, to allow for a proper integration of the school campus, ended the use of an insecure location, improving school security and reducing significantly the risk of violence to students. While this may appear on the surface to have been an infrastructure project, the long-term impact of having a safe learning environment is invaluable to staff and students alike. *South Africa 2016b*
- In another school, the construction of new classrooms allowed for a reduction in student/teacher ratios, and an increase in the services available to disadvantaged and vulnerable children, including speech & language therapy, occupational therapy, play therapy, remedial support and counselling. *South Africa 2016c*
- In a third school which benefitted from an extension, enrolment increased by 154 students, ahead of the target of 120. Despite this, average class size reduced from 65 to 40. *Zimbabwe 2016b*



The Special Needs Unit is part of the Nano Nagle Childcare and Learning Centre. The pre-school is run by Misesan Cara member organisation the Presentation Sisters. Photo: Presentation Sisters. The Philippines, 2015b.

1 - Mobilising Resources for Special Needs Education in Lusaka, Zambia



Some of the Grade 7 students for special needs education in Bauleni having fun during lessons. Photo: The Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

The Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary have been running a special needs educational project in the Bauleni area of Lusaka for over 15 years. In 2015, the project catered for 581 pupils, 140 of whom had special educational needs. Part of the project involves an outreach programme, providing home schooling for children with disabilities in many cases too profound to be catered for by the formal education system. There are others who do make the transition from home schooling in to full-time special needs education (65 in 2015) and from special needs education into the formal system (20 in 2015). The project has established itself as a centre of excellence recognised by the government and other institutions.

One remarkable aspect of the project is the manner in which the Sisters have managed to leverage resources to support their work. Lobbying with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education resulted in the provision of 27 new teachers for the schools. Contacts with Standard Chartered Bank, one of the biggest banks in Africa, yielded a brand new library, while advocacy with a local supermarket chain brought about a change in recruitment policy that resulted in people with special needs being offered employment.

Yet another example of resource mobilisation is the range of income generating activities (IGAs), almost all of which turn a profit for further investment into the project. Students in the schools participate in the IGAs, acquiring life skills, and the farm-based activities provide the school with produce for student meals. The various products have earned a reputation for quality in the local community, with people coming to buy bread and other groceries. There is a fish pond which has been used by the government for an aquaculture demonstration. This wide diversification of sources of income and other resources, typical of missionary work, is a major contributory factor to the sustainability of the project.

Zambia 2015

Lessons Learned

The following points were noted as contributing significantly to project-level success.

What Went Well

- One powerful contributor to change in attitudes and behaviours in relation to education is the evident success of participating students. Where successful students act as advocates for education, the stigma associated with the pursuit of learning is eliminated, and others consider returning to education themselves.
- The involvement of parents, in particular, is a major contributory factor in the success of education projects. In one project, when a child dropped out, or was in danger of dropping out, of school, the parents themselves were encouraged to consider the advantages of returning to education. The positive experience thus created for the parents ensured that their children were supported to return to the classroom. In another case, parents were provided with a checklist of activities to follow up at home, in order to support their child's education.
- In the case of children with disabilities from poor backgrounds, ensuring retention in non-formal or formal education requires a diverse range of interventions outside the classroom, such as income generation, community volunteers working to encourage acceptance of education, the provision of school meals, and promoting the involvement of parents.
- Bringing children with special educational needs into the formal education system will continue to meet significant challenges, as state-run schools are often ill-prepared, in terms of equipment and staff capacity, to cater for such needs. This constraint applies also to children with special needs being able to progress within the formal system.
- The long-term presence of a project within a community, and the long-term presence of core staff within a project, are key factors in developing high levels of trust between community members and project staff. This trust is, in turn, a major factor in project success.

Across the two years of evaluations, the following points were identified as areas where improvement could further enhance project success:

- In a vicious circle, poverty will continue to be a barrier to education, as poor families will be forced to prioritise the immediate economic value of a child's labour over the longer-term benefits of their education. The lack of an education will then contribute to continuing poverty. One project was particularly successful in addressing this challenge, but more, and more innovative, strategies must be found to break down this barrier.
- The good work being done on the ground is not always reflected adequately in project proposals and reports. Not all potential donors will have the opportunity to visit a project and observe first-hand what is going on, thus coming to an understanding of the rationale for the project and the change it is trying to bring about. It's important, therefore, that what is written about the project does justice to what is happening on the ground, in a way that convinces donors that supporting the project is a worthwhile investment.
- While project activities and outputs are clearly stated from the outset, the expected longer-term development outcomes are sometimes not well-expressed, thus making it difficult to assess the overall impact of a project. This is important for any type of intervention, even a relatively straightforward construction project, but is all the more important for complex projects promoting behaviour change and life-skills development.
- Linked to the previous point, monitoring, evaluation and learning is an area that could benefit from some degree of strengthening. Documents produced at the time of a funding proposal, such as a Results Framework, should be taken forward and used as ongoing support documents during project implementation.
- In some cases, while it was clear that the projects targeted marginalised and vulnerable communities, more might have been done from the outset to target particularly vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, people living with

Areas for Attention

HIV & AIDS, or orphans. Tailored interventions could then have been built into the project design to cater for the specific needs of such groups.

"The application of a faith-based approach...had a very powerful effect on participants, with particular regard to the importance of personal values, and the dignity of each individual – aspects of education that are often overlooked in conventional education projects that often focus exclusively on academic achievement. The schools peacebuilding project and the leadership training project in particular have the potential to be ground-breaking in this regard."
Williams, 2016.



In Parola and Patayas, two of the poorest areas in the Philippine capital, Manila, the Alsa Buhay project provides support to young people who have dropped out of formal education, and use an Alternative Learning System to educate them up to an equivalent standard. This photo shows a group of teenagers from Parola attending class. In the background on the left is Daniela Coppola from Misesan Cara member organisation the Society of the Divine Saviour. Photo: Society of the Divine Saviour, The Philippines, 2015a.

2 - Promoting Self-esteem in the Western Cape



Ten volunteer leaders take part in an intense Edmund Rice Camp group work session to obtain their certificates in Community Leadership. The workshop was facilitated by the Rural Development Support Program. Photo: Edmund Rice Camps.

Edmund Rice Camps (ERC), an offshoot of the Christian Brothers, is working with some of the most marginalised and vulnerable children and young adults living in extremely difficult circumstances in parts of the Western Cape, South Africa. The purpose of the recreational and life-skills camps (2-3 days in duration) is to build the self-esteem of vulnerable and marginalised 7-16-year-olds, while at the same time developing the leadership skills of young adult (17-30 years old) volunteers.

Participants include individuals who are highly vulnerable, who have experienced neglect or abuse, or who are orphans or refugees. Vulnerable parents, often with poor parenting skills, are also reached through the project.

The camps are, in the words of the consultant, "having a powerful impact on the individuals that participate in them". There is evidence of children using their improved life skills to improve school work, relationships and feelings of self-worth. ERC staff and volunteers (themselves drawn from the target group) are "well trained, very professional and technically very competent."

South Africa 2015d

The Projects

The projects evaluated were:

2015	2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Manuel Duato School, Columban Fathers (Peru 2015) – Alsa Buhay Project for Out-of-school Youth, Society of the Divine Saviour (The Philippines 2015a) – Nano Nagle Childcare and Learning Centre, Presentation Sisters (The Philippines 2015b) – Mavambo Trust Accelerated Literacy & Numeracy Project, Redemptorists (Zimbabwe 2015) – Bauleni Special Needs Project, Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary – Chigwell (Zambia 2015) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Building Peace in Catholic Schools, Sisters of the Holy Cross (South Africa 2016a) – New Classrooms at St. Boniface High School, Edmund Rice/Christian Brothers (South Africa 2016b) – Primary School Enlargement - Tall Trees from Small Seeds, Missionary Sisters of the Assumption (South Africa 2016c) – Edmund Rice Camps for Young People, Edmund Rice/Christian Brothers (South Africa 2016d) – Skills Training in Tongogara Refugee Camp, Jesuit Refugee Services (Zimbabwe 2016a) – Secondary School Enlargement in Tongogara, Jesuit Missions (Zimbabwe 2016b)

In 2015, the evaluations were carried out by a team of five from Coffey International (UK), led by Peter Mayers, while the work in 2016 was done by Mike Williams.

About Misesan Cara

Established in 2004, Misesan Cara is an international and Irish faith-based missionary development movement made up of 90 member organisations working in over 50 countries. We work with some of the most marginalised and vulnerable people in developing countries. Adopting a human rights focus, we support communities addressing basic needs in the areas of education, health, and livelihoods, as well as advocating for economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. At times of humanitarian crisis, the trusted and long-term presence of missionaries in affected communities also allows for rapid, efficient and targeted responses.

Misesan Cara and our members work collectively and individually through the missionary approach to development. This framework is based on five values: respect, justice, commitment, compassion and integrity. Together, these establish the basis for the approach of missionaries to good development practice.

Our Strategy 2017-2021 identifies five goals:

- Uphold the right to quality education
- Uphold the right to better health, clean water and sanitation

- Uphold the right to sustainable livelihoods
- Uphold and advocate for human rights
- Enhance and promote the missionary approach to development.

Further expressing our desire to reach the most vulnerable and marginalised, the Strategy will see Misesan Cara bringing a particular focus to bear on targeting five groups: women, children, refugees, displaced people and people with disabilities.



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