

## **Study Tour Report**

### **Mukunda Dayal PFPID Nepal Wellington, New Zealand 26-30 June 2017**

#### **Introduction**

Diane Richler, Inclusion International's Catalyst for Inclusive Education leader, suggested that there would be enormous value in Mukunda Dayal being able to observe inclusive education practice and engage with education and disability sector leaders in New Zealand.

Ralph Jones, CEO IHC generously agreed to host Mukunda Dayal for a week long study tour at the end of last month.

Information about New Zealand's legislative and policy framework for inclusive education was shared with Mukunda prior to arrival in New Zealand. New Zealand has a self-managing school environment which has resulted in inconsistent alignment to legislative and policy imperatives.

IHC's strategy to work across the education and disability sectors to ensure that disabled children's rights to education are recognised and responded to through a human rights framework was highlighted throughout the study tour.

An itinerary was developed (attached) to give broad exposure to inclusive practice in a variety of education settings. At Mukunda's request visits were also arranged to adult support services including supported employment and supported independent living.

#### **Schedule of visits**

In summary

- Mukunda visited an early childhood education setting, an early intervention service, a primary school and two secondary schools. He also engaged with students with intellectual disability enrolled at a tertiary education.
- The settings above were selected because of their commitment to and demonstration of inclusive practice. All teaching staff were able to discuss with Mukunda the positive outcomes for their school from a commitment to inclusive education and the government policy incentives and disincentives for their school/ education setting. Mukunda was able to observe children with a range of impairments being successfully included while also being able to have individual accommodations made within an inclusive school and classroom setting. In addition Mukunda was also able to observe the benefits for non-disabled students when they learnt alongside their disabled peers.

- Education professionals talked with Mukunda about the key building blocks for inclusive education
  - the importance of leadership within schools (across governance and management) and at Ministry level
  - initial teacher education and ongoing professional development
  - an adequate resourcing framework
  - the importance of individualised learning approaches
  - Monitoring presence, participation and achievement.
  - flexible arrangements between teachers and teacher assistants to optimise inclusive practice and education outcomes for individuals and their peers
  - opportunities for reflective practice within and across schools

Professionals talked about the current barriers in relation to

- to teachers having to “learn on the ground” as opposed to through initial teacher education
- Gaps in the policy and resourcing framework which meant that schools had to make hard financial choices if they want to prioritise inclusive education.
- Gaps between government’s vision and on the ground experience for children and schools

Mukunda also came away with examples of individual learning plans and accommodations (visual prompts etc.) developed by early childhood and primary teachers. He was also able to observe how inclusive settings flexibly and successfully accommodated students with sensory needs by providing physical spaces where students could fluidly come and go from.

- Mukunda met with the Human Rights Commissioner, Disability and discussed how the national human rights institutions can assist in the development and monitoring of inclusive education via the Independent Monitoring Mechanism (IMM) and through regular and focused communications with systems stewards
- Mukunda was keen to observe post school options for disabled students and he visited a youth service, an arts base and an employment support service. Mukunda was able to ask questions about New Zealand’s changing disability support systems, and individualised planning and approaches.
- We were able to attend a Parliamentary launch of a disability sector report and attend two events where families and schools came together to discuss resourcing issues and barriers to inclusive practice. Families shared ideas about how they had advocated for their son and daughter at the school and at the systems level.
- Mukunda met with two inclusive education lobby groups who described their work in building collaborations across the education and disability sectors and their historic and ongoing attempts to influence government’s commitment to inclusive education and the human rights of disabled children and young people.

IHC was delighted to be able to host Mukunda in New Zealand. Mukunda spoke very positively about the visits arranged and the overall experience. It was wonderful for me to see him so “lit up” after each visit and his words “I now believe we can do this in my country”

From this experience I believe there would be real value in Inclusion International developing a study tour approach to further embed inclusive education through global collaboration. The Asia Pacific Region would be uniquely placed to initiate this approach given Australia and New Zealand’s legislative and policy frameworks and commitments to UNCRPD and UNCROC.

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