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Guest blog: Dr. Grace Jamila Bila on disability inclusive education

To introduce this evidence digest, Susi Taylor, Associate Consultant with Social Development Direct, spoke to Dr. Grace Jamila Bila, a long-standing expert on disability inclusive education in Nigeria.

Question: Please tell me about your work on disability inclusive education in northern Nigeria.

I have thirty years of experience working on disability inclusive education in Nigeria. I started working as a teacher for the deaf and then moved on to become a consultant in the education sector working with a range of different development agencies, such as UNICEF, Sightsavers and FCDO.

My work has included developing disability inclusive education programmes in the academic sector, training teachers and promoting more equitable learning environments in all levels of education institutions, from primary education through to higher education institutions (such as universities).

I have recently concluded a pilot programme working with Sightsavers, collaborating with a local government to advocate for eight regular schools to become disability inclusive. This was achieved through teacher training, building the capacity of the local community and influencing local government policy.

I have also recently finished developing a undergraduate and postgraduate programmes on inclusive education and rehabilitation for a university in Nasarawa state.

Question: What do you see as the key challenges to disability inclusive education in Nigeria, and globally?

The challenges in Nigeria are similar to those found at a global level. Nigeria's constitution and the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act of 2004 guarantee the right to free, compulsory, and universal education for all children up to the age of 15, however there are challenges to its implementation.

Firstly, there is inadequate policy implementation. Although the policies exist, there is not sufficient budget allocated for their implementation. Another problem is the shortage of trained teachers. Teachers need to be equipped to teach learners with disabilities appropriately. Thirdly, and although this is getting better, there is still a lot of stigma and discrimination around disability which means that learners are often excluded from education due to the misconception that those with disabilities cannot learn. Schools often do not have the means to screen learners with disabilities or assess their learning, which means they cannot meet their needs.

In addition, there is limited and inaccurate data on the number of children with disabilities enrolled in education, which hampers intervention. Furthermore, families with children with

disabilities are often poor, especially in rural areas. There is a belief that education is expensive, so children without disabilities are prioritised for school enrolment.

At a global level, there are systemic barriers to disability inclusive education, which is marginalised within the broader education system. Adjustments to allow for inclusive education, such as assistive devices, technology and infrastructure are considered expensive and there is a lack of awareness of the best means of implementing inclusive education. Furthermore, when a humanitarian crisis hits in most parts of the world, children with disabilities are the most vulnerable to exclusion from education.

Question: What are some of the successes that you have seen in policy and practice in disability inclusive education?

There have been some very positive developments in Nigeria in terms of policy creation, including the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018. It has a five-year timeline for its implementation to be implemented in all 36 states in Nigeria. As of September 2024, 19 states have shown progress against the Act. The Act also created a National Commission for People with Disabilities which monitors progress.

In 2023 there was a Review of the National Policy for Disability Inclusive Education, which brought renewed focus and awareness on this area. Significant capacity building work has also been carried out by the Universal Basic Education Commission. Overall, therefore, government awareness and participation has increased.

There has also been a positive move to better include communities, parents and teachers in improving inclusive education. School Based Management Committees (SBMCs) are a good example of community-based advocacy on the issue, encouraging enrolment and providing resources for learners with disabilities.

Question: What role do you think donors like the FCDO should play in promoting more disability inclusive education policy and practice?

Donors, such as the FCDO, have shown commitment to disability inclusive education through programmes such as PLANE, the Partnership for Learning for All in Nigerian Education. This seven-year programme aims to improve basic education in Nigeria with a particular focus on girls and children with disabilities. Success in programmes such as PLANE now needs to be built on to continue to create a more equitable education system in Nigeria.

Further technical and financial support from donors such as the FCDO is needed for policy implementation, including accessible infrastructure and teacher capacity building. We need to ensure that positive steps are now consolidated, strengthened and scaled up in order that all children in Nigeria can learn according to their basic right to universal education.

The latest evidence and guidance on disability inclusion and education

Guidance on inclusive education

In December 2024, the International Finance Corporation released “**A Guide to Disability-Inclusive Education for Higher Education Institutions**”. This report provides guidance on promoting disability-inclusive education in higher education institutions (HEIs), particularly in low- and middle-income countries. It offers two main approaches: (i) actionable steps for HEIs to enhance disability inclusion and mental health support for students and staff, and (ii) a “maturity model” for assessing progress toward inclusive and accessible learning environments. The report also addresses key themes such as funding for accessible educational technology, gender considerations, physical accessibility in classrooms, and ensuring equal access and outcomes for people with disabilities. It encourages higher education institutions to hire and employ more individuals with disabilities.

In November 2024, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies published a webinar on “**Inclusive Education Resources - Highlights and Discussion**.” The webinar provided an overview of the Inclusive Distance Education Toolkit, Disability-inclusive Education in Emergencies report, and other resources.

In December 2024, ReliefWeb published news about a “**New activation to boost inclusive education for 160,000 children living with disabilities in Ukraine**.” The ‘National Lesson’ is accessible through the **EdEra platform**—one of the biggest platforms for educators in Ukraine—in a collaboration with the Presidential Commissioner for Children’s rights and Child Rehabilitation and with the informational support from the Ministry of Education and Science. The lesson materials include presentations, inspiring inclusive practices and provide educators with practical tools to foster understanding and acceptance in their classrooms.

In August 2024, ReliefWeb published the Global Education Cluster’s **checklist for safe and inclusive consultations with children**. The checklist provides guidance on how to organise safe and inclusive, gender- age- and disability-responsive consultations with children, such as focus group discussions or Key Informant interviews. Consultations with girls and boys, including children with disabilities, allows education actors to identify the specific needs, barriers and risks faced by those different groups in the education sector. The actions listed are entry points that can be prioritised based on context.

Programme learning

In July 2024, UNICEF published “**All In: Towards Tangible Solutions for Equity and Inclusion in Education**”. This report showcases promising practices in education systems around the world, to bring the most marginalised learners, including children with disabilities, into - and back to - school and learning. Countries covered include Brazil, Malawi, Cambodia and China. Enablers of inclusion are noted as multisectoral coordination, strong partnerships,

enhanced accountability, digital solutions and community engagement, as well as monitoring and knowledge management which are important for learning. Good practice specific to programming in the education sector included the use of the Universal Design for Learning, teacher capacity development and tailored learning assessments.

In January 2024, the Inclusive Education Initiative published “**Mastercard Foundation: Disability-Inclusive Education and Employment: Understanding the Experiences of Young Men and Women with Disabilities.**” Phase two of the disability-inclusive education and employment report showcases the lived experiences of young people with disabilities in the Mastercard Foundation’s seven countries of focus (Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal and Uganda). The seven reports (one per country) draw on in-depth qualitative interviews with young women and men with disabilities, platforming the knowledge, insights, and expertise of youth as they reflect on school, university, training, and the world of work. For example, in Ethiopia, participants reported navigating numerous barriers to inclusive education. Several young people did, however report the benefits of inclusive and enabling environments created by supportive teachers, staff, and peers, although these experiences were not consistent. Recommendations include strengthening educational institutions and teachers to better deliver inclusive education; and improved policy implementation to increase inclusiveness of persons with disabilities in education.

In November 2024, ReliefWeb published the World Bank’s report on “**Promoting Gender and Disability Inclusion in School Infrastructure: Case Studies and Entry Points**”. This report analyses 57 World Bank projects that address barriers to inclusive school infrastructure. Projects focused on gender- and disability-sensitive designs and facilities, with key barriers identified as inadequate gender-segregated WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) facilities, travel distances to schools, and insufficient facilities for students with disabilities. Case studies are included from Malawi, Pakistan, Mozambique, South Sudan, Tajikistan and Vietnam.

In November 2024, ReliefWeb published information about Light of the World’s programme to provide **inclusive education in South Sudan** by training teachers in sign language and braille. The aim is to train 1,400 teachers from all over the country at three national teacher training institutes in the next two years. The training is part of **Education Cannot Wait**, which is funding a **multi-year resilience programme** to provide safe and inclusive education to crisis-affected learners across fourteen counties in South Sudan. Light for the World has partnered with **Save the Children**, **Plan International**, **UNESCO**, and grantees, the **Norwegian Refugee Council** and **Finn Church Aid**.

Research

In December 2023, the Inclusive Education Initiative published Humanity & Inclusion’s report entitled “**Disability Data in Schools in Emergency and Protracted Crisis**”. The report describes Humanity & Inclusion’s research project from May 2022 to December 2023 to identify a practical and reliable methodology to produce data on learners with disability in schools in emergencies and protracted crises. As part of this project, the Child Functioning

Module – Teacher Version (CFM-TV) was tested and assessed for programming and monitoring use in humanitarian response. The findings were used to develop an evidence based operational package to explain to education field practitioners and stakeholders what the CFM-TV is, when and how to use it.

In October 2024, Sightsavers produced the report “**Disability Data Collection in Schools in Sierra Leone**”. The report presents findings from the third phase of a Sightsavers study with the Sierra Leone Ministry of Education on integrating disability data into the Education Management Information System. Phase two tested the feasibility of teachers collecting individual-level disability data using the Washington Group Set and the Child Functioning Module – Teacher Version (CFM-TV). Teachers found the assessments valuable for enhancing disability inclusion in teaching. However, the data showed that these tools have limitations in reliably identifying all children with disabilities and cannot replace clinical screening and assessments.

In December 2024, UNICEF published “**Children with Disabilities in Latin America and the Caribbean: A statistical overview of their well-being**”. The report includes internationally comparable data from 12 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and covers more than 30 indicators of child well-being, including on education. It also presents global and regional estimates of children with disabilities drawn from more than 1,000 data sources.

In May 2024, ResearchGate published an “**Analysis of Inclusive Education Policy Implementation in Developing Countries**”. This study examines the challenges of implementing inclusive education policies in developing countries based on a literature study of journals related to the topic. It highlights that while inclusive education is constitutionally guaranteed in some countries, there are barriers such as lack of accessibility, insufficient teachers, poor acceptance from the school community, and inadequate funding. The research suggests that while policies are adopted, they often fail to align with local needs. To achieve effective inclusion, governments must ensure consistent policy implementation and address these obstacles.

In November 2024, the International Journal of Developmental Disabilities published “**Parent input: shaping inclusive education for students with disabilities**”. This study, focused on Jordan, notes that over the past twenty years, Jordan has made progress in creating inclusive schools, partly due to new policies and international support. Despite this, intellectual disabilities remain marginalised. This study of parents’ views on inclusive education reveals concerns about bullying, isolation, and a lack of teacher experience. While many parents support inclusion, these challenges remain. This research highlights the ongoing difficulties in implementing inclusive education, despite its growing importance in Jordan’s educational agenda.

In May 2024, the International Journal of Developmental Disabilities published “**Leaving no one behind”: digital empathy and inclusive media literacy education for young adults on the autism spectrum**”. The paper advocates for the necessity of inclusive media literacy education (MLE) and equal opportunities for young adults with autism spectrum disorder

(ASD). The study aimed to empower young adults with ASD in Chennai, India, with media literacy and digital empathy through a one-day hands-on workshop and to assess the impact of this educational intervention on their understanding and application of media literacy in their daily lives. The study's findings demonstrated significant improvements in the participants' abilities to discern fake news, learn digital empathy and cybersecurity by engaging responsibly with digital media, and include MLE in their academic curriculum. The paper suggested that such educational interventions can enhance digital empathy and media literacy among young adults with ASD.

In September 2024, the International Journal of Developmental Disabilities published "**Barriers and facilitators to the inclusion of autistic students in integrated physical education: a Colombian perspective.**" This study examines Colombian pre-service physical educators' perspectives on the barriers and facilitators of including autistic students in general physical education classes. Findings reveal that social interactions and teacher practices were seen as key factors in promoting inclusion, while barriers related to social and teacher-related factors were most prominent. Programmatic factors, such as personnel support, were seen as facilitators, but environmental factors were considered less influential. The study highlights the importance of teachers' practices in fostering inclusive experiences for autistic students in physical education.

In December 2024, the International Journal of Special Education published "**Evidence-Based Practices for Students with Visual Impairments in Regular Settings: An Integrated Review**". This review examines strategies for effectively including students with visual impairments in regular education settings. It highlights evidence-based approaches that promote both academic and social inclusion. The review emphasises key strategies such as implementing the Expanded Core Curriculum, adapting the learning environment, using multisensory teaching methods, integrating assistive technology, and building collaborative support systems. It aims to provide educators, policymakers, and stakeholders with practical guidance for creating inclusive learning environments that embrace diversity and accessibility, drawing on expert insights and empirical research.

In October 2024, the International Journal of Special Education published a qualitative study on "**Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to Facilitate the Learning of Students with Intellectual Disabilities within the Inclusive Educational Context in Sarawak, East Malaysia**". This study explored the challenges faced by students with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) in inclusive educational settings and the strategies used by teachers applying Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to support their learning. Through document analysis and semi-structured interviews with four special education teachers in the Special Education Integration Program (SEIP) in Sarawak, East Malaysia, the study found that ID students struggled with complex concepts, social interactions, communication, sensory sensitivities, and emotional or behavioural issues that impacted their learning. Limited resources and support services further complicated the situation. Teachers used strategies such as flexibility, visual aids, technology, and clear speech to help ID students reach their learning potential. The study aimed to enhance ID students' social and functional literacy.

In November 2024, the International Journal of Special Education published “**Navigating Learning Differences: The Role of Mind Mapping in Fostering Inclusivity in Science Education.**” With a focus on Indonesia, this study examined the use of mind mapping as a teaching tool in science education, focusing on its impact on students with special educational needs. Through a mixed-methods approach, the study found that both control and experimental groups showed improved scores after using Popplet as a mind mapping tool. Two main themes emerged from student feedback: adaptive learning strategies and the balance between individual and collaborative learning. Students reported that mind mapping enhanced memory and presentation skills, though design and accessibility challenges remained, particularly for those with special educational needs. This research highlights the use of physical guidance and verbal instruction to assist students with visual impairments. The study emphasises the importance of tools that cater to diverse learning styles to foster inclusivity in education.

In December 2024, the International Journal of Special Education published “**A Study on the Impact of Self-Efficacy on Teachers' Attitude towards Mainstreaming of Children with Disabilities**”. This study investigates the impact of self-efficacy on teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education in Gwalior district, Madhya Pradesh, India. It explores how factors like gender, school locality, and teaching experience influence self-efficacy and attitudes. Data was collected from 613 government elementary school teachers using the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) and Teacher Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education (TASTIE) scales. The analysis revealed that self-efficacy was not significantly influenced by gender, school locality, or teaching experience. However, teachers in urban schools had more favourable attitudes toward inclusion than those in rural schools. Although there was a positive correlation between self-efficacy and attitudes, the contribution of self-efficacy to predicting teachers' attitudes was relatively low.

In October 2024, the journal for Disability, CBR and Inclusive Development published “**Exploring Educational Needs of Young Adults with Hearing Disability in Kabul, Afghanistan Before the Taliban Regime: Insights and Limitations from a Phenomenological Study.**” This study explored the educational needs of young adults with hearing disabilities in Kabul, Afghanistan. Using a qualitative, phenomenological approach, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten participants, and the data was analysed thematically. The findings highlighted the importance of a quality educational system, qualified teachers, and accessible education to meet the needs of hearing-disabled individuals. Despite some positive initiatives, challenges such as government neglect and financial constraints hindered progress. The study suggested two approaches—special education and inclusive education—and emphasised the need for teacher training and supportive learning environments.

In the same month, the journal for Disability, CBR and Inclusive Development published “**Challenges faced and Strategies used by Teachers to enhance Academic Performance among Learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at a School in Zimbabwe: A Quantitative Descriptive Study**”. This study investigated the challenges faced by teachers in Zimbabwe when teaching learners with autism at one high school and

identified strategies to enhance their academic performance. A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 20 teachers, using questionnaires to collect data. The results revealed key challenges such as time management, meltdowns, difficulties with routine changes, obsessive-compulsive tendencies, and distractibility. The teachers' confidence levels in teaching learners with autism varied, with most feeling fairly confident. Strategies used included visual materials like colour coding, objects, videos, and worksheets. Teachers recommended adopting new strategies such as therapy provision, advocacy, modern technology, and curriculum adjustments. The study highlighted the need for teacher training on autism to improve support and enhance academic performance, though the findings may not be generalisable to other schools in Zimbabwe.

In January 2024, the International Journal of Disability, Development and Education published "**The Evolution of Services for Children with Autism and Developmental Disabilities in Nigeria**". This paper examined the provision of services for autism spectrum disorder and developmental disabilities in Nigeria, influenced by U.S. and international research and awareness. Key factors affecting progress include Nigerian cultural beliefs, family involvement, societal attitudes, inadequate infrastructure, and inconsistent disability law enforcement. These factors can have both positive and negative effects on families. The lack of standardised teacher training and accreditation programmes limits access to individualised education programmes and classroom inclusion. While effective treatments for autism spectrum disorder and developmental disabilities are well-documented, they often do not reach rural or low-income areas in Nigeria or similar regions. The paper analyses the evolution of special education in Nigeria and the U.S., emphasising the need for culturally relevant, low-cost, research-based interventions in African nations like Nigeria.

In October 2024, the International Journal of Disability, Development and Education published "**Barriers and Facilitators in Accessing Education in Mainstream Schools for Children with Disabilities in Bangladesh: A Qualitative Secondary Data Analysis.**" Access to mainstream schools for children with disabilities remains a significant challenge, especially in low and middle-income countries like Bangladesh. This secondary analysis of qualitative data identified barriers such as stigma, discrimination, inaccessible environments, and negative attitudes from teachers. Key facilitators included strong parental motivation and peer support, which helped children with disabilities access education. The study recommended supporting parents in advocating for their children's rights in mainstream schools and calls for government investment to make schools more disability-friendly. Additionally, teacher training on educating children with disabilities in mainstream schools was considered essential. The study noted that a collaborative approach involving policymakers, teachers, professionals, and parents was necessary for achieving inclusive education.

In September 2024, the International Journal of Disability, Development and Education published "**Classroom Climate, Teacher Support and Self-Agency: Perceptions of Students with and without Disabilities.**" This study investigated perceptions of classroom climate, the physical environment, and self-agency of students with and without disabilities. Participants were 868 high school students from four mixed-sex day schools and 1 same-sex

boarding school in Western Kenya. Of the 868 participants, 431 had disabilities. Participants completed a questionnaire on classroom climate and self-agency. Overall, results showed that even though students perceived their classroom climate to be high in competition and difficulty, they were satisfied with their learning environments and regarded their teachers as being supportive. The results revealed that there were no statistically significant differences between those with and without disabilities. These findings suggest that teacher support plays a significant role in student satisfaction, cohesion, and self-agency, regardless of disability.

In September 2024, the International Journal of Disability, Development and Education published **“Making Mathematics Accessible to Visually Impaired High School Learners in South Africa: Teachers’ Instructional Approaches, Assistive Devices and Challenges”**. This case study examined the instructional approaches and assistive devices used by high school mathematics teachers for visually impaired learners, as well as the challenges they faced. The participants were two mathematics teachers from a special school for the visually impaired in South Africa. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and lesson observations. Challenges included inadequate Braille skills, time constraints, lack of home support for learners, and technology failures. The teachers used various approaches such as direct instruction, contextual linking, scaffolding, peer tutoring, and problem-solving. Assistive technologies like text enlargers, text translators, embossers, and talking calculators were employed. The study recommended in-service training for teachers working with visually impaired learners in mathematics.

In June 2024, the International Journal of Disability, Development and Education published **“Early Detection of Neurodevelopmental Disorders as a Strategy for Educational Inclusion in Early Childhood Education”**. This study presents the results of a pilot system for early detection of neurodevelopmental disorders in early childhood education centres in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia. A total of 280 preschool children, their caregivers, and teachers participated, with the system identifying 15 cases of developmental delays across various areas. The detection process involved three phases: screening for developmental delays, in-depth assessments, and referrals to specialised interventions and educational inclusion strategies. Families played a key role in this collaborative, interdisciplinary approach. The study demonstrates that early detection of developmental delays can enhance children's life opportunities and promote educational inclusion.

In May 2024, the International Journal of Disability, Development and Education published **“Disability Types and Children’s Schooling in Africa”**. This study examined school enrolment patterns among children with different types of disabilities in eight African countries, using the Washington Group Child function module from national Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys. The findings showed that children with vision and hearing disabilities had similar enrolment rates to their non-disabled peers. However, children with physical disabilities tended to start school later, while those with intellectual disabilities faced lower enrolment rates, higher dropout rates, and challenges staying enrolled. Children with multiple disabilities faced the greatest barriers to school enrolment at all ages. The study suggested that future research and educational policies should address the diverse challenges faced by

children with disabilities to promote better educational inclusion.

In May 2024, the International Journal of Disability, Development and Education published **“Inclusive and Special Education Policy in Nepal: Reality, Rhetoric and Contradiction”**. This study examined inclusive and special education policy in Nepal, using social constructionism and discourse analysis as theoretical perspectives. The research analysed key policy documents from 1970 to 2020 to explore how disability and inclusive education were framed. The findings revealed that Nepal’s education policies had been shaped by both the medical/deficit model and the social/human rights model of disability. The study identified inconsistencies and contradictions in the policies, highlighting tensions between these two discourses. The article offered recommendations for improving inclusive education in Nepal.

In March 2024, the International Journal of Disability, Development and Education published **“Universal Design for Learning in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Review of the Literature”**. The 2020 Global Education Monitoring report acknowledges the growing importance of Universal Design for Learning¹ (UDL) in implementing inclusive education, but there is limited evidence on how to effectively apply UDL in low- and middle-income countries. A scoping review commissioned by CBM Christian Blind Mission sought to identify existing UDL practices in low- and middle-income countries, highlight research gaps, and recommend resources for capacity development. The review included 21 articles, 13 from Africa, with eight coming from South Africa. Key themes identified include teacher capacity building, technology access, diversity of target audiences, the role of communities and families, addressing systemic inequality, and policy support. Additional themes related to disability and UDL, as well as challenges in implementing UDL, emerged through inductive analysis. The study discussed these themes and provided recommendations for improving UDL implementation in low- and middle-income countries.

In March 2024, the Inclusive Education Initiative published **“Learners with disabilities and technology: advocacy brief”**. Produced by the Global Education Monitoring Report, the advocacy brief is focused on the findings of the 2023 GEM Report “Technology in education: A tool on whose terms?” This advocacy brief was developed with the support of different organisations working on disability and provides recommendations for policy-makers on the use of technology in for inclusive education.

The latest evidence and guidance on disability inclusion: Other topics

Employment

In November 2024, UNDP Kyrgyzstan produced **“Guidelines on Disability-Inclusive Employment”**. They are a comprehensive resource that includes recommendations on attracting, recruiting, and hiring, retaining jobs, ensuring professional growth and continuous

¹ Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an educational framework that aims to accommodate the needs and abilities of all learners. It provides flexibility in how students access and engage with course materials and demonstrate mastery of learning objectives

development of employees with disabilities, creating Universal Design and an accessible environment, and providing persons with disabilities with reasonable accommodations in the workplace, as well as developing an inclusive organisational culture.

Health

In November 2024, Sightsavers produced research [assessing the prevalence of trachoma in the East, North, Far North and Adamaoua regions of Cameroon from 2016 to 2022](#).

Trachoma is a bacterial eye infection and the leading infectious cause of blindness worldwide, particularly in developing countries with limited access to healthcare. For the study, surveys were conducted in 35 evaluation units across four regions, with 151,800 people examined for trachomatous inflammation—follicular (TF) and trachomatous trichiasis (TT). The study concluded that trachoma remains a public health issue in Cameroon, and continued interventions, including mass drug administration and improved access to surgery, are essential. Further surveys will be needed to confirm when trachoma is eliminated as a public health problem.

In October 2024, the BMC Infectious Diseases journal published a study on [“Persistent transmission of onchocerciasis in Kwanware-Ottou focus in Wenchi health district, Ghana.”](#) Onchocerciasis is transmitted via the bite of infected female blackflies and can cause irreversible blindness. This study was conducted from 2019 to 2021. It confirmed that active onchocerciasis transmission centres on Kwanware/Ottou and is confined to a 10 km radius despite 27 yearly treatment rounds. The main contributing factors are suboptimal coverage and high biting rates. Identifying and targeting such a focus with a combination of interventions will be cost-effective in accelerating onchocerciasis elimination in Ghana.

Political participation

In October 2024, the African Journal of Disability published a study on the [“Electoral participation of people with and without disabilities in urban communities in Cameroon and Senegal.”](#) A study conducted in 2021 in four cities in Senegal and three in Cameroon assessed political participation, specifically voting, among people with and without disabilities. The survey involved 8,351 participants, with disability prevalence at 9.77% in Cameroon and 10.89% in Senegal. Over half of the participants in both countries voted in the most recent elections. Factors like interest in politics, possession of necessary documents, and political party registration were associated with higher voting rates. However, people with disabilities were less likely to vote than those without, with significantly lower odds in both countries. The study highlights the need to address socio-political and environmental barriers to ensure equitable political participation for people with disabilities.

Social inclusion

In October 2024, UNICEF released the report [“In Focus: Levelling the playing field for children with disabilities \(Europe and Central Asia\)”](#). The report notes that while progress has been made in including children with disabilities in schools and communities in Europe

and Central Asia, many still face discrimination, denying them access to education, healthcare, and full participation in society. Stigma and lack of tailored services contribute to their exclusion, with children often seen through a medical lens rather than as individuals with potential. This results in barriers to vital support, isolation, violence, and institutionalisation, including in inadequate special schools.

Humanitarian response

In 2024, Humanity and Inclusion has produced the report “**The Impact of War: Malnourishment and Disability in the Gaza Strip**”. The report states that the Israeli military's bombardment, blockade, and ground offensive in Gaza are severely affecting Palestinian civilians with disabilities, who face heightened difficulties in fleeing attacks and accessing humanitarian aid. Israel's October 13, 2023, evacuation order from northern Gaza ignored the needs of people with disabilities, leaving many unable to leave and exposed to the dangers of war. Children with disabilities, including those injured by explosive weapons, struggle with evacuation orders, lack of warnings, and disrupted access to medical treatment, food, and water. Before the escalation, many households in Gaza already faced significant barriers to healthcare, rehabilitation, and nutrition, and the conflict has worsened these conditions, with thousands of children acquiring disabilities. Displaced families, including over a million children, face extreme living conditions, further compromising the well-being of children with disabilities. The blockade and restrictions on aid have left people with disabilities unable to access essential services and assistive devices, while overcrowded shelters are unsafe and inaccessible.

Climate change

In August 2024, the Disability Inclusive Climate Action Research Programme published a report on “**Women with Disabilities and Climate Change**”. The report notes that people with disabilities are disproportionately affected by climate change, with poverty, stigma, and discrimination being key factors that expose them to its impacts. Women with disabilities face unique vulnerabilities, as the intersection of gender and disability amplifies their challenges in a world increasingly impacted by climate change. These women struggle with limited access to essential resources, healthcare, and mobility, while facing physical and social barriers that hinder their participation in decision-making processes. Economic disadvantages further exacerbate their situation, as they often have fewer job opportunities and lower incomes, limiting their ability to prepare for and respond to disasters. The lack of inclusive policies and accessible resources leaves women with disabilities less able to adapt and recover from climate impacts. The report concludes that it is essential to promote economic inclusion, ensure their participation in climate policy-making, and implement strategies that address their specific needs to create a more equitable and resilient future.

Disability inclusion policy development news

In July 2024, African leaders, African Union organs and AUC departments, UN agencies,

development partners, CSOs, and youth leaders met in Addis Ababa at the 1st African Union Pan African Conference on Girls and Women's Education (AU/PANCOGE1) to discuss girls and women's education. At the end of the conference, 35 AU Member States, 6 AU organs and AUC departments, 7 UN agencies, 5 development partners, and 17 Civil Society Organisations agreed to a set of **10 recommendations and call to action for girl's and women's education**. The document is a strong expression of the need and desire to speed up the work needed in girl's and women's education. It is a guiding document for all stakeholders working at the intersections of education, gender equality, and social development. The document acknowledges the intersectional barriers faced by many adolescent girls, including those with disabilities, and calls for ensuring that they are participating in formal education and have access to informal learning opportunities, benefiting from multiple alternative learning pathways.

In June 2024, following its 15th ratification, the **African Disability Protocol officially entered into force**, having originally been adopted in 2018. The African Disability Protocol (ADP) is a vital legal framework guiding African Union member states in developing disability laws and policies. Inspired by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the ADP reflects a social and human rights approach to disability. The ADP addresses inadequacies in the African human rights system, tackles deep-rooted issues of disability discrimination, and promotes community living and inclusive development. It aligns with the commitment to *Leaving No One Behind* formulated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This milestone was achieved through dedicated advocacy by organisations of persons with disabilities across Africa.

The National Democratic Institute notes several **advances in disability inclusive legislation** in Africa in 2024. These include new laws in Kenya, such as the Persons with Disabilities Bill, the Kenya Sign Language Bill, and the Learners with Disability Bill; whilst in Malawi, in April 2024, the Persons with Disabilities Act became law.

In November 2024, **ReliefWeb** announced the Australian Government's new **International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy (IDEARS)**. The strategy reaffirms Australia's leadership in advancing disability equity across international development, humanitarian assistance, climate action, and foreign and trade policy. The Government also announced an additional \$12 million for assistive technology in the Indo-Pacific over four years. For the first time, the Australian government has set a target for performance on disability equity across all international and humanitarian efforts: 60 per cent of all programming will be performing effectively on disability equity by 2026 with a staged approach to reach 70 per cent by 2030.

In September 2024, Global Employment News, Insights and Events (GENIE) noted that **Chilean labour code has been amended to include new labour inclusion laws**. The new law modifying the Labor Code increases the minimum percentage of persons with disabilities that must be hired in companies, from 1% to 2%. Fines will be issued to companies who fail to comply with the new obligations. Employers must implement accessibility measures, necessary adjustments and policies which prevent harassment of employees with disabilities and / or disability pension recipients. Companies must make the

necessary adjustments in their recruitment, selection and working conditions to facilitate the inclusion of people with disabilities, safeguarding equal opportunity for people with disabilities.

In early March, 17 **Latin American countries approved the update of the Regional System of Educational Information for Students with Disabilities (SIRIED)**, and 13 UNESCO Member States will implement it to strengthen the measurement of the educational situation of the population with disabilities. The aim is to drive improvements to strengthen the measurement of the educational situation of the population with disabilities in the region. To promote the improvement of the teaching and technical capacity of the ministries of education, it was agreed to develop a regional programme of scholarships and/or peer exchange internships for professional development in inclusive education, with an emphasis on students with disabilities and in various vulnerable environments. Similarly, countries were called upon to participate in and disseminate the call for recognition of digital technologies for the inclusion of students with disabilities: innovative and inclusive teaching and learning practices, identifying educational initiatives and projects that creatively explore, experiment, and integrate digital technologies as tools to reduce or eliminate learning barriers for students with disabilities in inclusive environments.

In May 2024, the European Disability Forum published a **Resolution on Disability Rights, Peace and Conflict**. The General Assembly of the European Disability Forum calls on EU institutions, Member States, national governments, and the United Nations to heed key recommendations for ensuring the inclusion and protection of persons with disabilities in humanitarian responses. It emphasises: ending hostilities and ensuring immediate access to humanitarian aid, prioritising persons with disabilities' safety and needs; consulting and involving persons with disabilities and their representatives in all stages of humanitarian action and decision-making; ensuring that disability requirements are central to humanitarian assistance; prioritising at-risk groups; recognising the increased risk of gender-based violence for persons with disabilities; including persons with disabilities in national emergency plans and legislation; allocating specific budgets for accessibility and accommodation; and disaggregating data by gender, age, and disability.

About the Disability Inclusion Helpdesk:

The Disability Inclusion Helpdesk provides research and technical assistance on disability inclusion to the UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office as part of the Disability Inclusive Development Programme. All our published reports are available on **our website**. Contact us via: enquiries@disabilityinclusion.org.uk