



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

IERC SCHOOL OUTREACH GUIDELINES



CONTENTS

Part A: Introduction To The School Outreach Process	4
Introduction	5
Why are school outreach visits important?	5
Who is in the School Outreach Team?	6
What Does School Outreach involve?	6
Part B: Key Steps to Planning School Outreach Activities	7
1. Develop an annual plan	8
2. Develop a detailed quarterly work plan	8
3. Coordinate with School Inspectors	11
4. Coordinate with Schools	11
5. Coordinate with Provincial Health Authority	13
6. Coordinate with relevant Non-Government Organisations (NGOs)	13
Part C: The School Outreach Visit	14
1. Child Safeguarding	15
2. Schedule	15
3. Equipment and Resources	17
4. Setting up on the day	18
5. Screening	18
6. Point of Care Treatment	19
7. Providing Guidance and Support to Teachers	19
8. School Accessibility Check	20
9. Conducting Awareness Sessions	21
10. Home Visits - Road to School	22
Part D: Referring and Registering Students with the IERC and Specialist Health Services	23
1. Referring Students to Health and Specialist Services	24
2. IERC Referral	24
3. Registering Students with the IERC	24
Part E: Specialist IERC Support	25
1. Assistive Devices	26
2. Individual Education Plans (IEPs)	29
Annex A: Guide for Schools: Purpose and Benefits of School Outreach Activities	31
ANNEX B: Key Policy Points	33
Key Sections of the Inclusive Education Policy and Minimum Standards (2024)	33
Key Sections of the National School Health Policy (2015)	35

PART A: INTRODUCTION TO THE PART SCHOOL OUTREACH PROCESS



INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education supports all students, including students with disabilities and additional learning needs, to access quality education and to reach their full potential. The right of all children to an education is embedded in the Inclusive Education (IE) Policy and the National Education Plan (NEP) 2020-2029.

To help schools develop an inclusive approach, the National Department of Education (NDoE) has a network of Inclusive Education Resource Centres (IERCs). The IE Policy emphasises the central role of IERCs in ensuring children with disabilities and additional learning needs can participate and learn in schools alongside their peers. IERCs support schools and communities to assess and enrol students with disabilities, develop Individual Education Plans (IEPs), improve inclusive teaching practices, and raise awareness and understanding about disabilities. The IE Policy also identifies the importance of connecting schools with outreach programs conducted by many IERCs to help schools to screen, identify and support children with disabilities. However, IERCs have limited resources, and this impacts their ability to conduct school outreach activities, leaving many children with disabilities unsupported.

The IERC School Outreach Guidelines are designed to support all IERC staff who are involved in school outreach activities.

Why are school outreach visits important?

Even though there are national commitments supporting inclusive education, many children with disabilities struggle to access, fully participate, and learn in schools. There are many reasons for this. It could be because of negative cultural beliefs and attitudes which means children with disabilities or additional learning needs are kept at home. It could be because the school grounds are not accessible for some children with disabilities. School leadership and teachers may not understand how best to support children with disabilities and additional learning difficulties in their schools and classrooms. Whatever the reason, we know that without the proper support, children with disabilities and additional learning needs will struggle to fully participate and learn, leading to high rates of absenteeism and early drop out from school.

The IE Policy recognises that one of the primary roles of the IERCs is to ensure that schools are connected to IERC staff for outreach support. The goal of this support is to help teachers feel confident in conducting initial screening and identification of students with disabilities and additional learning needs, to be able to write simple IEPs for some students, and to know how and when to refer students to the IERCs for more in-depth IEPs and/or specialist support. All information, forms and resources relating to IEPs can be found in the IEP Teacher's Guide and IEP Additional Guidelines and Resources.



Who is in the School Outreach Team?

The School Outreach Team may consist of the following people:

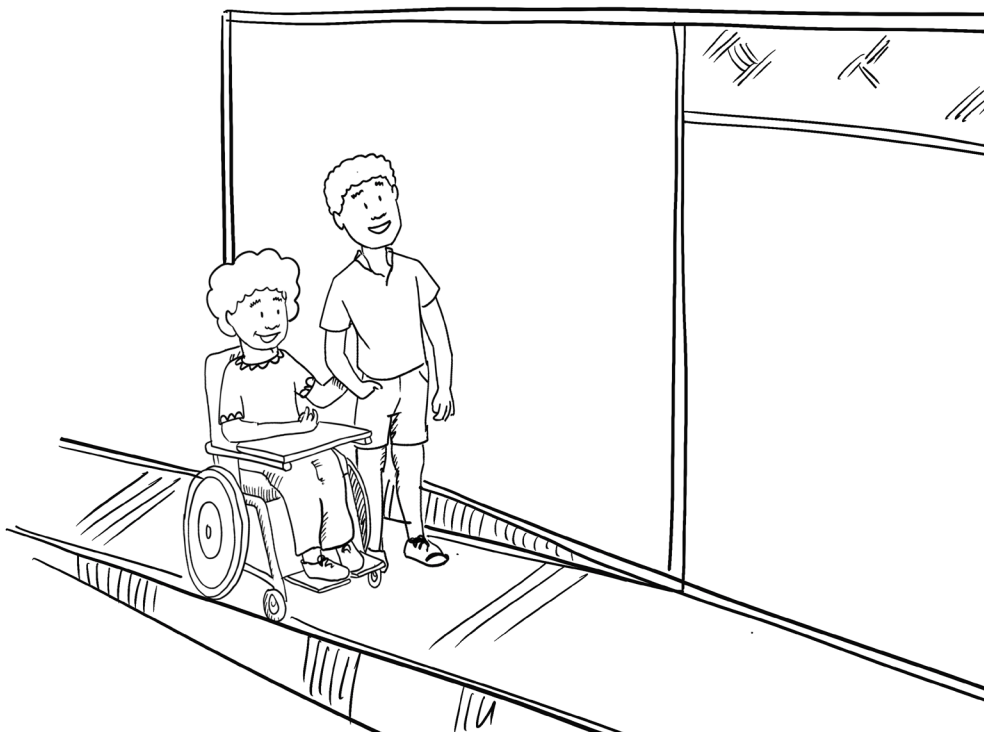
- Inclusive Education Outreach Officer (where relevant).
- IERC Specialist Teacher/s.
- Community-based Inclusive Development (CBID) staff (previously known as Community-based Rehabilitation (CBR)).
- A certified health worker.

It is important to make the most of the time available during school outreach visits. The number of staff in each IERC varies, so each team will look different.

What Does School Outreach involve?

IERC School Outreach Activities include:

- School and community engagement and awareness raising on the inclusion of students with disabilities and additional learning needs.
- Identifying and providing support to children with disabilities and additional learning needs - this can include helping teachers to understand when and how to refer a student to the IERC, connecting with health and specialist services, and how to obtain assistive devices.
- Training school heads and teachers to improve inclusive teaching practices, conduct initial screening of students who they are concerned about, and write, implement and review Individual Education Plans (IEPs).



PART B: KEY STEPS TO PLANNING SCHOOL OUTREACH ACTIVITIES



1. DEVELOP AN ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

- IERCs should include outreach activities in their SLIP Annual Action Plan.
- In deciding when and which schools to visit, think about the following:



The Education Calendar:

Don't plan visits during holiday times.



Weather conditions and transport routes:

Plan rural and remote school visits during dry periods of the year and when transport routes are safest. Visit clusters of schools to reduce transport times.



Community factors:

Are there times of the year when some communities are engaged in livelihood activities that might impact school attendance, such as agricultural harvest times or times when families travel to urban markets? Your province may have other local factors to be aware of.



Cost sharing:

Can the IERC conduct joint visits with the School Inspectors, Guidance Officer, Education Agency, or Provincial Health Authority?

2. DEVELOP A DETAILED QUARTERLY WORK PLAN

This should include:

- Schools
- The activities that need to be done.
- Who will be responsibility for leading the task/activity.
- Who will be involved in the activity.
- When the activity will be completed.
- Budget



Template 1 provides a workplan template you can use.

Sample Quarterly Work Plan

Activity / Task	Person(s) Responsible	Person(s) involved	Completed by
School selection and coordination			
Draft list of schools and date for school visits.	IE Outreach Officer	IERC Principal/ Coordinator	Week 1
Contact the School Inspector/s to coordinate and confirm date/s of visits. School Inspectors will then advise the PEA, DEA, and church agencies.	IE Outreach Officer	School Inspectors	Week 1
Meet or call school School Heads to coordinate and confirm date of school visit and provide guidance on preparations.	IE Outreach Officer	School Heads	Week 1
Final confirmed list of schools and date for school visits.	IE Outreach Officer	IERC Principal/ Coordinator	Week 2
Visit logistics (travel, per diem, accommodation, equipment, and materials)	IE Outreach Officer	IERC Principal/ Coordinator	Week 2

Template 1: School Outreach Quarterly Workplan Template

Activity / Task	Person(s) Responsible	Person(s) involved	Completed by (date)
School Selection and coordination			
School Outreach preparations			
School Outreach Visits			
Referrals and follow up			
Assistive Devices – procurement and distribution			
Reporting			

3. COORDINATE WITH SCHOOL INSPECTORS

The first people you should contact are the School Inspectors. Primary School Inspectors are also responsible for current Elementary schools. Secondary School Inspectors are responsible for Junior High Schools. This is to avoid any clash with their inspection visits to schools, or any other programs such as professional development, meetings, remedial classes, mock examination week, or any other planned activities.

The School Inspector will then advise the Provincial Education Advisor (PEA), District Education Advisor (DEA), and church agencies of your visit.







4. COORDINATE WITH SCHOOLS

The IE Outreach Officer or Specialist Teacher should contact the schools that the School Outreach Team intend to visit. In-person visits can be made to schools located close to the IERC or phone calls can be made to the school head at schools that are located a long distance from the IERC. Confirm the date/s and provide guidance on preparations that the school should undertake prior to the day.

Some schools will be aware of the IERC and their role in supporting children with disabilities in schools. Teachers in some schools may have been provided with training in inclusive education and may have already pre-screened children in their class using the Whole Child Checklist. They may have been able to develop and implement a Quick IEP, or be using more detailed IEPs for students with disabilities and additional learning needs in their class. (Information and guidance on this process is available in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) Teacher's Guide.)

Some schools, especially in remote areas located far away from the IERC, may not have had an IERC outreach before and some teachers may never have received training in inclusive education. Therefore, it is important to take time during this initial visit or phone call to get to know the school and understand their teacher's prior knowledge of and experience with the IERC and inclusive education.

During the initial school visit / phone call with the school head, you should:

-  Share the purpose and benefits of IERC school outreach. Annex A provides key messages on the purpose and benefits of IERC school outreach.
-  Confirm the date/s and time for the school outreach visit.
-  Provide an overview of the school outreach activities and guidance on what they should do to prepare for the school outreach visit (see below).
-  Confirm the list of students who are already registered with the IERC and/or already have an IEP.
-  Remind the school head that you will visit or call again three weeks before the planned school outreach visit to confirm arrangements, inquire about preparations and provide further guidance or support if needed.
-  Provide the school head with your phone number and contact details and let them know that they can call you to ask further questions or seek advice prior to the school outreach visit.

Guidance to school heads on preparing for the IERC school outreach

To prepare for the school outreach day, ask the school head to:

- Inform teachers, parents, and students about the IERC school outreach visit through school assembly announcements, staff meetings, Parent & Citizen (P&C) meetings and during Toksave sessions after church services. Share the key messages on the purpose and benefits of IERC school outreach.
- Provide the teachers with an overview of the school outreach day schedule and plan time in the school day for each activity. (See Part C for information about this process).
- Identify any training, guidance and support needs of teachers. Ask the Head Teacher if teachers at their school are trained in the use of the Whole Child Checklist and how to develop a quick IEP. Are there teachers with students with disabilities in their class that require individual guidance and support on how to adjust or adapt lessons to meet the child's learning needs? Based on the needs of teachers at the school, you can talk to the Head Teacher about allocating time to provide guidance and support to a small group or individual teachers.
- Encourage teachers to use the Whole Child Checklist with students they have concerns about in their class. By pre-screening students, teacher can help ensure that children that may have a disability or additional learning need are prioritised for assessment on the day of the IERC school outreach visit.
- Encourage parents of children who have been pre-screened by their teacher or parents who have concerns about their child/ren to attend on the day of the IERC school outreach visit.
- Identify children with disabilities in the community that are not enrolled school. It is important to ask the Head Teacher if they are aware of or if they can inquire with the BOM, P&C, church and community leaders etc. about children with disabilities in the community that are not enrolled in school. This is so you can plan a home visit during your time in the community to support children with disabilities to enrol in school through the Road to School. I



5. COORDINATE WITH THE PROVINCIAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

The National Department of Health (NDoH) has a National School Health Policy (2015) that provides the basis for cooperation between the NDoE and NDoH on school health checks. A health worker should be part of the School Outreach Team so that they can provide point-of-care treatment to students at the school on the day. This will help avoid having to refer students with basic health issues for follow up treatment – ensuring that students get the treatment that they need as soon as possible and saving students and their parents/caregiver’s time. This is particularly important because:

- Basic health issues, such as eye or ear infections, can become more serious if left untreated and can lead to permanent disability.
- It can save time and money for students and their families, particularly in rural and remote areas, where health services are often far away or where visits from health workers are irregular.
- For some students, an IEP may no longer be required once basic health issues have been treated.

In some cases, an IERC staff member may be a qualified health worker and can join the school outreach team. If the IERC does not have a member of staff who is a health worker, the IE Outreach Officer should seek support from the NDoE IE Branch to coordinate with the PHA for a certified health worker to join the school outreach team.

Annex B provides key sections of the National School Health Policy that can be used to help ensure cooperation between national and provincial education and health authorities in support of IERC school outreach activities.

6. COORDINATE WITH RELEVANT NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS (NGOS)

The majority of IERCs are part of the Callan Services IERC network and there are other NGOs, such as the Fred Hollows Foundation, that provide health and/or disability and additional learning needs support services throughout PNG. Each IERC will have different services working in their regions – if an existing list of local NGO contacts is not available, IERC Outreach Officers should map their area for local services and contacts.

PART C: THE SCHOOL OUTREACH VISIT



The school outreach visit is an important opportunity for the IERC to undertake several activities to support children with disabilities, their teachers and their caregivers.

1. CHILD SAFEGUARDING

The IERC school outreach team must abide by the national Behaviour Management Policy and PNGTA Code of Ethics. IERC staff funded by AQEFA need to follow the Abt Associates PSEAH policies.

Abuse, harassment and violence against students and staff must be reported to the provincial Guidance and Counselling Officer and School Inspector. Schools may also report incidents directly to the Police or Child Protection/Welfare Officer.

Schools may also report safeguarding incidents directly to the Program on png.safeguarding@abtassoc.com.au

During screening, IERC staff will need to touch children. It is important to remember that physical contact during screenings can confuse or make some children uncomfortable. It is important that you take the time to explain what you will do and why you will do it before you touch a child. You should always explain and ask permission before touching a child. You can say things like 'I am now going to touch your face so that I can check your ears – is this, ok?'

You must never be alone with a child in a secluded place (e.g. in a room with a closed door).

2. SCHEDULE

Activities to conduct include:

1. Awareness raising sessions to promote the rights of children with disabilities and health and hygiene promotion so that children learn how to better take care for themselves.
2. Screening and identifying children with disabilities and undertaking point of care treatment or making a referral to health and specialist services where relevant.
3. Undertaking accessibility checks and providing guidance to Head Teachers on modifications to improve the accessibility of the school environment.
4. Providing training, guidance and support to teachers to improve their inclusive teaching practices.
5. Conducting home visits to out of school children with disabilities while in the community in order to support them to enrol in school through 'Road to School' activities.

School Outreach Visit Schedule

Below is a sample schedule for a typical school outreach visit. Depending upon location, school outreach may take 2 or 3 days per cluster, so you can adjust your schedule as needed.

Time	Activities
8:00am	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Arrive at the school. 2. Meet with the school head. 3. Identify and set up screening location. 4. Obtain list of students for screening from school head and teachers. If teachers have used the whole child checklist to pre-screen children, a copy of the completed whole child checklist should be obtained. If students already have an IEP or are registered with the school, record this data.
8:30am	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Morning Awareness Session (e.g. for teachers, students, caregivers)
9:30am	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student screening (by grade) 2. Point of care treatment 3. Referrals and registration of students with the IERC
12:30pm	Lunch Break
13:00pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IE Support and guidance to teachers (see the IEP Teacher’s Guide and Additional Guidelines and Resources documents)/IEP writing and review 2. School accessibility check
15:30pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Home visits - the Road to School.
17:30pm	End of day

At the end of your visit, make sure to complete the Outreach Visit Report.

3. EQUIPMENT AND RESOURCES

<p>Awareness Sessions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability and Additional Learning Needs Inclusion, Health and Hygiene Information, Communication and Education materials (e.g. handouts, posters, pamphlets) • IEP Teacher’s Guide • Road to School • Examples of accessible materials (braille), assistive devices (e.g. white cane, hearing aid)
<p>Screening</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Otoscope • Tri-lens • Printed Screening Forms from the IEP Additional Guidelines and Resources
<p>Point of care treatment</p>	<p>Medical/basic first aid kit including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panadol • Bandages • Gauze • Ear drops • Eye drops • Cotton wool • Tweezers • Scissors • Syringes • Iodine • Stainless steel small bowls • Antibiotics (for use by a qualified health worker)
<p>Referrals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Printed IERC referral form (IEP Additional Guidelines and Resources) • Parent consent form (IEP Additional Guidelines and Resources) • Road to School documentation (IEP Additional Guidelines and Resources) • Parent interview form (IEP Additional Guidelines and Resources)
<p>School Accessibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Printed accessibility checklist (IEP Additional Guidelines and Resources)

4. SETTING UP ON THE DAY

You will need to choose a location in the school for screening students. The location should be safe, convenient, and accessible for all students. The location can be in a room, under a tree, or in an open space within the school. The location should be discussed with the school head during planning and confirmed when you arrive at the school. Talk about these questions with the school head so you can find an appropriate screening location.

Are there areas in the school that are:



Close to most of the students' classes.



Easy for students to come to.



Quiet (e.g. away from the playground or sports field).



Protected from weather (shady, sheltered).



Accessible for students with disabilities.

Also consider:



Is there a clean water source and toilet facilities that students can use whilst they are waiting?



Is there an area that students can sit comfortably whilst they are waiting?

5. SCREENING

Screening involves a set of simple assessments to investigate and identify whether a child has health, disability or learning needs. All students at the school should be screened. If teachers have used the Whole Child Checklist to pre-screen children, you should prioritise these children for screening as there is already some concern about their health, disability status or learning needs.

There are a range of screening forms available in the IEP Additional Guidelines and Resources documents.

Information about how to write and review IEPs, and how to register students with the IERC can be found in the IEP Teacher's Guide.

6. POINT-OF-CARE TREATMENT

If a qualified health worker is part of the School Outreach Team, point-of-care treatment can be provided to students with basic health issues such as a build-up of ear wax, ear or eye or skin infections and other treatable illnesses. These can all be treated on the day.

In some cases, a follow up health check or further treatment will be needed. In such cases, a health referral should be made following point-of-care treatment (See Part D below).

7. PROVIDING TRAINING, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT TO TEACHERS

After students have been screened, the School Outreach Team should take the opportunity to provide teachers with training, guidance and support to strengthen their inclusive teaching practices. Teachers can include most children with disabilities in their classroom with simple easy adaptations to their teaching, the classroom, and the curriculum. The type of guidance and support teachers need will vary depending on their needs and should be identified in your discussions with the school head prior to the school outreach visit.

Depending on the needs identified, guidance and support could include:

- How to use the Whole Child Checklist to identify children with disabilities and learning needs.
- How to develop a quick IEP and use simple strategies to remove barriers to learning.
- How to develop a more detailed IEP.
- Adapting their classroom.
- Adapting their curriculum and using accessible materials.

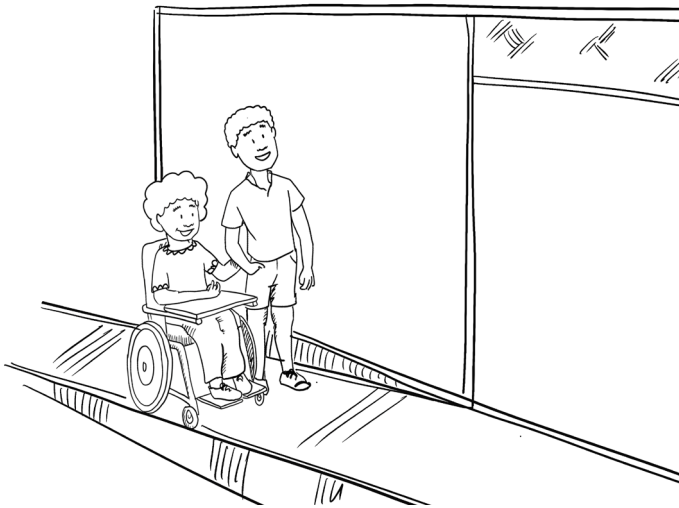
The IEP Teacher's Guide and Additional Guidelines and Resources should be used to provide guidance and support to teachers.

8. SCHOOL ACCESSIBILITY CHECK

Whilst you are at the school, a member of the School Outreach Team should conduct an accessibility check. An accessibility check involves walking around the school with the school head and undertaking a survey of the school environment and facilities. This is so you can point things out areas which need improvement and provide guidance on low-cost modifications that will make the school more accessible. You can use the Accessibility Checklist in the IEP Additional Guidelines and Resources.

You should encourage the school head to include the changes in the SLIP. The table below provides the relevant SLIP focus areas.

SLIP Focus Area	Priority Area
4. Student Needs and Welfare	4.2.3 Provision of relevant teaching aids and resources and technical/special staff for various disabilities, including WASH facilities for all students.
5. Infrastructure, Equipment and Transport	Basic maintenance works following standards requirements of WASH and infrastructure policies.



9. CONDUCTING AWARENESS SESSIONS

Providing disability and additional learning needs inclusion, and health and hygiene awareness during school outreach is a key activity. There are 2 reasons for this:

1. It is important to challenge negative attitudes about disability and additional learning needs by promoting and reinforcing the education rights of children with disabilities.
2. Good health and hygiene practices can help prevent children from becoming sick and this can help prevent some children from developing a disability.

Awareness sessions can take place with different groups:

1. Awareness for teachers (e.g., on the new IE Policy, understanding the IEP Teacher's Guide, Adapting their classroom, curriculum, or teaching).
2. Awareness for P&C (e.g., on school attendance and students' rights to education).
3. Awareness for the governing body (e.g., on the IE Policy, NQSFF and infrastructure standards).
4. Awareness for students (e.g., on healthy practices and looking after their peers).

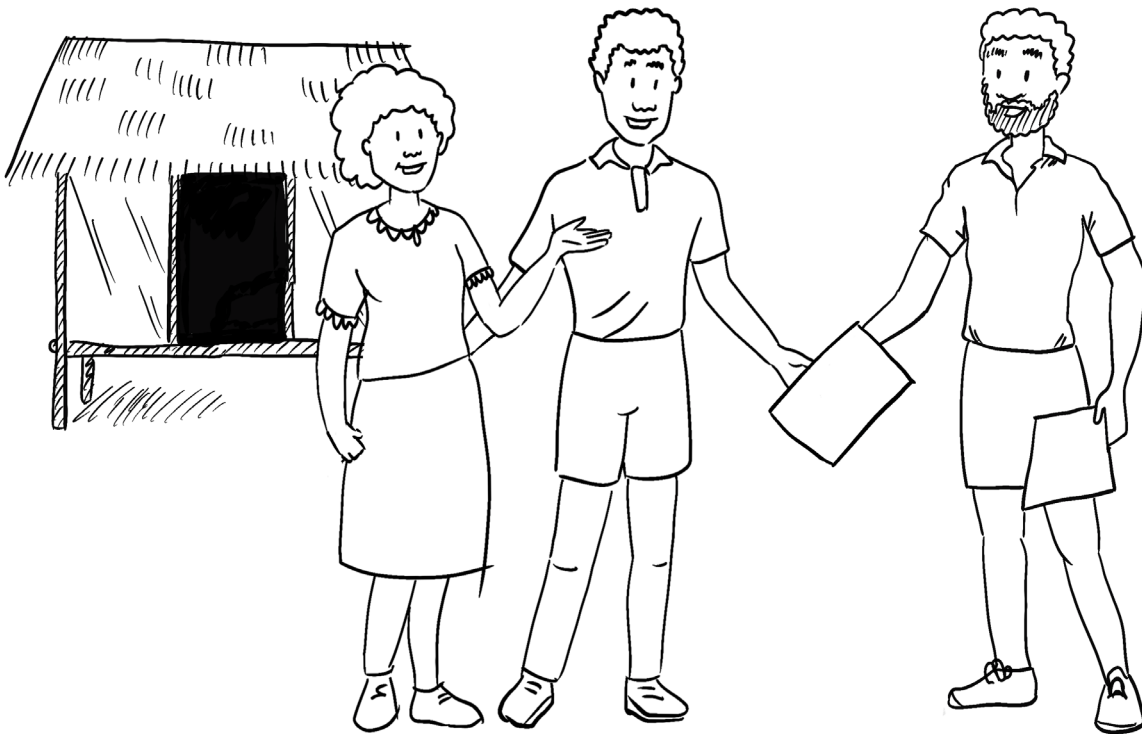


10. HOME VISITS - ROAD TO SCHOOL

It is important to maximise your time, particularly in rural and remote communities that you do not visit often. Therefore, after you have completed the school outreach activities, the team should take the opportunity to conduct home visits to students with disabilities in the community who are not attending school regularly. This can be done in the afternoon following the end of the school day or on a separate day.

In some cases, the IERC may already have a list of children with disabilities in the community that are not attending school. In other cases, the school head may have notified you of children with disabilities in the community as part of your coordination and planning prior to your visit.

During a home visit, you should use the Road to School materials developed by Callan Services to help children with disabilities enrol and attend school for the first time. This involves interviewing the parents and child, assessing the child, and preparing the school, family, and the child for transition to school, including developing an IEP and providing any assistive devices and materials needed. The IEP Teacher's Guide provides information on the Road to School that you should use during home visits.



**PART D:
REFERRING AND REGISTERING
STUDENTS WITH THE IERC AND
SPECIALIST HEALTH SERVICES**



1. REFERRING STUDENTS TO HEALTH AND SPECIALIST SERVICES

Where possible, referrals should be made to available health or specialist services as close to the child's home as possible. However, given the lack of services in many areas, it may be necessary to refer a child to a health or specialist service some distance away. The IEP Additional Guidelines and Resources provides a health/specialist services referral form.

Referrals should be given to the child's parent /caregiver if they are present on the day of the screening or to the child's teachers. In making a referral, you should:

- Explain the outcome of the screening to the child and their parent/caregiver or teacher.
- Complete and give them the referral form: If the referral is given to the child's teacher, ask them to meet and discuss the outcome of the screening with the child's parent/caregiver and provide the referral to the teacher.
- Talk to the child's parent/caregiver or the teacher about making a plan to bring their child to the IERC, health or specialist service and the support that the IERC can provide if needed.
- Provide your contact details if the caregivers or teachers have any questions.

2. IERC REFERRAL

Some students will require specialist teaching which is not available in their home school (for example, students with hearing or vision impairments). Some students may experience barriers preventing them from accessing mainstream education and may also need to enrol and attend the IERC for specialist teaching. However, the aim should be to transition these students into mainstream schools if possible.

The Whole Child Checklist includes a section to indicate that a referral to the IERC is needed. This means a more detailed screening is required. Schools will also need to be supported in developing and implementing a detailed Individual Education Plan (IEP).

The IEP Teacher's Guide and Additional Guidelines and Resources includes all the relevant information and documents for this process.

3. REGISTERING STUDENTS WITH THE IERC

All students with disabilities and additional learning needs must be referred to and registered with their nearest IERC. Some students will require specialist teaching or access to assistive devices. These students will also require a more detailed Individual Education Plan (IEP) to be developed to support their learning.

If a student needs to be registered with the IERC, complete the IERC referral form in the IERC Additional Guidelines and Resources documents.

PART E: SPECIALIST IERC SUPPORT



1. ASSISTIVE DEVICES

An assistive device is any tool, piece of equipment, or technology designed to help a person with a disability or additional learning need function and perform daily tasks and activities. For children with disabilities, having an assistive device can make a major difference to their ability to access, participate and learn in schools alongside their peers.

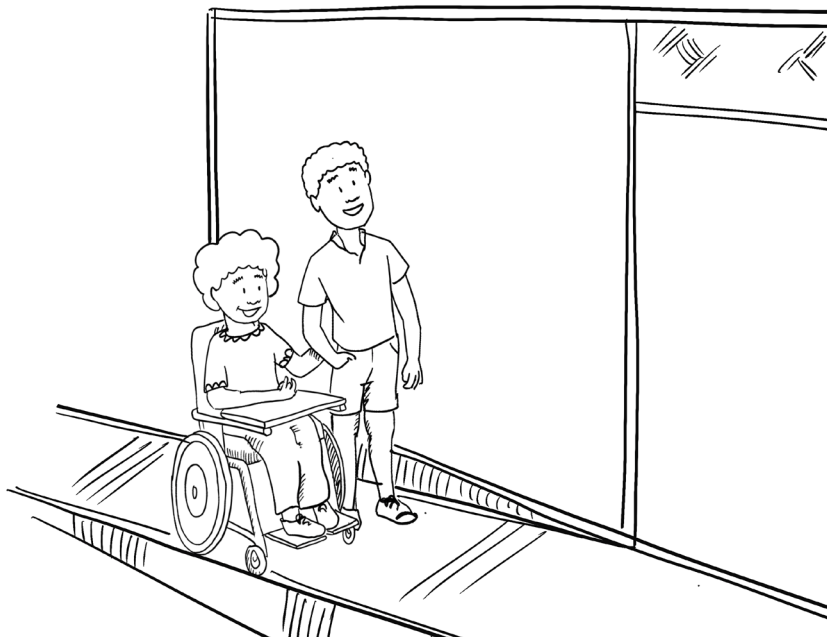
The type of assistive device depends on the type of disability. Below is a list of some of the available assistive devices for different disabilities and additional learning needs:

Difficulty hearing

- Hearing aids, which make sounds louder and help reduce background noise.
- Cochlear implants, which are surgically implanted devices that deliver auditory (hearing-related) information to the brain.
- You can find signed and audio versions of the NDoE's ECE, primary and secondary reading books at <https://bloomlibrary.org/PNG-EERRP>

Difficulty with mobility

- Canes or walking sticks that help with walking.
- Crutches.
- Walkers, which are aids that have four points of contact with the ground.
- Wheelchairs, which may or may not have a motor.
- Prosthetics, or artificial limbs for walking.
- Orthotic devices and shoes, which support the limbs and provide additional support to the feet.



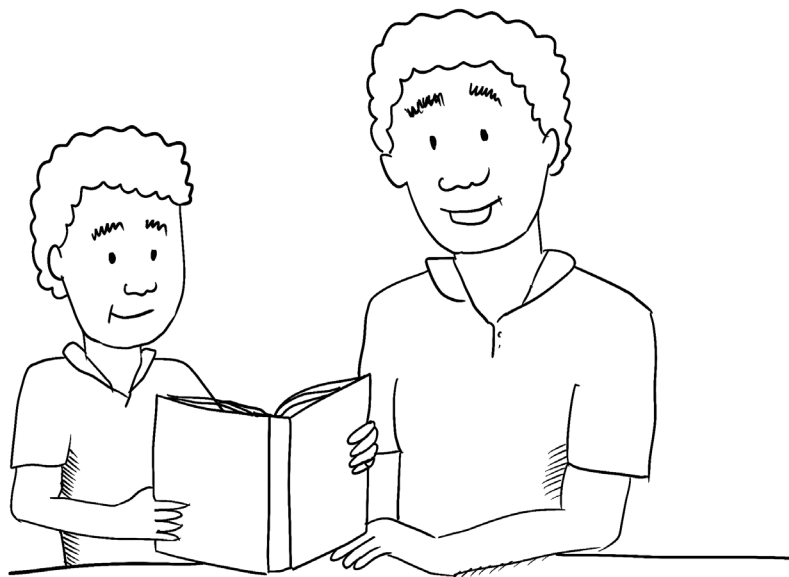
Difficulty with vision

- Eyeglasses to improve sight for short sightedness and long sightedness.
- Braille books that use printed or raised dots to translate the text.
- Large print books that use bigger font size.
- Magnifying glasses for enlargement print text.
- Audio versions of teaching and learning materials (textbooks, reading books, etc.). You can find audio versions of the NDoE's primary reading books at <https://bloomlibrary.org/PNG-EERRP>
- White cane.



Difficulty with communication or being understood

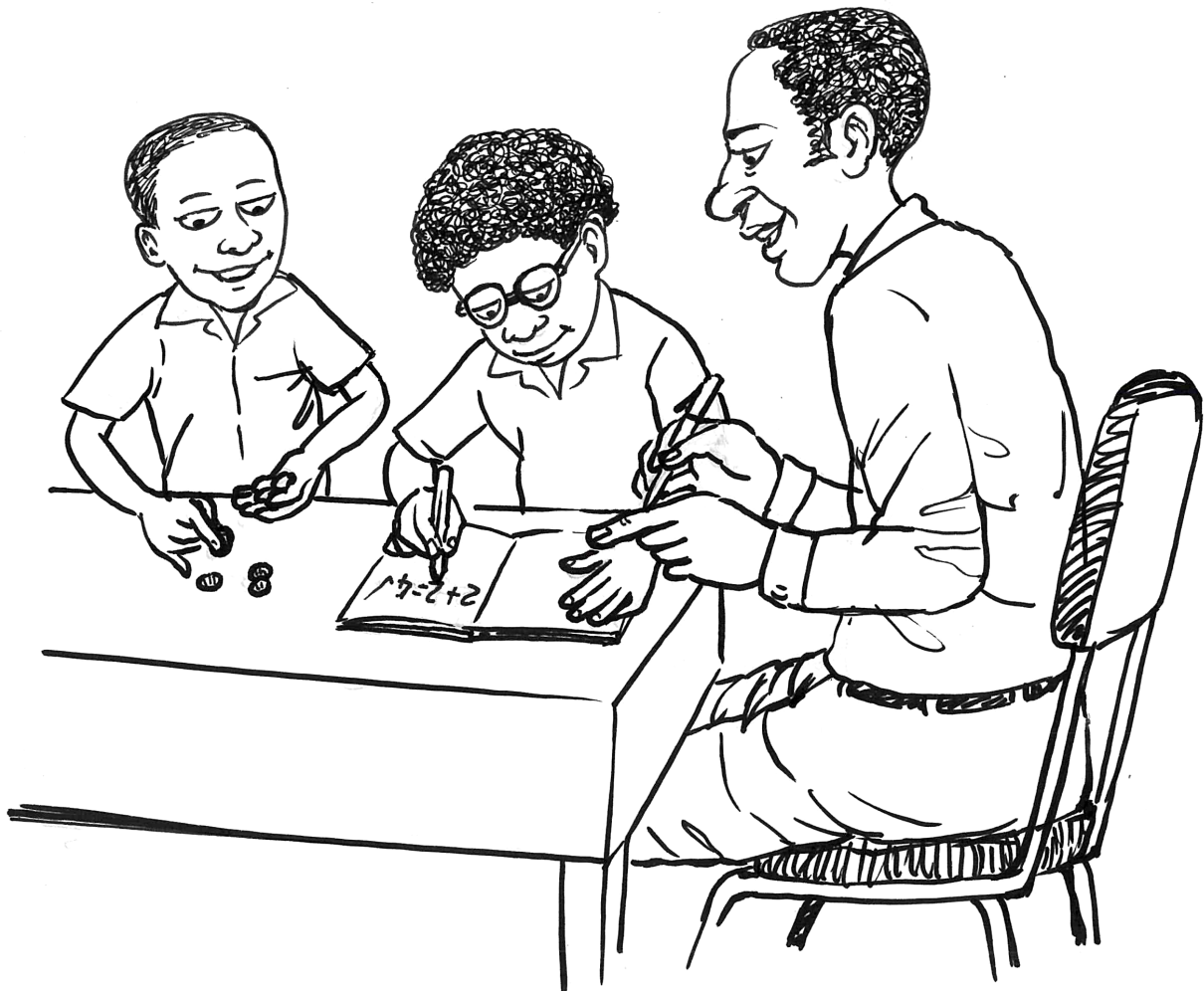
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication devices (AAC) (e.g., Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)).



Providing Assistive Devices

Providing a child with an assistive device will depend on the availability and cost of the device. Below is a summary of where and how to procure assistive devices.

Assistive Devices	Description	Procurement forms
In stock at the IERC	Some assistive devices, such as eyeglasses, have been pre purchased and are in stock at the IERC.	Assistive device register
Locally available in the province /country	Some assistive devices will be available for purchase within the province/country.	Low-cost assistive devices (\$) – procurement form High-cost assistive device (\$) – request form
Unavailable locally	Some assistive devices may only be available in Port Moresby or internationally.	High-cost assistive device (\$) – request form



2. INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLANS (IEPS)

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a written plan which determines a student's strengths as well as their learning goal, strategies, and assessment plans. A student's IEP describes the adjustments to meet their individual learning goals so that they can reach their full potential. It helps teachers to plan and monitor a student's unique learning needs and is a collaborative process where everyone works together to identify what the student needs to learn. The IEP drives the child's education, guiding all partners in their roles in supporting the student's learning.

There are two kinds of IEPs that schools can use. For some students, a few simple adjustments to teaching strategies or to the classroom may be enough. The IEP Teacher's Guide provides a Quick IEP that schools can use immediately to support the child.

Other students will need more support and a more detailed IEP. The IERC should always be involved in developing detailed IEPs for students who have been referred for more support. Encourage schools and teachers to become comfortable in using the Whole Child Checklist as a starting point in this process.

The IEP Teacher Guide provides detailed guidance on the process for developing and reviewing/updating an IEP.

ANNEXES



ANNEX A: GUIDE FOR SCHOOLS: PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF SCHOOL OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

This guide is intended to familiarize schools with the concept of inclusive education and the supportive role of Inclusive Education Resource Centres (IERCs). It highlights the purpose of school outreach activities in overcoming challenges to the inclusion of students with disabilities and additional learning needs, ensuring every child has the opportunity to thrive in the educational environment.

UNDERSTANDING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education means that all students, including those with disabilities and additional learning needs, can go to the same school and learn together. It's about making sure every student feels welcome and gets the support they need to do their best in school.

In inclusive schools:

- Students with disabilities and additional learning needs learn in the same classrooms as other students.
- Teachers and staff work together to help all students, no matter their abilities.
- Everyone is treated with respect and kindness, and differences are celebrated.

The goal is to create a school where every student, regardless of their abilities, feels included, valued, and has the chance to learn and grow with their peers. This goal is a priority in the National Education Plan (NEP) 2020-2029, and the Inclusive Education Policy and Minimum Standards (2024).

How IERCs Support Schools

The National Department of Education supports and regulates Inclusive Education Resource Centres (IERCs) to help schools develop inclusive practices.

IERCs:

- provide outreach support to schools.
- train teachers to screen and identify students with disabilities and additional learning needs.
- supporting students with disabilities who are not at school to attend school.
- train teachers write and review Individual Education Plans (IEPs).
- promote inclusive teaching practices.
- coach teachers on how to adapt their classroom, curriculum, and teaching.
- register all students with an IEP with the IERC.
- help schools refer students for specialist teaching and health services.
- conduct awareness about disabilities and additional learning needs to students, teachers, parents/ caregivers, and communities.
- assess and provide advice to schools on accessibility.
- help students access assistive devices and accessible teaching and learning materials.
- provide specialist teaching at the IERC to children who need it.

Why School Outreach Matters

- Despite national commitments, children with disabilities and additional learning needs face obstacles due to cultural beliefs, physical barriers, and lack of understanding. Without proper support, these children may experience high rates of absenteeism and early dropout.

Resources for Schools

- Schools can refer to the Inclusive Education Policy Implementation Guide for ideas on how to implement inclusive education in their schools and how to work with their local IERC.
- All necessary resources for Individual Education Plans (IEPs) can be found in the IEP Teacher's Guide.

Who is in the School Outreach Team?

- Inclusive Education Outreach Officer
- IERC Specialist Teacher/s
- Community-based Inclusive Development (CBID) staff
- Certified health worker
- Organisation of People with Disabilities (OPD) where possible.

The composition may vary based on the resources available in each IERC.

What kind of activities happened during School Outreach visits?

- Engagement: Raising awareness in schools and communities about including students with disabilities and additional learning needs.
- Identification: Help identify and support children with disabilities and additional learning needs, including connecting with health and specialist services.
- Teacher Support: Aiding schools and teachers in developing inclusive teaching practices, initial screening, and implementing Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

ANNEX B: KEY POLICY POINTS

KEY SECTIONS OF THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY AND MINIMUM STANDARDS (2024)

Background: The National Education Plan 2021-2029 (NEP) includes a focus on access and equity. The plan acknowledges that students with disabilities and additional learning needs have traditionally not been able to access education in the regular school system. The Inclusive Education Policy and Minimum Standards represents one of the initiatives undertaken by the National Department of Education to redress this situation.

Policy Goal: To provide a comprehensive framework promoting the full participation of learners with disabilities and additional learning needs in all aspects of school life, thereby ensuring equitable access to quality educational opportunities, fostering holistic development, and maximising all students' potential for success.

POLICY OBJECTIVES AND STANDARDS

Objective 1:

To create inclusive and child-friendly school environments that enrich the overall educational experience for every student, by enhancing the culture, structures and programs within and outside the classroom.

What does this mean?

Accessing school begins by ensuring that school premises are inclusive and child-friendly environments. This means thinking about school infrastructure, leadership, attitudes, and partnerships with family and community.

This is reflected in:

Standard 1: Inclusive and Accessible Infrastructure

Standard 2: Strong Leadership and Positive Attitudes

Standard 3: Inclusive Communities

Objective 2:

To ensure a holistic learning approach with inclusive teaching pedagogy, assessment and learning support.

What does this mean?

Successful inclusive education needs a holistic approach to learning support. IERCs can work with schools to develop better processes for screening, registration and referral of students with disabilities and additional learning needs. Schools will also need IERC support to meet the individual learning needs of

their students by understanding how to write individual education plans (IEPs). IERC Outreach Officers and specialist teachers can work with schools on flexible approaches to teaching pedagogy. This might mean helping teachers understand differentiated learning or using principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) can help to support all learners in the classroom in the areas of assessment, teaching, and monitoring progress.

This is reflected in:

Standard 4: Inclusive Screening and Assessment Practices

Standard 5: Inclusive Teaching Pedagogy and Assessment

Standard 6: Inclusive Learning Support

Objective 3:

To cultivate knowledgeable and skilled educators capable of delivering high quality inclusive education services across Papua New Guinea.

What does this mean?

It is important for teachers to have the knowledge and skills to create inclusive classrooms. Research has shown that well trained teachers feel more positively about inclusion. Building a knowledgeable and skilled teacher workforce means making sure teachers have opportunities for both pre-service and in-service training that develops their knowledge and confidence around inclusive education. It's also important that teachers have opportunities to learn about the students in their school who have disabilities or additional learning needs through ongoing professional development.

This is reflected in:

Standard 7: Knowledgeable and Skilled Teacher Workforce

Objective 4:

To ensure disability information is incorporated into education data systems to assess education performance, plan and monitor program implementation, and evaluate outcomes. To ensure effective delivery of inclusive education and national, sub-national and school levels.

What does this mean?

Good planning and management at the school level helps make sure that inclusive education programs can be successfully implemented and evaluated. It's important that detailed records are kept so that schools receive enough funding to support students with disabilities and additional learning needs.

This is reflected in:

Standard 8: Strengthening Data and Evidence

Standard 9: Management

KEY SECTIONS OF THE NATIONAL SCHOOL HEALTH POLICY (2015)

Background:

The policy was developed following the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement between the secretaries of the National Departments of Education and Health on 2 June 2014.

Policy Goal:

To provide school health services in partnership with the NDoE and other organisations to strengthen the overall wellbeing of PNG children using a school focused approach that is responsive to evolving children's needs.

Policy Objectives:

- a.** To ensure the school health service is delivered to students, teachers and the surrounding community.
- b.** To protect and promote the health and wellbeing of school children through school health services and health education.
- c.** To ensure active collaboration and partnership between the NDoE, NDoH and other stakeholders in school health services.

Analysis of Issues Includes: Many schools do not provide an enabling environment for children with disabilities, who are often ignored, disrespected, uncared for and left to cope by themselves. This leads to lack of active and meaningful participation in educational, social and physical activities. Accepting children with all forms of disabilities and respecting the nature of the child should be encouraged and child friendly environments promoted.

Access to health checks and information on diagnosis, and treatment of disabilities must be made available to schools, teachers and school children living with disabilities.

Policy Statement Two: School Health Services

- Every school shall be visited once a year to conduct school health services.

Strategies include:

- 1.** Rural outreach programs shall include school medicals as part of their annual activities.
- 2.** Mobilise resources to support school medicals in rural and urban settings of PNG.
- 3.** Coordination of School Health Services will be led by NDoH in cooperation with NDoE.

Policy Statement Seven: Partnerships

- Effective partnerships between stakeholders in school health will be encouraged at all levels to better coordinate and implement school health programs.

Policy Statement Ten: Disability

- Disabled children shall be given an equal opportunity to be education with access to health services without any fear of discrimination.

Strategies include:

- 1.** Advocate for and support the rights to education for disabled children.
- 2.** Educate schools on the needs of school children with disabilities.
- 3.** Educate parents, teachers and the school communities on rights of disabled students to have access to school health services.
- 4.** Develop standard guidelines for schools and teachers on how to provide education to disabled school children with care and understanding.



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