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# ARE WE FULFILLING OUR PROMISES? INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SUB- SAHARAN AFRICA

DATA AND EVIDENCE FOR EDUCATION PROGRAMS  
(DEEP) PROJECT

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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DEEP	Data and Evidence for Education Programs
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EMIS	Education Management Information System
IDA	International Disability Alliance
LSMS	Living Standards Measurement Study
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

# INTRODUCTION

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 calls for ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities—a key element in achieving the Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030 and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Journey to Self-Reliance. SDG 4.1 goes on to call for all girls and boys to complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education that leads to relevant and effective learning outcomes by 2030. Two targets explicitly mention disability:

- Target 4.5 aims to ensure access to all levels of education and vocational training
- Target 4.a calls for building and upgrading all education facilities that are sensitive to persons with disabilities and providing inclusive learning environments for all children (United Nations 2018)

Education, a fundamental human right, is essential to individual development and effective participation in society. Therefore, education must be accessible to every single child. Numerous conventions and frameworks declare that everyone has a right to education and that education is an integral part of universal human rights: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education (1960), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989), the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD 2006), and the Incheon Declaration adopted at the World Education Forum (2015) (United Nations 2018). The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa (The African Union Commission 2018), in particular Article 16, gives children with disabilities and their families an important regional legal tool to ensure their right to inclusive education against states which fail to fulfill the obligation of this right (Dubin 2019). The SDGs use the momentum generated by these and many other documents to ensure measures are taken to achieve the full inclusion of all children, including children with disabilities, in schools across the world.

In this report, disability is defined as a functional difficulty (i.e., difficulty doing basic activities linked to an impairment or health condition) that, due to environmental barriers, may exclude someone from full participation in society.

According to the United Nations' Flagship Report on Disability and Development, *Realization of the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with Persons with Disabilities*, there is an urgent need to improve access to education for persons with disabilities so they can acquire the skills and knowledge required for full inclusion in society and active participation in the labor market. Otherwise, existing educational disadvantages are likely to lead to even higher exposure to social exclusion and poverty. Among adults with disabilities, each additional year of schooling they completed reduces the probability that they will be in the poorest two quintiles by 2–5 percent (UNESCO 2015). It is evident that increasing access to high-quality, equitable education based on principles of universal design for learning is a key element in ending this cycle (United Nations 2018).



Although 42 percent of countries in sub-Saharan Africa are considered to be pursuing inclusive education policies,<sup>1,2</sup> children with disabilities still face significant barriers to access and complete education—barriers that differ for each child depending on their disability (UNESCO, 2020). For example, building ramps can help many learners physically enter the school but does nothing to improve access for learners who are blind or deaf, or have intellectual disabilities.

Evidence shows that children with disabilities are less likely to attend school. Even when they are able to enroll in school, other challenges in the design of the education system create barriers for learners with disabilities and make it less likely for them, on average, to complete levels of education comparable to their peers without disabilities (UNESCO 2018a). Barriers to the successful completion of school include lack of government prioritization of inclusive education in strategies and policies; lack of knowledge/resources for parents/caregivers to support their children in schooling; the prejudices, discrimination, and attitudes that many still hold against children and adults with disabilities; a lack of qualified teachers, principals, and pedagogic supervisors, to accommodate the needs of learners with disabilities;<sup>3</sup> poor accessibility of school infrastructure; the low supply of accessible teaching and learning materials; and the low number of teachers with disabilities who better understand and show empathy towards learners with disabilities, provide mentorship to learners with and without disabilities, provide guidance and expertise on the inclusion process, lead to a positive change in attitude, advise colleagues on being more aware of learners' difficulties, and create a more inclusive environment for teachers and students with disabilities (IDA 2020; UNESCO 2014; UNESCO 2020; GPE 2018).

There is a global systemic dearth of data on inclusive education programs that are needed to ensure the achievement of the SDGs by 2030 (Mont 2007). Through the collection of data disaggregated by disability, resources can be allocated equitably, budgets can be managed more efficiently, inclusive education programs and policies can be implemented and monitored more closely, and efforts to enhance education services can be strengthened (GPE Stocktake 2018). It is especially critical to disaggregate data not only by disability, in general, but by types of disabilities. We can then begin to understand the specific barriers faced by children who are deaf or with reduced hearing, by those who are blind or with low vision, or those faced by children with intellectual or physical disabilities. It will also be possible to examine barriers faced by children with any combination of difficulties, for example, those who are deaf-blind.

The educational experience for all learners, and specifically learners with disabilities, must be both accessible and inclusive so they can stay enrolled until completion. It must also provide qualified teachers and adapted learning materials to meet each learner's unique needs. Schools must ensure that learners are safe from harm (e.g., bullying, violence, undeserved discipline) so each learner (regardless of their disability status) and their caregivers feel that being in school does not come at a cost beyond the financial one.

In the sections that follow, we discuss the state of inclusive education across Sub-Saharan Africa. While many of the broader observations apply to much of the world, we have provided examples that are

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<sup>1</sup> The focus of inclusive education differs by country. In high-income countries, inclusive education often refers to efforts to educate children with disabilities, whereas in low-income countries, where more children are excluded from school, the term is used more broadly to refer to the education of girls and the poorest children, in addition to children with disabilities (EDT and UNICEF 2016).

<sup>2</sup>Countries that have Inclusive Education Policies include: Angola, Botswana, Ghana, Lesotho, Liberia, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

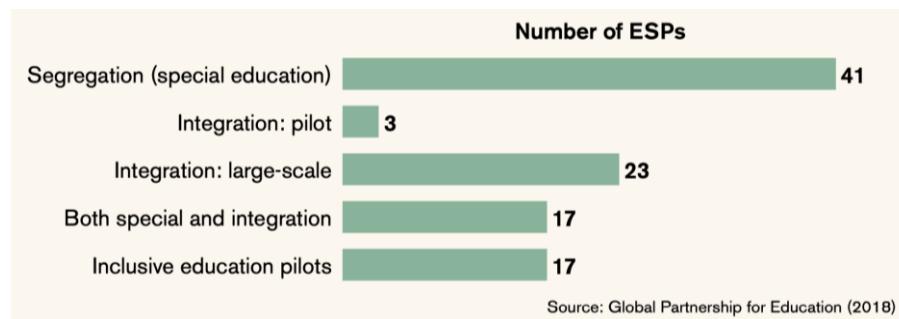
<sup>3</sup> The CRPD defines disability as long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

specific to sub-Saharan Africa throughout this report. In Section 1, we begin with a description of inclusive, integrated, and segregated schooling for children with disabilities. In Section 2, [Government Priority](#), we review declarations, laws, policies, and funding allocations through which Sub-Saharan African countries prioritize or recognize inclusive education. In Section 3, [School Access](#), we review data on inclusive education, including the school attendance and school completion of learners with disabilities, as well as the barriers to enrollment and retention. In Section 4, [School Experience](#), we review the practical experience of learners with disabilities in school, including how accessibility of facilities, bullying and violence, and instructional accommodations affects this experience. The report concludes in Section 5 with a review of [USAID's initiatives](#) to support inclusive education in Sub-Saharan Africa.

## SECTION I: INCLUSIVE VERSUS SEGREGATED VERSUS INTEGRATED EDUCATION

There are different approaches to the provision of education for children with disabilities. These different approaches reflect different constructs of disability, namely the social versus the medical model of disability<sup>4</sup> which can affect whether there are efforts at systemic change or only various levels of individual accommodation. Given these fundamental differences, we begin our discussion by describing these different approaches. According to the World Bank's *Every Learner Matters* report (2019), most countries make explicit reference to persons with disabilities' right to education in their constitutions, laws, and policies. However, definitions are rarely included, they vary widely, and their implementation (if it exists) often aligns more with segregated learning and special schooling than true inclusion. Even when countries claim they are following inclusion, they may only be placing children with disabilities in regular classrooms, and not creating a learning environment that addresses their needs. Of the 51 countries included in the GPE Stocktake of Education Sector Plans (ESPs), 41 countries have segregated schools, 3 are piloting integrated schools and 23 have implemented them at a large scale, 17 have both special and integrated learning, and only 17 are piloting inclusive education (Exhibit 1) (2018).

Exhibit 1: Country approaches to education for learners with disabilities



Learners with disabilities are frequently placed in special schools or classrooms because of the belief that they will benefit more from learning in such settings. Separating learners in their own classrooms and

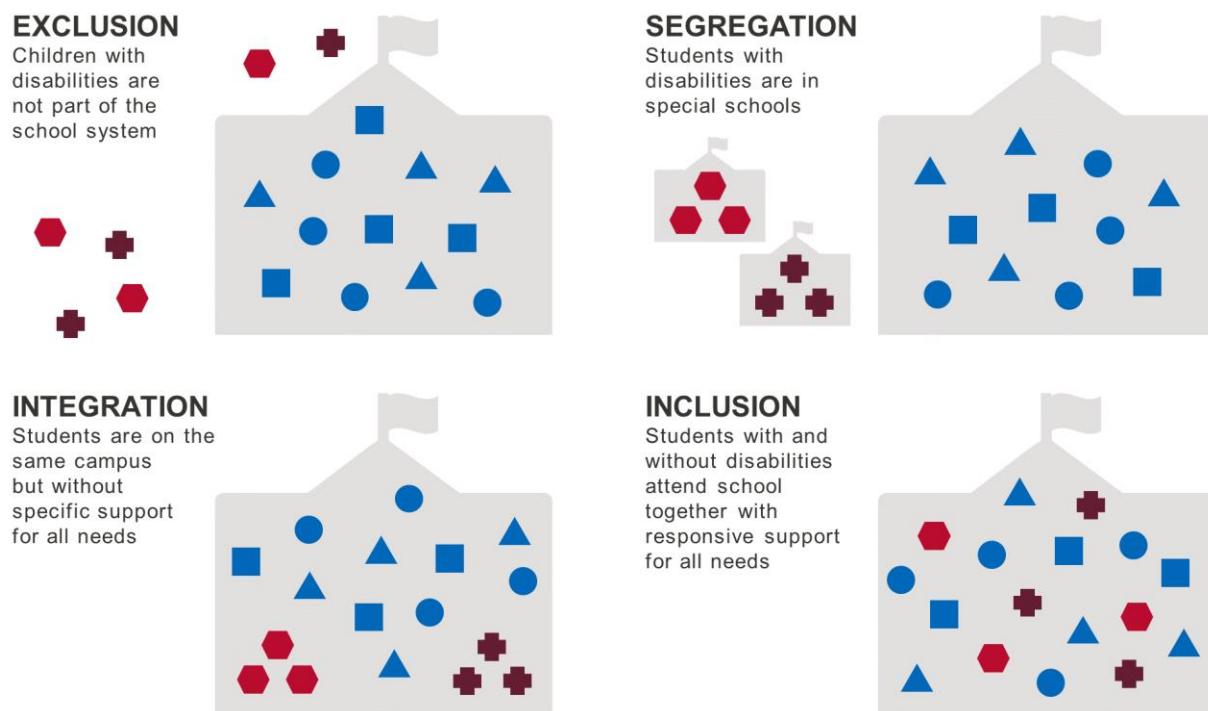
<sup>4</sup> Please see USAID's [Mapping of Tools for Disaggregation by Disability Status](#) for a description of the social and medical models of disability.

schools isolates learners with disabilities and bolsters existing negative stereotypes. Although it will take time to reach full inclusion, taking steps toward inclusive schools and away from segregated and integrated learning is critical to meeting SDG 4.

Inclusive education means having one inclusive system of education that is responsive to the needs of all learners, at all levels (early childhood, primary, secondary, and post-secondary) and provides supports to meet the needs of learners with disabilities. It advocates access to schools through the principles of Universal Design for Learning and having resources for specific needs available to teachers and learners. It supports the participation of all learners in a safe and friendly environment, using the mother tongue or sign language for primary learning and technology to further support communication. It also promotes achievement that comes with qualified teachers trained in Universal Design for Learning, adaptable curriculum, and resources available to meet the needs of each child.

This differs from segregated education, where learners with disabilities are in special schools. It is also not the same as integrated schooling, which has learners with disabilities on the same campus or compound as learners without disabilities, but without the necessary supports or considerations for their needs. Integration is often confused with inclusion, but without support or inclusive pedagogy for learners with disabilities, this does not equate to inclusion. Other approaches to education for learners with disabilities are via pilot programs, in-hospital schools or classrooms, and in-home teaching (World Bank 2019).

Exhibit 2: Educational provisions seen around the world for learners with disabilities



According to a qualitative study by Okyere and colleagues (2019), learners with intellectual and developmental disabilities in inclusive schools in Accra, Ghana, received support from many of their peers, but also faced challenges such as corporal punishment, low family and teacher support for their learning, and victimization from other peers. Learners expressed concern over the lack of teachers' support, saying, "If teacher helps me, I can be able to understand and write" and "I want someone to

“always help me to learn.” Learners with disabilities often had to complete the assignments in the same amount of time as their peers and without any modifications to the lessons (instructions and assignments), even when those changes would have proved helpful. Often, when they were unable to complete an assignment in the time allotted, learners with disabilities were punished by not being allowed to go out and enjoy recess or, even more seriously, a lunch break.

Education for learners with disabilities in inclusive settings provides an opportunity for learners with and without disabilities to work together on assignments and even interact outside the classroom during their commutes home, which improves not only their academic skills but also their social interactional skills (Okyere et al. 2019). Inclusive education benefits all learners because they are able to access the material through alternative methods and Universal Design for Learning that will only bolster their understanding of the material. According to UNICEF (2017), inclusive education promotes understanding, reduces prejudice, and strengthens social integration among all learners, with ripple effects into the community.

## SECTION 2: GOVERNMENT PRIORITY

Government support and prioritization of inclusive education influence the availability and allocation of resources and school-level policies that reinforce inclusive education (UNICEF 2009). Across Sub-Saharan Africa, governments recognize inclusive education through various declarations, disability and education acts and laws, national policies, constitutional provisions, and funding allocations.

### 2.1: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICIES

A number of international treaties spearheaded by the United Nations have been signed, ratified, or adopted by the majority of Sub-Saharan African countries. The UNCRC, a human rights treaty signed in 1989, sets out the rights of children around the world and specifically seeks to ensure these rights apply to all children, irrespective of disability status. All United Nations Member States except the United States have ratified the UNCRC (United Nations Treaty Collection 2020a).<sup>5</sup>

The education of children with disabilities is not a particularly new initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa. Formal education of children with disabilities has occurred in special schools since the colonial era (Mpfou, Oakland, and Chimedza 2007). Additionally, some countries in Africa were among the first to sign and ratify the UNCRC (EDT and UNICEF 2016). A shift of policy and practice toward inclusive education is happening with commitment and enthusiasm (Charema 2010).

The CRPD is an international treaty adopted in 2006 that identifies the rights of persons with disabilities and obliges states to promote, protect, and ensure those rights. It does not set out new requirements, but clarifies existing rights of persons with disabilities already existing in international treaties. Most Sub-Saharan African countries in this review have signed and ratified the CRPD which guarantees the right to inclusive education. More specifically, Article 24 recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to inclusive education without discrimination and on an equal basis with others, and requires parties to ensure persons with disabilities can access inclusive education. General Comment No. 4 on Article 24 further defines and conceptualizes inclusive education and provides a framework and guidance for states. It makes it clear that persons with disabilities experience persistent discrimination that denies them their

<sup>5</sup> Somalia and South Sudan are the most recent members to do so in 2015.

right to an education. The CRPD articulates the concept of inclusive education for the first time in international law. Fewer, but still the majority of countries, have ratified the CRPD's Optional Protocol, which gives the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities the right to receive complaints and investigate serious violations of the Convention, essentially holding ratifying countries accountable for following through with guaranteeing the rights outlined in the CRPD (CRPD 2006; IDA 2020; United Nations Treaty Collection 2020c).

The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, includes SDG 4.5, which commits countries to ensure equal access to all levels of educational and vocational training for persons with disabilities. The 2030 Agenda sets out specific intergovernmental global goals for countries to, build and upgrade educational facilities to be disability sensitive and in compliance with the CRPD (Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform n.d.; IDA 2020). All United Nations Member States have adopted the 2030 Agenda. These high-profile declarations signal growing interest in inclusive education in Sub-Saharan Africa and around the world (UNESCO 2018a).

National policies and strategies on inclusive education) are in various stages in many countries. It should be noted that often the term “special needs education” is still used<sup>6</sup>, although that term has historically also been used for segregated education. These policies and strategies include specific sections on education as part of disability legislation, and some include sections on disability within education legislation. These acts vary in specificity by country, and many call for the availability of special schools for children whose disabilities are too severe for or cannot be accommodated by ordinary schools (see the [Inclusive Versus Segregated Versus Integrated Education](#) section for a discussion on separate schools). What qualifies a learner for admission to a special school and who decides on those qualifications differs by country. A review of national policies and strategies completed for this literature review finds that many of these policies and strategies specifically call for:

- Physically accessible educational facilities (e.g., Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, South Africa, and Uganda)
- Communication accommodations such as Braille, sign language, and audio libraries (e.g., Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Senegal)
- Teacher training on special needs education (e.g., Madagascar, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda)
- Adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of learners with disabilities (e.g., Kenya, Senegal, and Uganda)
- Financial assistance or tuition reduction for learners with disabilities (e.g., Malawi and Senegal)

Not all countries mandate inclusive education as it is outlined in legislation; some laws simply state that the government will “encourage” such actions. Certain countries have documented their prioritization of inclusive education in their constitutions. Many Sub-Saharan African countries have constitutional provisions that protect persons with disabilities from discrimination, such as South Africa, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Eritrea, Kenya, Ghana, Namibia and Gambia, and some also have provisions that ensure the right to education for children with disabilities, like South Africa, Kenya and Burundi (ACPF 2014).

Government prioritization of inclusive education is essential for children with disabilities to have access to education. It should be noted, however, that while essential, establishment of education policies alone

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<sup>6</sup> Examples of its use were found in the policies in Senegal, South Africa, and Uganda.

is not sufficient to guarantee inclusion. There frequently is a gap between political intent and the actual provision of inclusive education in schools in all 21 eastern and southern African countries included in a study on the fulfilment of the right to education of children with disabilities (EDT and UNICEF 2016).<sup>7</sup> For example, a case study of the Comoros established that despite political intent, enrollment in school was particularly challenging for children with disabilities due to barriers to parents bringing their child to school and parents being unwilling to admit their child has a disability as a result of cultural attitudes. Another report determined that policy in low- and middle-income countries was often not clearly stated or understood. The same report found that some schools were not even aware of their country's inclusive education policies and received no training on how to implement them (Graham 2014). Many countries with government support of inclusive education have seen progress, but further advancement requires appropriate funding, awareness, and specific strategies for achieving educational provisions for learners with disabilities, such as teacher training (EDT and UNICEF 2016).

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<sup>7</sup> Angola, Botswana, Burundi, the Comoros, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

## **Examples of National Inclusive Education Policy**

### **Kenya – Persons with Disabilities Act**

#### **18. Education**

- (1) *No person or learning institution shall deny admission to a person with a disability to any course of study by reason only of such disability, if the person has the ability to acquire substantial learning in that course.*
- (2) *Learning institutions shall take into account the special needs of persons with disabilities with respect to the entry requirements, pass marks, curriculum, examinations, auxiliary services, use of school facilities, class schedules, physical education requirements and other similar considerations.*
- (3) *Special schools and institutions, especially for the deaf, the blind and the mentally retarded, shall be established to cater for formal education, skills development and self-reliance.*

#### **19. Special and non-formal education**

*The Council shall work in consultation with the relevant agencies of Government to make provisions in all districts for an integrated system of special and non-formal education for persons with all forms of disabilities and the establishment where possible of Braille and recorded libraries for persons with visual disabilities.*

### **Nigeria – Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018**

#### **17. (1) A person with disability shall have an unfettered right to education without discrimination or segregation in any form.**

- (2) *A person with disability is entitled to free education to secondary school level.*
- (3) *The Commission shall provide educational assistive devices.*

#### **18. (1) All public schools, whether primary, secondary or tertiary shall be run to be inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities, accordingly every school shall have-**

- (a) *at least a trained personnel to cater for the educational development of persons with disabilities; and*
- (b) *special facilities for the effective education of persons with disabilities.*

*(2) Braille, sign language and other skills for communicating with persons with disabilities shall form part of the curricula of primary, secondary and tertiary institutions.*

#### **19. The education of special education personnel shall be highly subsidized.**

#### **20. Government shall ensure that the education of persons with disabilities, particularly children, who are blind, deaf or with multiple disabilities, is delivered in the most appropriate language, mode and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximise academic and social development.**

### **Rwanda – Law N° 01/2007 of 20/01/2007 Relating to Protection of Disabled Persons in General**

#### **Chapter 2. Rights of a Disabled Person in Matters Related to Education**

##### **Article 11:**

*A disabled person has the right to appropriate education in respect of the nature of his or her disability. The Government or centres which cater for disabled persons who are not able to study with others, shall provide with them modalities to study in a specialised school and shall have qualified and trained teachers and appropriate equipment. The Minister in charge of Education shall, basing on basic categories of disability determined by the Minister in charge of Health, determine modalities of facilitating the needy disabled persons in ordinary schools and in specialised schools in case of failure to study with others.*

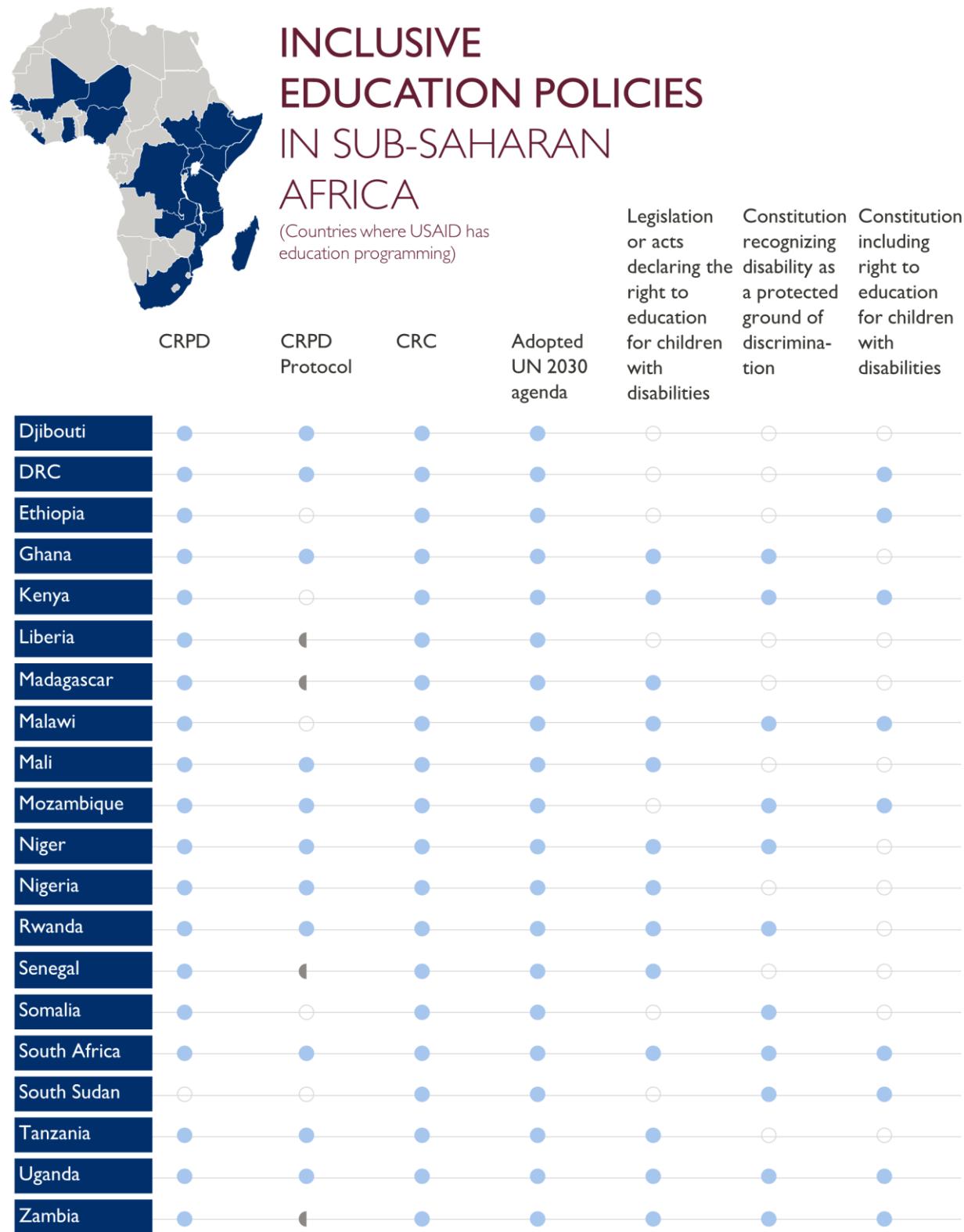
##### **Article 12:**

*A pupil or a student with disabilities that do not enable him or her to sit exams with fellow schoolmates or in the same manner as others is entitled to the right of sitting for exams in a special manner.*

##### **Article 13:**

*The Minister in charge of education shall determine modalities of facilitating the needy disabled persons in pursuing education.*

Exhibit 3: Inclusive education policies in Sub-Saharan Africa



United Nations Treaty Collection 2020a; United Nations Treaty Collection 2020b; United Nations Treaty Collection 2020c; EDT 2016; ACPF 2014; United Nations N.d.

- Signed, ratified, or adopted
- Signed, not ratified
- Not signed, ratified, or adopted

## 2.2: FINANCING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Despite policy commitment to inclusive education by the majority of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, significant barriers, in the form of “inadequate facilities, poorly trained teachers, and a lack of accessible learning materials,” remain the operational reality (IDDC and IETG 2017). A lack of adequate funding for inclusive education represents a significant barrier to effective implementation. Funding should ideally enable “education systems to take learners’ educational needs into account and to support parents in meeting the direct and indirect costs of education” (Ebersold and Meijer 2016).

Increases in funding alone, however, do not necessarily guarantee effective implementation of inclusive education commitments. Factors such as political will, an understanding of the types of investments needed to support inclusive education, and funding allocation approaches have an impact on the effectiveness and sustainability of inclusive education investments. As Ebersold and Meijer (2016) state, “The implementation of inclusive education is correlated with the way funds are allocated and to whom the funds are addressed.” Funding allocations have the potential to facilitate or inhibit inclusion in education.

The 2017 IDDC and IETG report on costing inclusive education calls for sufficient domestic and donor funding to support a two-track investment model needed for the effective adoption of inclusive education. The first track focuses on systemic change and requires investing in new policies as well as shifts in “practice and attitudes” to help “remove barriers and create enabling conditions to enhance the quality and access to education for all children” (IDDC and IETG 2017). This first track benefits all learners in the system. The second track requires investments specifically designed to increase access to education and accommodation in instruction for learners with disabilities.

In many countries, ministries of education tend to have systems supporting separate special schools rather than supporting inclusive education in mainstream schools. This often stems from a limited understanding of inclusive education and its scope, as well as the interchangeable use of the terminology in many countries. In addition to further segregating learners with disabilities, such special schools are less cost-effective than inclusive mainstream schools (IDDC and IETG 2017). In low-resource environments, segregated schools are economically unsustainable, are generally unable to accommodate all learners with special needs, and perpetuate the perception that provision of education for learners with special needs is extremely expensive. Conversely, there are increasing examples from successful models of inclusive education in low-resource settings (Stubbs 2008). For example, strategic partnerships between government, NGOs, donors and civil society have been successful in supporting inclusive education combined with early screening and intervention programs for students with low vision (IDDC and IETG 2017).<sup>8</sup> A UNICEF study found that “If good quality education, featuring well-trained teachers and strong peer support were in place, as many as 80 to 90 percent of learners with disabilities could be educated in mainstream schools with only minor additional support” (IDDC and IETG 2017).

“If good quality education, featuring well-trained teachers and strong peer support were in place, as many as 80 percent to 90 percent of learners with disabilities could be educated in mainstream schools with only minor additional support” (IDDC and IETG 2017, p. 18)

An important exception is around schools for the deaf, which some organizations, such as the World Federation of the Deaf and the International Federation of Hard of Hearing, have noted are critical for

<sup>8</sup> Please see the [following](#) for examples of successful [inclusive education strategies in low resource settings](#).

providing deaf children with the opportunity to learn and socialize in sign language in a setting with peers with the same disability. Placing deaf learners in mainstream schools that do not provide them with adequate access to and direct instruction in sign language does not support inclusion for all deaf learners. Bilingual education for deaf learners is a form of inclusive education for deaf learners. Taking this into account, the International Disability Alliance (IDA) proposes the supported transition of schools for the deaf and inclusive, bilingual sign language schools that meet the needs of deaf learners but still create an inclusive setting (IDA 2019).

A range of funding allocation approaches has been applied to support inclusive education. The effectiveness of these different approaches varies depending on the country's existing systems. The following are the main approaches:

- **Conditional cash transfers** are designed to increase access to school via individual cash transfers, in which families living in poverty receive cash conditionally depending on factors such as school attendance and obtaining preventive medical care. The transfers are designed to create an incentive for school attendance by helping compensate for direct and indirect costs associated with attendance. Transfer programs such as these have proven successful in increasing girls' attendance and reducing poverty among adults with disabilities, but there is little disaggregated data about their impact on the school attendance of children with disabilities (Krishnaratne, White, and Carpenter 2013; Mont 2006). Additionally, without systemic reforms needed to make classroom instruction more accommodating, conditional cash transfers alone do not ensure that once in school, learners receive the accommodation needed to help them engage successfully, learn, and remain in school (Stubbs 2008).
- CCT programs can disadvantage families in which children with disabilities face barriers to education because the inability to attend school puts those transfers at risk. One strategy for working around this issue is to exempt children with disabilities from this conditionality; however, while this provides the family with an economic safety net, it undermines the goal of promoting education for the child with a disability (See Mont D, "Social Protection and Disability," Chapter in Poverty and Disability 2010).
- Ministries of education frequently rely on Education Management Information System (EMIS) enrollment data to determine **per capita funding allocations** to regions, sub-regions, and/or schools. EMIS data on student disability status frequently are incomplete, inaccurate, or are available with a lag of a year or more<sup>9</sup>. Some ministries build on this existing funding allocation system by supplementing the per capita allocations for learners who have been identified as having disabilities. Under Kenya's Free Primary Education program, for example, the government allocates 1,420 Kenyan shillings per learner. This capitation funding is supplemented with an additional 2,300 Kenyan shillings for learners with disabilities (Ministry of Education 2018). Per capita funding has the potential to provide a transparent, formula-based way to allocate targeted inclusive education funds where needed. However, this approach requires accurate disability prevalence data, which are frequently not available at the subnational or school level. In addition, if data on the number of learners with disabilities are drawn from schools' EMIS data, this has the potential to create an incentive for schools to over-identify learners with special needs (IDDC and IETG 2017). The per capita funding approach also runs the risk of reinforcing the idea that accommodations for an individual child are enough, rather than the design of an inclusive system.

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<sup>9</sup> See USAID's *Tracking Inclusion: Data Sources on Inclusive Education in Sub-Saharan Africa* report, section 2.3.

- **Needs-based systems and school-level investments** are less dependent on school and student-level data requirements. System and school-level investments needed to support greater mainstreaming of inclusive education may be more cost-effective (IDDC and IETG 2017). Examples of investments include curriculum reform, development of adaptive materials and instructional approaches, allocation of specialized teachers, teacher training, community outreach programs and construction of accessible infrastructure (e.g., ramps, sidewalks, and accessible toilets).
- Even in countries that have implemented universal primary education, **household contributions** to education continue to represent a significant portion of domestic spending. In some cases, they contribute more to education than governments make (IDDC and IETG 2017). Students with disabilities who are enrolled in segregated classes or schools are often required to pay additional fees and levies, on top of those paid by other students (Ministry of Education and VSO Jitolee 2016). These costs can exacerbate educational exclusion. However, to the extent that they are already being collected, these funds can be used to support inclusive education. School administrators or school-level Boards of Management typically decide how this money is spent. Interventions sensitizing them to the importance of inclusion have been effective in increasing the admission of children with disabilities to schools, improving access to buildings and infrastructure, and promoting staff training and student support (Mariga, McConkey, and Myezwa 2014).

**Countries in East Africa have established and have been investing in dedicated resource centers** to provide a decentralized and flexible way for governments to fund education for children with disabilities. In some cases, special schools have been converted into these centers. Known by different names in different countries—for example, Educational Assessment and Resource Centers in Kenya, Educational Assessment and Resource Services in Uganda, and Inclusive Education Resource Centers in Ethiopia—they can provide a number of different services: assessing students, recommending school placements, training teachers, loaning specialized materials to schools, supporting curriculum development, and/or providing referrals to healthcare providers (UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2014; 2015b; 2015a). However, in many cases, these centers have limited funding, support, and staffing, and there is little data showing what type of spending and interventions have the greatest impact on student enrollment and achievement.

## SECTION 3: SCHOOL ACCESS

To further highlight the differences between policy and practice, the report explores school access, focusing first on disability prevalence rates to highlight the magnitude of this issue.

Globally, the World Health Survey estimates that 15.6 percent of the population 15 years and older have some form of disability. Among children under 15, prevalence is estimated to be around 5.1 percent for moderate to severe disabilities and 0.7 percent for those with severe disabilities<sup>10</sup> (WHO 2011). Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest regional prevalence rate, with 6.4 percent of children under age 15 having a moderate to severe disability and 1.2 percent having a severe disability (EDT and

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<sup>10</sup> There are seven disability classes. Within those, “severe” disability includes classes VI and VII (e.g., blindness, Down syndrome, quadriplegia, severe depression, or active psychosis) and “moderate and severe” disability includes classes III and higher, such as angina, arthritis, low vision, or alcohol dependence (WHO 2011).

UNICEF 2016). New data from the latest round of the MICS shows high rates of childhood disability in SSA that can vary quite a bit by country.

COUNTRY	YEAR	SOURCE	% OF CHILDREN AGE 5-17 YEARS WITH A DISABILITY				
			TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	RURAL	URBAN
DRC	2018	MICS	19.5	19.8	19.2	20.9	17.7
Ghana	2018	MICS	20.7	20.5	20.9	21.5	19.5
Madagascar	2018	MICS	14.2	14.3	14.0	14.1	14.6

Source: UNICEF n.d

Malnutrition, poor medical care, lack of access to clean water and basic sanitation, dangerous living and working conditions, conflicts, and natural disasters all contribute to increases in disability (UNICEF 2013). Disability prevalence rates are sometimes estimated to be higher in lower-income countries but are frequently underreported in official data sources. The prevalence rates are often specific to impairments, which are not adequate proxy for disability information. Health conditions are sometimes conflated with disability (WHO 2011). Estimates of overall disability prevalence tend to lack reliability and comparability and tend to underreport the scale of disabilities (UNESCO 2018b).

Underreporting of children's disability status often comes because parents are unaware of that status. In other cases, parents know of their child's disability but decline to answer survey or census questions about disability (ACPF 2014). A UNESCO working paper indicates, "In most developing countries the number of children with disabilities is grossly underestimated. Children with severe and moderate disabilities may be acknowledged, but children with mild or hidden disabilities are ignored" (Graham 2014). Many are not identified and then go undetected in EMIS data, either because data on disability is not collected or it is not done appropriately. However, that is changing as efforts to improve disability data in EMISs are growing (Mont and Sprunt 2019; UNESCO 2019). The significance of under-counting disability prevalence rates has clear implications for potential inaccuracy in estimating enrollment, out-of-school, and completion rates among children with disabilities.

### 3.1: PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL

Participation in school among learners with disabilities lags significantly behind that of their peers without disabilities.

The introduction of Universal Compulsory Education has brought about an increase in enrollment of children in primary school throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. However, increases in enrollment among children with disabilities have not kept pace with increased enrollment of children without disabilities, resulting in growing gaps in enrollment rates. Based on national census data from 11 countries in the region<sup>11</sup>, a World Bank study found that the chance a 12-year-old child with disabilities has ever attended school is 10 percentage points lower than a child without disabilities (Wodon, Male, Montenegro, and Nayihouba 2018).

Exhibit 4 lists the percent of individuals aged 15–29 who have ever attended school, disaggregated by disability status. Among children with disabilities, the percent who reported ever attending school ranged from 35.8 percent in South Sudan to a surprisingly high rate of 98.2 percent in Zambia, and in 37 of the countries analyzed in a UNESCO Institute for Statistics study, children with disabilities were less

<sup>11</sup> Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, South Sudan, and Zambia.

likely than their peers to have attended school (UNESCO 2018a). The estimated gap in the rates between children with and without disabilities ranges from a low of 1.5 percentage points in Mali to 26.2 percentage points in Nigeria (see Exhibit 4). The range in these rates, as well as the gap between the rates, may in part reflect inconsistencies in how disability is defined, how data are collected, and how the sample is designed.

The probability of never having attended school varies with the type of disability. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) data from 2006 indicate that the probability of never having attended school is much higher among those with a risk of mental disabilities than those with a risk of hearing impairment.<sup>12</sup> Wodon and colleague's review of census data from Sub-Saharan Africa similarly finds that the impact of disability on having ever attended school is greatest among children with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities and those with multiple disabilities (2018).

**Exhibit 4: Proportion of 15- to 29-year-olds who have ever attended school, by disability status and sex**

COUNTRY	YEAR	SOURCE	% OF PERSONS AGED 15–29 WHO EVER ATTENDED SCHOOL					
			WITHOUT DISABILITY			WITH A DISABILITY		
			MF	M	F	MF	M	F
DRC	2015	SWTS	97.8	98.7	96.9	95.0	95.3	94.6
Ethiopia*	2007	IPUMS	49.4	58.7	40.5	38.8	46.2	30.2
Ghana*	2010	IPUMS	83.2	86.7	79.9	74.8	77.7	72.1
Kenya*	2009	IPUMS	90.0	90.6	89.4	82.7	83.1	82.3
Liberia	2008	IPUMS	66.5	74.3	59.1	57.0	63.2	51.0
Liberia	2012	SWTS	90.4	95.3	86.1	(59.8)	.	.
Madagascar	2013	SWTS	85.3	87.4	83.5	81.6	(76.3)	85.9
Madagascar	2015	SWTS	85.9	88.2	83.9	83.7	84.1	83.5
Malawi*	2008	IPUMS	85.3	88.8	82.2	78.5	81.1	75.8
Malawi	2012	SWTS	95.6	97.2	94.2	90.0	(93.7)	(85.6)
Malawi	2014	SWTS	93.0	94.1	92.0	(96.0)	.	.
Mali*	2009	IPUMS	37.7	45.6	30.7	36.2	41.2	31.3
Mali†	2018	DHS	53.8	62.7	47.0	41.9	46.5	.
Mozambique	2007	IPUMS	70.2	81.1	61.0	56.2	66.4	45.5
Nigeria†	2018	DHS	75.3	80.7	70.6	57.3	63.2	51.2
Nigeria†	2018	LSMS	81.4	85.4	77.1	55.2	.	.
South Africa†	2016	DHS	99.0	99.0	99.1	91.2	87.6	95.6
South Sudan	2008	IPUMS	34.3	43.2	26.1	35.8	44.9	27.4
Uganda	2013	SWTS	96.1	97.1	95.2	89.4	(92.8)	(85.3)
Uganda	2015	SWTS	94.1	96.0	92.5	84.5	(83.8)	(85.1)
Uganda	2016	DHS	95.4	96.4	94.4	85.3	87.4	83.2

<sup>12</sup> This example comes from the 2006 MICS in Iraq, which showed that 10 percent of 6–9-year-old-children without a disability had never been to school and 19 percent of children with hearing impairment had never been to school, while 51 percent of those with mental disabilities had never been to school (Graham 2014).

COUNTRY	YEAR	SOURCE	% OF PERSONS AGED 15–29 WHO EVER ATTENDED SCHOOL					
			WITHOUT DISABILITY			WITH A DISABILITY		
			MF	M	F	MF	M	F
Zambia	2010	IPUMS	88.9	91.4	86.7	72.4	75.4	68.9
Zambia	2012	SWTS	97.1	98.0	96.3	98.2	(97.7)	(98.6)

Source: ICF 2004–2017; World Bank 2020; UNICEF n.d.; Ruggles et al. 2020; UNESCO 2018a.

All indicators are calculated by UNESCO, using source as listed unless otherwise indicated.

† Indicators calculated by authors using source as listed.

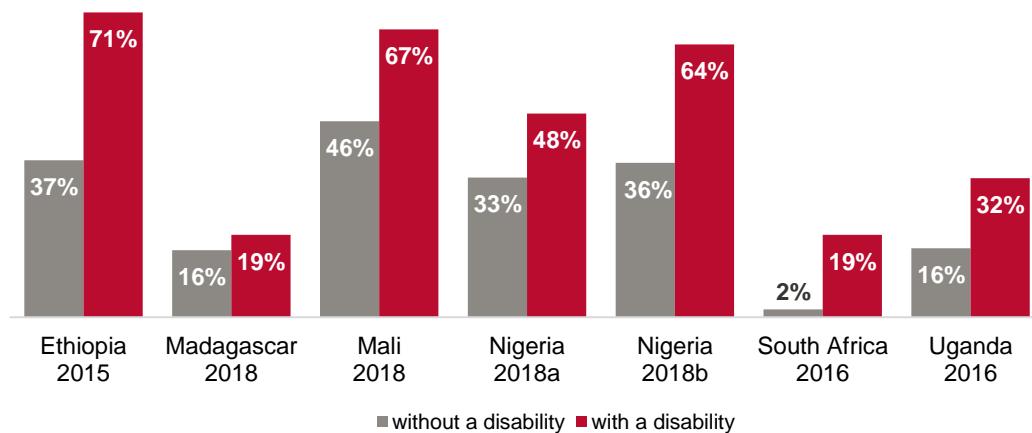
Notes: (1) An asterisk (\*) identified surveys that did not use the Washington Group questions; (2) A period (.) indicates that values were not reported because they were based on a sub-sample with fewer than 25 unweighted observations; (3) Numbers in parentheses are based on 25–49 unweighted observations; (4) Averages are unweighted and were calculated from the most recent data for each country. (5) Abbreviations used in the table are as follows: Male (M); Female (F); Male and Female (MF); School-to-Work Transition Survey (SWTS); Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS); Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS).

Having ever attended school should not be conflated with regular enrollment in school. Comparing out-of-school rates of school-aged children provides another and more current measure of differences in school access among children with disabilities than the previous indicator, which collects data from adults about their previous school experience. UNESCO's 2020 GEMR estimates that 59 million primary-aged children are out of school. More than half (32 million or 54 percent) of these children live in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO 2020).

In Malawi and Tanzania, half as many children with disabilities attended school when compared with children without disabilities (UNESCO, 2010).

Globally, one-third of all out-of-school children have some form of disability (GPE 2018). The differences in out-of-school rates among children living with and without disabilities in Sub-Saharan Africa are highlighted in Exhibit 5. In Ethiopia and Uganda, the out-of-school rate is almost twice as high among children with disabilities. In South Africa, where enrollment rates tend to be higher in general, the out-of-school rate is more than 10 times greater among children with disabilities.

Exhibit 5: Out-of-school rate for primary and lower secondary school-age children, by disability status (%)



Source: ICF 2004–2017; World Bank 2020; UNICEF n.d.

Enrollment levels in other reports mirror these data on out-of-school rates. In 2006, the Global Education Monitoring Report stated that only 10 percent of deaf children ages 7–12 were enrolled in Burkina Faso. In Malawi and Tanzania, half as many children with disabilities attended school when

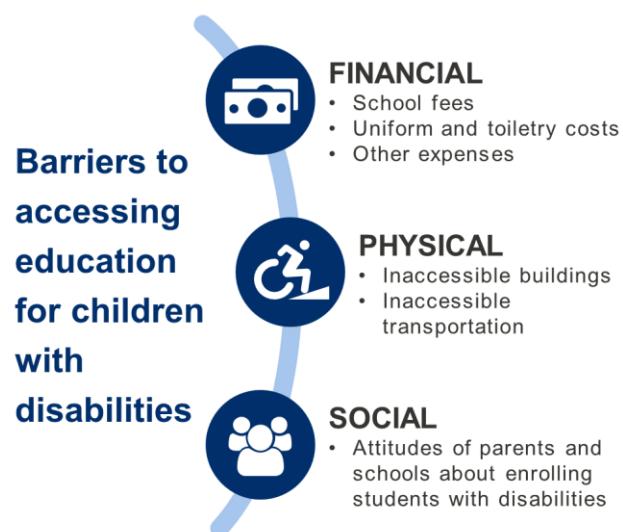
compared with children without disabilities (UNESCO 2010). There is a critical issue when it comes to the enrollment of children with disabilities. In the following section, the report highlights some of the barriers to enrollment.

## 3.2: BARRIERS TO ENROLLMENT

Countries report multiple barriers that limit enrollment among children with disabilities. Physical barriers take the form of a lack of accessible infrastructure and transport. Financial barriers to enrollment (e.g., school fees; transport costs; and the cost of school materials such as books, notebooks, uniforms, and toiletries for boarding schools) common among many children in Sub-Saharan Africa are more pronounced among children with disabilities, given the correlation between poverty and disability prevalence (ACPF 2014). Social barriers influence parents' willingness to send children to school, as well as schools' and communities' acceptance of children with disabilities in school.

According to a UNICEF report, *Every Child's Birth Right: Inequities and trends in birth registration*, some of the lowest levels of birth registrations are found in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is estimated that 44 percent<sup>13</sup> of babies are registered before age 5 (UNICEF 2013). Among children with disabilities, these rates are disproportionately lower. For example, due to parents' reluctance to register their children given the stigmatization associated with disabilities, only 48.7 percent of babies with disabilities in Uganda are registered at birth, compared to 62 percent of babies without disabilities. Children with multiple disabilities are even less likely than children with one disability to be registered at birth (ACPF 2011a). From the beginning of life, children with disabilities experience stigma and discrimination. Without a birth certificate, it is difficult for children to access the rights they are entitled to, such as access to school (ACPF 2014).

A 2018 qualitative study from Zambia on barriers to and facilitators of lifelong learning provides several interesting observations for reasons children are not being enrolled in schools. These findings could provide insights relevant to other Sub-Saharan African countries. Delayed enrollment is common among children with disabilities. Parents frequently delay enrolling their children because they do not know their child can enroll in neighborhood schools, they are unsure of whether the schools are equipped to handle their child's specific needs, or they wish to protect their child from a negative experience. Parents and caregivers might also be suspicious of the qualifications of teachers of learners with disabilities and are thus less likely to send their child to school to be taught by someone they deem less qualified or unable to meet their child's educational needs. Many local schools discriminate against learners with disabilities and give them very little priority or even mistreat them, and parents are rightly concerned that their children will not get the attention they need or that the attention they do receive will be negative. In some cases, delayed



<sup>13</sup> According to the same report, the rate is even lower when looking specifically at East and Southern Africa, where 38 percent of all children registered before age 5.

enrollment comes from parents' hiding their children as a result of a cultural belief that a child with disabilities is a curse or punishment for something the parents have done in their past. Often, children with disabilities are deemed incapable or their potential is not recognized; as a result, they are not considered worth the educational investment. Extremely poor households might be forced to choose which of their children receive an education, and children with disabilities are not often prioritized in these situations. (Malungo et al. 2018; GPE 2018).

#### **Communities working to increase access and completion in Mali and Rwanda**

Communities in Mali have created school committees that involve varied stakeholders to ensure learners with disabilities receive the proper services and promote awareness among members of both the school community and the larger community on the importance of inclusive education. They select one person to focus on girls and learners with disabilities to make sure their access to education is prioritized. In Rwanda, it has been observed that where the community takes ownership of education, there is better attendance and the rates of completion are higher. Where the community is involved and works alongside the governments and implementing agencies, the uptake of inclusion is more probable. (Stubbs 2008)

The World Bank's *Malawi Inclusive Education for Disabled Children* project tested innovative ways to increase enrollment among children with disabilities who were not in mainstream schools. Parents of children with disabilities carried out sensitization and community mobilization campaigns in 150 schools; stakeholder consultations were held; and guidelines on identification of disabilities, enrollment, and supporting the educational needs of children with disabilities were developed by the national umbrella DPO (Nannyonjo 2016).

Removing barriers to education access for children with disabilities is critical to achieving SDG 4, but we also know that the experience children with disabilities have once in school is important to both learning and retention. Even for those children with disabilities able to access schools, dropout rates tend to be higher and completion rates lower when compared to their peers without disabilities.

### **3.3: SCHOOL COMPLETION**

Dropout rates tend to be higher among learners with disabilities and are likely higher than reported because learners with "hidden" disabilities—those with mental or intellectual disabilities or those with unidentified disabilities—are excluded from these calculations (Graham 2014). As with ever having attended school, the dropout rate among learners with disabilities varies by disability type. In Uganda, dropout rates are lower for visually impaired and physically disabled children than those with learning difficulties, who are often hidden and/or misidentified as having behavioral challenges. In one area of Kenya, a dropout rate of 33.3 percent was recorded among learners with learning disabilities (Ogadho and Ajowi 2013).

Barriers to both entrance and retention in school contribute to lower completion rates among learners with disabilities. Average primary school completion rates in Sub-Saharan Africa are 10.1 percentage points lower for girls with disabilities than girls without disabilities and 12.8 percentage points lower for

boys with disabilities than those without<sup>14</sup> (Wodon et al. 2018). Recent household survey data reflect similar gaps in primary completion rates (Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6: School completion rate for primary school-age children, by disability status and sex

COUNTRY	YEAR	SOURCE	COMPLETION RATE, CHILDREN					
			WITHOUT A DISABILITY (%)			WITH A DISABILITY (%)		
			MF	M	F	MF	M	F
Madagascar†	2018	MICS	64.6	59.9	69.1	61.8	61.2	62.5
South Africa†	2016	DHS	97.0	95.4	98.6	80.9	.	.
Uganda	2011	DHS	39.5	36.0	43.1	34.2	(23.2)	(47.7)
Uganda†	2016	DHS	44.3	42.7	46.0	22.7		

Source: ICF 2004-2017; World Bank 2020; UNICEF n.d.; UNESCO 2018a.

All indicators are calculated by UNESCO, using source as listed unless otherwise indicated.

† Indicators calculated by authors using source as listed.

Notes: (1) A period (.) indicates that values were not reported because they were based on a subsample with fewer than 25 unweighted observations; (2) Averages are unweighted and were calculated from the most recent data for each country. (3) Abbreviations used in the table are as follows: Male (M); Female (F); Male and Female (MF); Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS); Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS).

Although less pronounced, differences in completion rates exist at the secondary level as well. Among girls, the secondary-level completion rate gap was 7.0 percentage points, while among boys it was 11.1 percentage points. Completion rates at primary and secondary levels have continued to increase over the past 20 years, but the increase among learners with disabilities has been slower—continuing to widen the completion rate gaps as a result (Wodon et al. 2018).

### 3.4: BARRIERS TO RETENTION

The reasons for higher dropout rates and resulting lower completion rates among learners with disabilities include many of the same ones that keep them from enrolling in the first place: lack of accessible infrastructure throughout the school, costs associated with attendance, and health and nutritional status. There are even lower completion rates for secondary school than for primary school, and these rates are lower for girls with disabilities than boys due to school-related gender-based violence, child marriage, and early childbearing (Wodon et al. 2018). Social factors also lead to their dropping out, such as the attitudes of teachers and learners toward learners with disabilities, feelings of isolation due to delayed entry into school, and bullying and violence that tend to disproportionately target learners with disabilities. From a pedagogic perspective, learners experience a lack of adaptive or inclusive teaching practices as well as low availability of adapted teaching materials.

These diverse factors all undermine the quality of experience and learning opportunities in school and increase the probability of dropouts among learners with disabilities. In addition to these in-school factors, girls with disabilities are especially at risk of dropping out due to early marriages and pregnancy (Wodon et al. 2018). In the following section, we discuss three principal factors affecting learners' experience in school: school accessibility, adaptive teaching, and bullying and violence.

<sup>14</sup> Based on national census data from 11 Sub-Saharan countries (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, South Sudan, and Zambia).

# SECTION 4: SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

## 4.1: ACCESSIBILITY OF FACILITIES

According to the Africa Report on Children with Disabilities, most educational buildings lack ramps, handrails, and especially lifts to make facilities accessible to all children (ACPF 2014). The Global Partnership for Education's report, *Disability and Inclusive Education: A Stocktake of Education Sector Plans and GPE-Funded Grants*, notes that 21 of 51 developing-country partners included in this stocktaking<sup>15</sup> noted including “building new schools” or “renovating existing schools to make them more accessible to children with disabilities” as a strategic priority, with considerations for accessible buildings, classrooms, toilets, covered drains, and proper lighting in the classrooms (GPE 2018). Ackah-Jnr and Danso (2018) find that carefully planning an inclusive physical environment affects the “feeling” of the school and the “extent of social connectedness and respect for differences,” thereby setting the tone for more inclusive attitudes and a safer space for learners with disabilities. However, few schools are actually adapting and modifying the physical environments to meet the needs of learners with disabilities. According to the Ghana Ministry of Education’s Education Sector Analysis (2018), for example, only 8 percent of schools were equipped with ramps and hardly any had handrails. Even among special schools, only 32 percent had ramps and just 23 percent had handrails.

Schools often have stairs, narrow doorways, and seating that does not accommodate those with special needs, such as wheelchair users. When there are ramps in schools, it is common for them to be so steep that it is dangerous or impossible for wheelchair users to navigate them. Although there might be standards for the gradient of ramps, they are often disregarded. Many schools have a single ramp that makes limited areas of the school accessible, leaving the remaining space inaccessible to learners who require ramps or other accessible infrastructure to access buildings, upper levels, bathroom facilities, or spaces for eating or recreation (ACPF 2014).

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<sup>15</sup> Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, Lao, PDR, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Yemen, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

## **Accessibility of Facilities in Rwanda**

The total percent of primary schools in Rwanda with adequate infrastructure for disabilities increased from 18 percent to 24 percent between 2017 and 2018, reaching Rwanda's Education Sector Strategic Plan target of 21 percent. Similarly, the total percent of secondary schools in Rwanda with adequate infrastructure for disabilities increased from 23.5 percent to 28.6 percent between 2017 and 2018, reaching the target of 26 percent. This is important progress, especially considering that 36.9 percent of learners with disabilities in Rwandan public primary schools and 46 percent of learners with disabilities in Rwandan public secondary schools have physical disabilities. The Ministry of Education states that especially because physical disabilities are the most common disabilities among enrolled students, it is important to have adequate infrastructure that allows these learners to be comfortable at school and pursue their studies. (*Republic of Rwanda Ministry of Education 2018*)

Bathrooms are often inaccessible for learners who use wheelchairs or mobility devices or need support in standing or sitting comfortably. Bathrooms are often extremely unsanitary, which can make it especially challenging for learners who require assistance to avoid unhygienic conditions. This can be particularly problematic for girls with disabilities during their monthly menstrual cycle. Many girls with disabilities simply do not go to school during their monthly periods, or at all, to avoid situations where their privacy is violated or equipment is inadequate to allow them to take care of themselves independently (ACPF 2014).

For learners with sensory disabilities, low lighting can often be a barrier. It inhibits learners who are deaf and hard of hearing and/or who might rely on sign language or lip reading to communicate. For learners with poor vision, low lighting can further decrease their ability to see and concentrate.

Seating in the classroom can have an impact on a learner's ability to engage in learning. Learners with low vision, for example, might be better able to follow instruction if they are seated at the front of the class. Learners who are hard of hearing could benefit from front-row seating so they can focus on the sign language interpreter or hear with their residual hearing. Additionally, a front-row seat may increase the learner's ability and confidence to ask for more explanation or additional support. Unfortunately, teachers are frequently unaware of learners' sensory disabilities or are unaware of the benefits of front-row seating for learners with sensory disabilities, and learners may be relegated to the back row.

Learners with disabilities often use assistive devices to mitigate barriers to learning, such as wheelchairs, spectacles, and hearing aids. However, if they are not used appropriately, they do not provide the potential benefits they could offer.

## **Use of Assistive Devices in Botswana**

A School Vision Screen Pilot conducted in Botswana found that after 3 or 4 months, only 60.1 percent of learners who participated in the follow-up wore their spectacles. Girls were more compliant than boys, and learners in primary and lower secondary school were more compliant than those in upper secondary school. It was concluded that improved compliance with the use of the assistive device would increase the overall effectiveness of the program. This finding can be assumed for other types of assistive devices as well. (*McCormick et al. 2018*)

## 4.2: BULLYING AND VIOLENCE

Learners with disabilities in Sub-Saharan Africa often have difficulties engaging at their schools for reasons beyond the lack of adaptive instruction and physical accessibility of the facilities. Bullying and violence are directed at children with disabilities at higher rates than for those without disabilities, especially girls, creating an unsafe school environment. According to Stubbs (2008), if a learner is bullied or struggles in any way, it is viewed as the learner's problem rather than that of the teacher or the environment, so little support is given to mitigate the problem. Very few schools have reporting mechanisms in place for learners to alert the school of this type of behavior, and many learners have communication barriers that would prevent them from saying something even if a system were in place.

In a study ACPF conducted, 100 percent of the 956 children with disabilities interviewed in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Senegal, Uganda, and Zambia had suffered at least one act of emotional or sexual violence, and 81.5 percent had suffered at least one instance of physical abuse (ACPF 2011). Given the stigma surrounding disability in Sub-Saharan Africa, children with disabilities are often more likely to be victims of abuse. In the ACPF study, boys with disabilities were more vulnerable to physical and emotional violence, whereas girls with disabilities were more vulnerable to sexual violence. Sexual violence ranged from 1.9 counts per child in Senegal to 3.9 counts per child in Cameroon, where 52 percent of the sample had been raped, 30 percent forced into prostitution, and 43 percent touched inappropriately (ACPF 2011).

These patterns of abuse are similarly observed in school settings where learners with disabilities report higher incidences of abuse. Okyere and colleagues (2019) report peer bullying and victimization to be especially high among learners with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Ghana. When reports were made concerning this type of violence, teachers often dismissed them, illustrating that these learners are viewed with skepticism. The authors point to the importance of developing strategies that will increase peer support to harness the overall positive peer interaction observed in mainstream schools, as well as the need to sensitize teachers to respond appropriately to violence and bullying.

According to a study by Devries and colleagues (2014), the incidence of violence against learners with disabilities is three to four times higher than against learners without disabilities. Girls with disabilities are even more likely to endure physical violence and twice as likely to endure sexual violence than girls without disabilities; 23.6 percent of girls with disabilities experienced sexual violence, compared with 12.3 percent of their female peers without disabilities. Boys with disabilities in Uganda saw four times as much sexual violence compared to their peers without disabilities.

## 4.3: INSTRUCTIONAL ACCOMMODATION AND TEACHER TRAINING

Learners with disabilities face an array of barriers that limit their ability to participate actively and achieve learning outcomes. If a child can overcome the physical and social barriers that keep them out of the classroom, they often encounter additional barriers in the classroom. A lack of local sign language can exclude a child who is deaf from communicating and learning. The lack of an adapted learning plan (with additional time to explain lessons and complete tasks, or modified lessons) can prevent a child with an intellectual disability from learning. To address these barriers, it is imperative that teachers receive adequate training to help create a classroom environment that can address a learner's needs and provide the opportunity for learning achievement. Although inclusive education policies exist in many

parts of the region, they frequently fail to provide teachers with guidance on how to address learners with special needs and carry out inclusive education (Mwangi 2013).

Most teachers are not equipped with the skills necessary to provide an environment where every learner can thrive. Teachers are introduced to “inclusive education” without guidelines, follow-up, support, or training (Malungo et al. 2018). A World Bank note suggests, based on a review of 11 countries, that only 1 in 10 teachers receive in-service training to promote inclusive education (Wodon et al. 2018). According to Mwangi (2013), teachers lack the repertoire of learning and teaching strategies appropriate for addressing the barriers to learning and providing individual supports; she notes that teachers have called for additional training to help them develop the strategies to respond appropriately to the identified learning difficulties.

Kenya’s Education Cabinet Secretary has increased funding for special needs education, with an emphasis on training teachers to work with learners with special needs, recognizing the grave need to equip teachers with the right skills to work with all learners (Nyaundi 2019). According to Ogahdo and Ajowi (2013), 38.3 percent of teachers who work with learners with learning difficulties had participated in special needs education training, while 59.9 percent had not had any sort of formal training on how to work with learners with disabilities. When training programs are applied, adaptive teaching approaches and attitudes toward inclusive education improve, as demonstrated via observations of trained teachers in Kenya (Mwangi 2013).

The importance of adequately preparing teachers for inclusive education is emphasized in another study by Ogahdo and Ajowi (2013) in Kenya that examines the high drop-out rates among children with learning difficulties. This study found that very little adaptation of the curriculum took place (only 13.5 percent of respondents reported adapting the curriculum), presumably because teachers were not equipped with the skills to do so. Teachers acknowledge the importance of adaptation; 97.7 percent said they believe that when curriculum is not adapted, learners with disabilities are at increased risk of dropping out. The dropout rate in this study was shown to be inversely related to the number of teachers trained specifically in special education. Where there was a higher percentage of special needs educators, there was an associated lower dropout rate (Ogahdo and Ajowi 2013).

In addition to the need for all teachers to receive training in inclusive education and adaptive practices, there is a need for specialist support, such as itinerant (or “visiting”) teachers—qualified teachers or specialists who travel from school to school to provide educational supports to multiple schools potentially across several communities. Not every inclusive school has a blind student, for example, so an itinerant teacher would rotate among schools with blind learners and provide services such as supporting Braille literacy, transcribing materials into Braille, and advising teachers on how to support each learner’s educational needs. If a school has a deaf student, an itinerant teacher could support sign language and literacy acquisition and help adapt curriculum (Hayes et al. 2018). In Uganda, itinerant teachers find children who are not yet in school and determine ways to ensure they can be included appropriately in school, prepare them for entering school, and support inclusion in the mainstream schools by, for example, providing individual classroom support and advice to regular teachers on how to include these learners (Lynch et al. 2011). Greater percentages of special needs educators, who are skilled and prepared to support their teachers in creating an environment that fully supports learners with disabilities, is associated with lower dropout rates (Ogahdo and Ajowi 2013).

Another barrier that teachers often face is simply not knowing that a child has a learning difficulty or a disability. Learners are not often properly identified, screened, or assessed early on. As a result, a teacher might assume a behavioral issue when, in fact, the learner might be facing a difficulty that could

require particular support. Ensuring that proper screening and assessments take place in schools is essential to making every child's learning experience better. Mwangi (2013) also recommends using individual education plans to influence and maintain high expectations for the learners.

Due to a lack of teacher training and appropriate student screening, discipline is often misdirected toward learners with disabilities. Children with learning difficulties or intellectual disabilities are often incorrectly identified as misbehaving and, therefore, wrongly disciplined, frequently without any explanation or understanding of what they are being disciplined for. Discipline often comes in the form of corporal punishment (Devries et al. 2014).

The lack of teacher training, student identification, and adaptive learning has an impact on engagement, and ultimately learning, among learners with disabilities. Of those who graduate from primary school, half leave unable to read or write, and only 25 percent go on to complete secondary school (Wodon and Alasutari 2018). Recent census data from Sub-Saharan Africa indicate 11.9 and 13 percentage point gaps in literacy for girls and boys, respectively, living with disabilities (Wodon et al. 2018). Access to the high-quality, equitable inclusive education the SDGs call for is achieved not when seats are filled, but when each learner completes the educational experience equipped with the skills to successfully enter and thrive in the job market and contribute to society in a meaningful way.



## SECTION 5: USAID INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT DISABILITY PROGRAMMING IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Of the 20 Sub-Saharan African countries considered in this report, at least eight have current USAID initiatives that support inclusive education for learners with disabilities (

Exhibit 7). The programs in these countries—Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Rwanda, Senegal, Uganda, and Zambia—implement a diverse range of initiatives, from teacher training to physical accessibility and more (Exhibit 8). Notably, most of these programs focus on learners who have vision or hearing impairment. Other disabilities (e.g., physical, intellectual) are addressed less frequently.

Exhibit 7: USAID programs with inclusive education initiatives

COUNTRY	USAID PROGRAMS WITH INCLUSIVE EDUCATION INITIATIVES
 Kenya	Tusome
 Liberia	Accelerated Quality Education (AQE)
 Malawi	Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity (MERIT) Reading for All Malawi (REFAM) Partnership with Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology*
 Mali	Inclusive Education for Visually Impaired School Children Inclusion of Deaf and Blind Children into Mainstream Schools Mali Mission's Civic Engagement Project*
 Rwanda	Soma Umenye
 Senegal	Lecture Pour Tous Our Children Read
 Uganda	General work to expand voice/political participation of persons with disabilities*
 Zambia	Let's Read Project Partnership with Ministry of General Education*

\*Not a program, but a partnership or individual initiative

 **Adapt/Develop Inclusive Learning Materials:** Most USAID inclusive education programs in Sub-Saharan Africa entail the development and distribution of inclusive learning materials. This includes the adaption of textbooks and classroom materials into Braille and large print to cater to visually impaired learners, as in the Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity and Senegal's *Lecture Pour Tous* program. In a unique case, Rwanda's *Soma Umenye* program plans to digitize reading materials to make them more accessible to learners with disabilities.

 **Adapt/Develop Inclusive Teaching Materials:** Many programs develop and distribute inclusive materials for teachers. As a part of Mali's Inclusive Education for Visually Impaired Primary School Children program, the early grade reading assessment was adapted to be used with learners with visual impairment. Other programs more generally note that they distribute "specialized teaching materials for learners with special needs."

 **Advocacy/Raising Awareness:** As a part of USAID/Mali's Civic Engagement Project, a subgrantee organized a meeting to raise awareness among civil society associations and grassroots community organizations about including persons with disabilities into all sectors of community life, including education. In Uganda, due to USAID's work to expand the voice of persons with disabilities, persons with disabilities developed 33 advocacy position papers that were presented to local government and resulted in increased budgets for inclusive education.

 **Disability Identification:** Some programs create tools to help teachers identify disabilities in their learners. The *Lecture Pour Tous* program in Senegal produced student tracking data sheets to help teachers identify learning impairments, while the Let's Read Project in Zambia provides e-learning audiology packages that help teachers identify learners who may be hearing impaired.

 **Distribute Assistive Devices:** The Inclusive Education for Visually Impaired Primary School Children in Mali distributes spectacles to children with visual impairment enrolled in schools.

 **Enrollment in School:** The Inclusive Education for Visually Impaired Primary School Children and the Inclusion of Deaf and Blind Children into Mainstream Schools programs in Mali enroll children with disabilities in school.

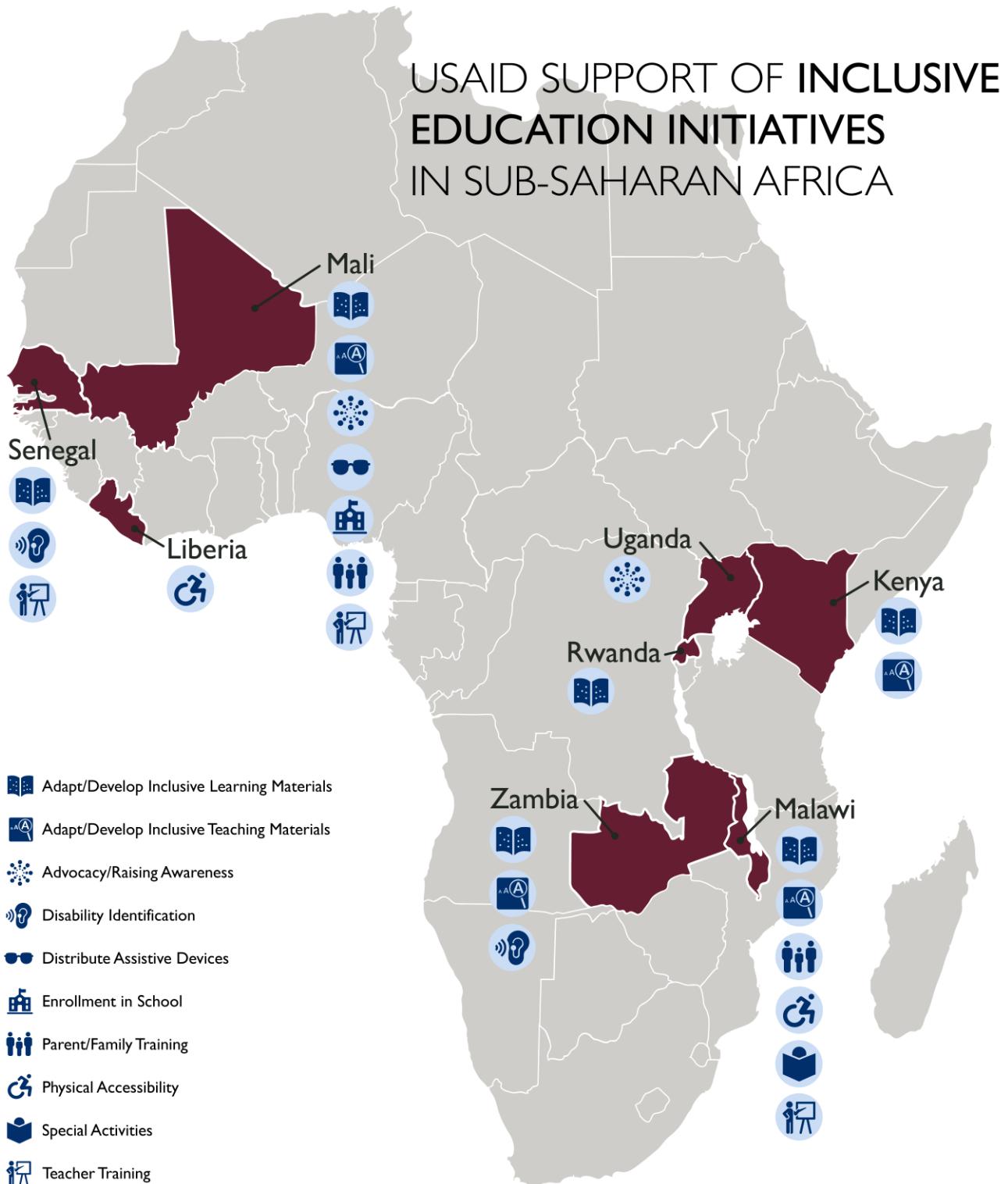
 **Parent/Family Training:** Programs in Malawi and Mali help train parents to support their children with disabilities at home, especially with reading and writing. The Inclusion of Deaf and Blind Children into Mainstream Schools program in Mali also trained parents in Braille and sign language.

 **Physically Accessibility:** Two programs, including the Accelerated Quality Education program in Liberia, prioritize making schools physically accessible to learners with disabilities.

 **Special Activities:** The Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity held reading competitions for vision- and hearing-impaired learners. In 2019, the reading competition for vision-impaired learners included 46 learners from 16 schools, while the pilot reading competition for hearing-impaired learners involved 18 learners from three schools.

 **Teacher Training:** Several USAID inclusive education initiatives involve teacher training. For example, Senegal's Our Children Read program developed a training module to encourage including learners with disabilities in the classroom. Mali's Inclusion of Deaf and Blind Children in Mainstream Schools program trained teachers, principals, and pedagogical advisors in pedagogy and the use of course preparation sheets that facilitate inclusive teaching.

Exhibit 8: USAID support of inclusive education initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa



This information comes from the 2019 USAID Performance Plan and Report (PPR) data. This chart represents the inclusive education initiatives referenced in the PPR narrative submissions.

# CONCLUSIONS

**Policies:** Access to quality education is a fundamental human right, one that is essential to individual development and effective participation in society. Lack of access to quality education limits the ability for persons with disabilities to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to fully participate in society and in the labor market, leading to social exclusion and poverty. This right is reflected in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and has been enshrined in international and regional conventions and frameworks. Many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa include policies that guarantee the right to inclusive education for children with disabilities.

**Finance:** A lack of adequate funding for inclusive education represents a significant barrier to effective implementation. Increases in funding alone, however, do not necessarily guarantee effective implementation of inclusive education commitments. Many countries' funding systems support segregated education, which is costly and not sustainable. Models exist that can support inclusive education in low resource settings, though more systemic research is needed to identify the most effective approaches.

**Barriers:** Despite inclusive education policies, evidence shows that children with disabilities are less likely to attend school and are less likely to complete school if they are able to enroll. Children who are able to enroll face increased probability of experiencing bullying, violence, and undeserved discipline (UNESCO 2018a). Children with disabilities face additional barriers to the successful completion of school, such as lack of government prioritization of inclusive education in strategies and policies; lack of knowledge/resources for parents/caregivers to support their children in schooling, the prejudices and discrimination that many still hold against children and adults with disabilities; a lack of qualified teachers, principals and pedagogic supervisors to accommodate the needs of learners with disabilities; poor accessibility of school infrastructure; the low supply of accessible teaching and learning materials; and the low number of teachers with disabilities, who are better able to understand and show empathy toward learners with disabilities (IDA 2020; UNESCO 2014; UNESCO 2020; GPE 2018).

**Data:** Through the collection of data on students disaggregated by disability and on the barriers and facilitators of access, resources can be allocated equitably, budgets can be managed more efficiently, inclusive education programs and policies can be implemented and monitored more closely, and efforts to enhance education services can be strengthened (GPE Stocktake 2018). Though there are many international efforts to systematize the collection of comparable, quality education data, the data needed to ensure the achievement of the SDGs by 2030 remains severely limited (Washington Group 2016). Local, country and subnational level data needed for advocacy, decision-making, and funding allocations is particularly wanting.<sup>16</sup>

**Donor Support:** USAID and other donors are working with local ministries to raise awareness around inclusive education and to pilot projects to increase accessibility to quality education for all learners. Continued efforts to address systemic barriers, increase access, and improve the educational experience for children with disabilities is essential if we are to achieve SDG4 by 2030.

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<sup>16</sup> DFID disability data portal. <https://www.disabilitydataportal.com/about-the-portal/indicators/>

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