DISABILITY–INCLUSIVE EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

ETHIOPIA

About This Report

This report was developed by Addis Ababa University, the International Centre for Evidence in Disability at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, and Mastercard Foundation.

The report aims to inform Mastercard Foundation's disability and inclusion programming and strategy development. It draws on a literature review, as well as key informant interviews with relevant stakeholders, investigating the inclusion of youth with disabilities in education and employment in Ethiopia. The information in this report will be built on in the next phase of this research project, through in-depth interviews with young men and women with disabilities

Contributors

Addis Ababa University (AAU) is the oldest and the largest higher learning and research institution in Ethiopia. The University has been the leading center in teaching, learning, research and community services.

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The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) is a world-leading centre for research and postgraduate education in public and global health.

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The International Centre for Evidence in Disability (ICED) provides evidence to improve the wellbeing of people with disabilities globally.

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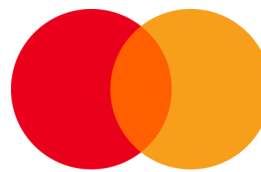
The Mastercard Foundation is one of the largest foundations in the world and has worked to advance financial inclusion and education in Africa and transform education and employment systems for Indigenous youth in Canada, improving the lives of more than 139 million people.

Their *Young Africa Works* strategy seeks to enable 30 million young women and men to secure dignified and fulfilling work by 2030.

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Publication Date

January 2023

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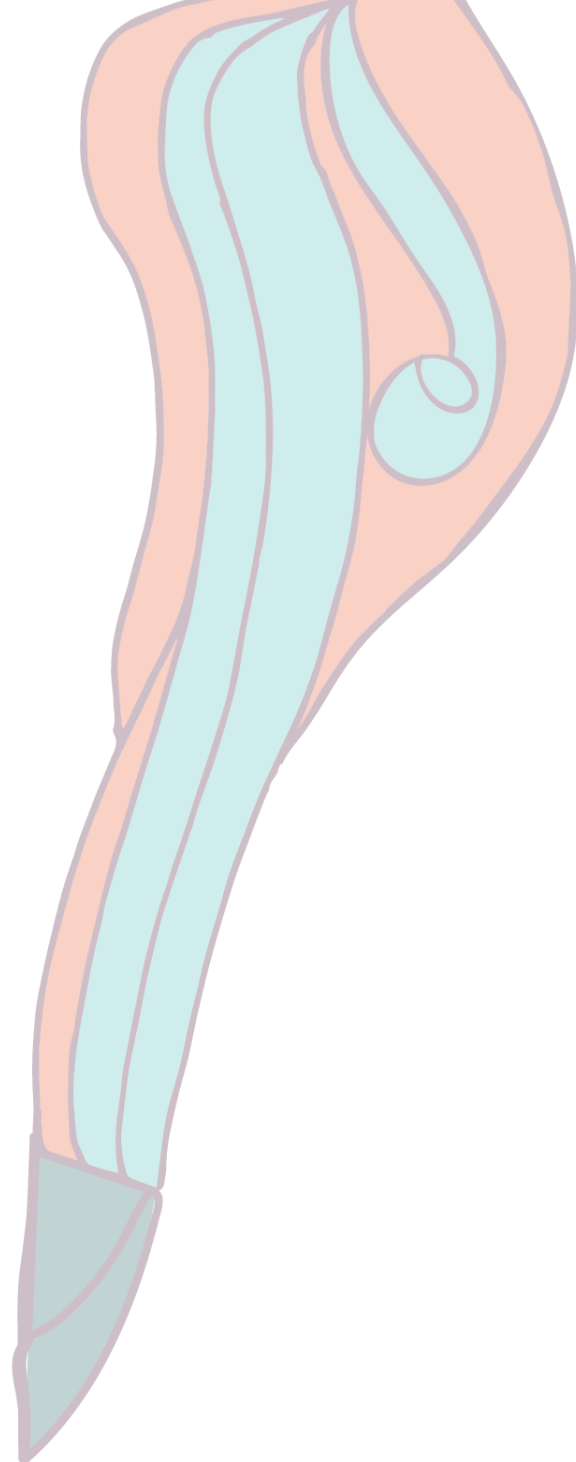Andre Okunzuwa
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Acknowledgements

Suggested Citation

International Centre for Evidence in Disability, Addis Ababa University, Mastercard Foundation. Disability-inclusive education and employment: understanding the context in Ethiopia. London, UK: ICED, 2023

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Contents

Disability–Inclusive Education and Employment: Understanding the Context in Ethiopia

About disability

According to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) people with disabilities include those who have: *"long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."* [1]

Estimates suggest that there are 1 billion people (15%) living with a disability globally [2]. People with disabilities often experience barriers to accessing education and employment and this can lead to an increased risk of poverty [2]. They may also face difficulties being included in other aspects of society [3].

Executive Summary

- Ethiopian policies and legislation reflect a promising rights-based policy framework for disability inclusion in education and employment. However, there are substantial implementation gaps that contribute to the persistent exclusion of people with disabilities from education and work. Gaps in implementing, coordinating, and monitoring policy contribute to this exclusion.

- Gaps and challenges in both employment and education sectors include poor awareness of disability rights, negative attitudes, stigma, and discrimination at the community, institutional, and structural level, inaccessible infrastructure, and insufficient resources to support inclusion.

- Key challenges in education include lack of enforcement and monitoring of inclusive education policies, inadequate teacher training, insufficient resources for accessible materials and assistive technology, and weak support systems for enrolling students with disabilities in technical and vocational education programmes.

- Examples of innovative and promising practices in education include mainstream inclusive education policies, provision of undergraduate scholarships for students with disabilities, opportunities for technical and vocational training, and resource centres to support inclusive education.

- Key challenges in employment include negative attitudes and discrimination among employers, fear of exploitation for people with disabilities, and lack of media and IT training.

- Examples of innovative and promising practices in employment include skills, capacity-building, and business trainings for people with disabilities; provision of start-up capital for self-employment, and income-generating initiatives to support economic empowerment and employability.

Introduction

Disability in Ethiopia

Ethiopia has a population of 112 million people, the second largest in Africa [4]. The disability prevalence is estimated to be 2.8% for people aged 15 and older [4]. Note that this is likely a low estimate, given that the World Report on Disability estimated 15% prevalence [5]. Evidence on inclusion of youth with disabilities in Ethiopia is relatively limited. Studies suggest there is poorer access to education for young people with disabilities compared to their non-disabled peers and that barriers include inaccessible learning materials and buildings, as well as negative attitudes and limited staff training in disability inclusion [6-11]. People with disabilities are also less likely to be working with barriers including inaccessible buildings and transport, discrimination, and lack of awareness among employers [12-14].

Disability policy context

The Ethiopian government ratified the UNCRPD in 2010 [6]. In addition, the constitution and other national programs and proclamations such as the Right to Employment of Persons with Disability Proclamation (2008), National Plan of Action of Persons with Disabilities (2012 – 2021), Education and Training Policy (1994), Higher Education Proclamation (2009), Education Sector Development Programme V and Labour Proclamation (2019), address and recognise the rights of persons with disabilities. There are policy provisions to mainstream disability across society including equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in education, skills training, and work, and full participation in the lives of their families and communities [11-14]. However, despite this supportive policy landscape which aims to mainstream disability across society, evidence on the extent of implementation is limited.

Employment focus for this research: agriculture and manufacturing

Agriculture is the main economic activity in Ethiopia, constituting 77% of the country's export commodities and manufacturing constitutes 13.3%. Information is lacking about the proportion of persons with disability involved in agriculture and manufacturing, but barriers to participation are expected as found in other sectors [7-9]. While this research aimed to address disability inclusion in both agriculture and manufacturing, there remains a significant gap in evidence specifically on the manufacturing sector, which is reflected in the findings.

About this study

This research aimed to assess the policy landscape relating to inclusion in education and employment for young men and women with disabilities in Ethiopia aged 15-35, with particular focus on secondary, tertiary, and vocational education and employment in agriculture. Using the Policy Triangle framework [16], this study highlights:

- Key policies, programmes, and evidence on the situation for people with disabilities
- Key stakeholders and policy processes
- Policy implementation, gaps and challenges and contextual influences
- Examples of innovation and promising practise to foster greater inclusion

This research involved document review and 15 key informant interviews (KIIs) with key stakeholders in Ethiopia. Key informants (KIs) included representatives from organisation of people with disabilities (OPDs), government bodies, education providers, local and international NGOs, and private employers.

Additionally, disability disaggregated data analysed and published by the 2021 Disability Data Report, the Disability Data Portal and the ILOSTAT database Disability Labour Market Indicators (DLMI) [7] were also included. Further details on these methods are provided in the Appendices.

Source: Global Partnership for Education/Kelley Lynch

Findings

The findings of the study are organised in four parts: (1) education; (2) employment; (3) social and political context; and (4) opportunities.

Box 1: Information on the quantitative findings

This report includes disability prevalence estimates and disaggregated data published in the 2021 Disability Data Report [4], the Disability Data Portal and ILOSTAT databases [10].

Some caution is needed in interpreting and comparing these estimates. Reasons for this:

- Disability is complex to measure and different surveys use different methods.

- The Washington Group short set of questions (WG-SS)[1] are widely recommended for use in national surveys and census [18]. They have the advantage of being relatively simple, rapid and non-stigmatizing, as they don't ask directly about disability. Some surveys using the Washington Group questions estimate lower than expected disability prevalence compared to the World Report on Disability estimates of 15% all ages and 5% children.

  The reasons are unclear, but may include: i) WG-SS questions don't ask about mental health (and therefore don't capture all people with disabilities); ii) variation in implementation, such as alterations to wording and/or the meaning of questions intentionally or through translation difficulties; iii) if a statement about disability is included in the survey before asking the Washington Group questions, this may result in under-reporting due to stigma associated with disability.

- The relatively low proportion of youth with disabilities results in small sample sizes for this group, which affects the precision of the estimates. It also means disaggregation of disability data by other important intersectional characteristics (e.g. urban/rural, type of functional limitations) is often not possible.

- There are potential sources of bias, for example: how questions were worded and understood by participants, the extent of interviewer training, the extent that data collection is disability-inclusive (e.g. was there equal opportunity for people with communication difficulties to take part in the survey). These sources of bias can all influence the findings.

The disability estimates presented in this report are therefore subject to error and results may not be directly comparable across different data sources. The disability disaggregated data should be considered as indicators and trends of differences, rather than exact data on inclusion in education and employment.

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1 The Washington Group Short Set (WG-SS) asks about level of difficulty ('none', 'some', 'a lot', or 'cannot do') in the following functioning domains: seeing, hearing, walking/climbing stairs, remembering/concentrating, self-care or communicating. Reporting 'a lot of difficulty/ cannot do' in at least one domain is commonly used to classify people as having a disability for the purposes of disability statistics and data disaggregation.

Findings

Prevalence of disability

According to the 2021 Disability Data Report [4], based on analysis of national survey data, 0.8% of youth (aged 15-29 years) reported a lot of difficulty in at least one functioning domain asked in the WG-SS [15]. This is the definition commonly used to classify people as having a disability for the purposes of disability statistics and disaggregation. This increases to 4.7% for people reporting at least 'some difficulty' in one domain. These estimates are lower than would be expected; please see Box 1 for further information on variation in disability data.

1. Education

1.1. Education indicators disaggregated by disability status

Education level completed among youth

Table 1 presents education completion rates from the disability data portal , based on data from 2015. These estimates suggest that primary and secondary school completion rates were very low in general (≤15%) and even lower among children with disabilities (5%). The exact estimates should be interpreted with caution, given other estimates indicate higher primary school completion in the general population.

	Youth without disabilities	Youth with disabilities
Primary school completion*	15%	5%
Secondary school completion*	14%	5%

*Data source: Disability Data Portal using data from the 2015 Economic and Social Survey; completion rates calculated as the percentage of people aged 3-5 years above the expected age of completion of the last grade for each education level (e.g. 15-17 years for primary school and 21-23 years for secondary school);

1 The Washington Group Short Set (WG-SS) asks about level of difficulty ('none', 'some', 'a lot', or 'cannot do') in the following functioning domains: seeing, hearing, walking/climbing stairs, remembering/concentrating, self-care or communicating. Reporting 'a lot of difficulty/cannot do' in at least one domain is commonly used to classify people as having a disability for the purposes of disability statistics and data disaggregation.

Education

1.2. Policies and programmes

Table 1. Notable provisions in Ethiopia policy and legislation related to disability inclusive education

Policy & Law	Notable Provisions
The Education and Training Policy (1994 - 2002)	Aimed to expand educational opportunities for all, including children with disabilities. States that special education and training will be provided for children with disabilities
National Plan of Action of Persons with Disabilities (2012 – 2021)	Includes provisions for improving inclusive education by increasing the number of children with disabilities in education and increasing the number of teachers trained in special education
The Education Sector Development Programme V (2015-2020)	Sought to increase the participation of students with disabilities in higher education and ensure that all universities adapt their campuses to provide full access to all students
Higher Education Proclamation (2009)	States that necessary and feasible academic assistance must be provided to students, including sign language, accessible buildings, and alternative testing procedures
Special Needs Education Program Strategy 2006 (revised in 2012)	Overall objective of strategy is 'to build an inclusive system which will provide quality, relevant and equitable education and training to all children, youth and adults with Special Educational Needs (SENs) and ultimately enable them to fully participate in the socio-economic development of the country.' (MoE, 2012:14).

A full list of programmes promoting disability inclusion in education implemented in Ethiopia within the past five years is provided in Appendix Table A2.

Education

Review of key policies demonstrate a rights-based policy landscape that recognises the need for disability-inclusive education. For example, policies such as the Education Sector Development Programme and the Higher Education Proclamation include that necessary and feasible academic assistance must be provided to students with disabilities, including sign language, accessible buildings, and alternative assessment procedures where needed.

Education policy and programme frameworks have generally shifted in emphasis from 'integration' (where children with disabilities usually attend special/separate classes within mainstream schools) to 'inclusion' (where mainstream school systems are adapted to respond to the diversity of students, enabling children with disabilities to participate and learn effectively) of disability within the education system. Although, one KI reported that schools continue to provide integrated education, whereby, *"the child is expected to learn in the existing situation"* (Policymaker in education sector*).*

Inclusive Education Resource Centres were introduced in 2006, by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with Government of Finland, with the aim of establishing 800 centres, each with a focal teacher qualified in special education. Each teacher provides advice, and resources to mainstream schools to support teachers, families, and students with disabilities integrate in mainstream classrooms and to engage with the wider community to build disability inclusion [17]. Particularly in the last decade, an emphasis had been placed on improving access of all children to general education, improving teacher education, and equipping resource centres with specific materials, assistive devices, and trained professionals to assist teachers and learners [17].

There is limited evidence on the impact of the resource centres, but documented challenges include a lack of awareness of the centres, gaps in engagement with focal teachers, inappropriate learning aids and materials, overburdened teachers, and barriers to sustainability due to staff turnover [17].

Education

1.3. Policy development

According to KIs, policy framework development and updates are driven by emerging needs and compliance with international treaties (e.g., UNCRPD), as well as advocacy from OPDs, other ministries, and stakeholders:

> *"...the [Special Needs] Education Strategy was revised in 2012. ...the first reason for the revision was that the first [version of the strategy] has completed its due date, second, the first disregarded the issue of female students, third due to the enactment of the UN convention and fourth as education is dynamic and include new things the strategy should include them as well ..."* (Representative from government)

The Federation of Ethiopian Association of Persons with Disability (FEAPD) is an umbrella organisation considered important for coordination of disability-inclusion efforts, as well increasing the visibility and strengthening the advocacy work of OPDs (including in education and employment). The FEAPD have taken a leading role in coordinating and representing input from other OPDs in the drafting of the Disability Act, which was initiated in 2013 and is being ratified by Parliament currently.

From policymakers' perspective, this user involvement was felt to have taken a long time, but was considered important. KIs from OPDs agreed that they participated in this process, but felt their requests were not always taken fully on-board or implemented accordingly. Wider OPD involvement in policy development is also reported to be improving. For example, in the draft Disability Act, regional OPD members participated, not just the main offices or Federation only.

The relationship between the Federation and other OPDs, and between the OPDs and the government, is considered positive with good communication channels. Government funding for FEAPD and other OPDs is reported to be increasing every year, indicating government commitment to disability rights. However, the funding is still considered inadequate with KIs from OPDs reporting unmet needs such as offices, evidence generation, capacity building, provision of assistive devices, and financial support for their members.

Education

1.4 Implementation gaps and challenges

Despite the policies in place and suggestions from KI policymakers that the number of children with disabilities in schools is increasing, a number of implementation gaps and challenges were highlighted:

i) Specific types of disability and women with disabilities are more excluded

Policies and programmes are not always sufficiently inclusive of different types of disability, and do not recognise the heterogeneity of people with disabilities and their associated specific needs. For example, education policies and programmes were considered by some KIs to predominately focus on physical and sensory disabilities, and neglect people with intellectual or severe multiple disabilities. One KI explained emphasis is given to visual disability:

> *"...look at the education policy, most disability that was given attention and included in the policy is the visual one..."* and *"...the programs didn't include persons with severe disabilities. For example, the issue of students with severe intellectual disability, autism and deaf blind students aren't included..."* (Representative from government)

Girls and women with disabilities were considered to be particularly under-represented in educational attendance and progression. Reasons for this are not well understood, although fear of gender-based violence was reported and may be a potential factor (particularly for girls/women with intellectual disabilities).

> *"Female students [with disabilities] are not getting enough attention. Though we are saying bring them to school and support them but it isn't possible. I don't know the reason but there is lack of attention for female students ...they don't come to school. They don't send them to school. Even if they came, they don't get the necessary support."* (Representative from government)

> *"Because ... girls, the parents have to think about various things. When they are female, they will be subjected to sexual harassment ... here are women who are raped."* (Representative from an NGO)

Education

Under-representation of women was also a challenge for the Gondar University scholarship programme:

> "...60% should be female, but they can't be. I can't tell you the number of the boys, and they are so many and so talented. They were at boarding school. They do participate. But the girls are not here ....Because they have to be empowered from early level at elementary and high school." (Representative from education sector)

It is unclear whether this situation reflects challenges at the intersection of disability and gender, or whether this relates more to entrenched gender norms limiting access to education to females in general.

ii) Lack of policy implementation, awareness, and accountability

KIs reported general lack of awareness, implementation and accountability relating to disability inclusion within government and staff in educational institutions:

> "Although there is a policy in place and the government has signed on to the convention, no one is aware of it ... When you argue that disability concerns are a human rights issue, there are those [in government] who don't get it, even at the office level ... disability is considered as an issue of the Labour and Social Affairs Minister only." (Representative from government)

For example, despite policies requiring accessible educational infrastructure (including the Ethiopian Building Proclamation) this is not mandated. The Ministry of Construction and Construction Bureaus are responsible for school design. Accessibility standards for schools were reported as lacking, but there are plans to develop this. Lack of awareness and attitudes within government were perceived as a key reason for the lack of implementation. There was a perception among some KIs that organisations are sometimes motivated by being 'seen' to be doing something (e.g. installing ramps) rather than genuine commitment:

> "They just want their name to be mentioned there. They will say 'we did this and that' without doing nothing. And this is painful for us who have disabled people in our home and who are working here." (Representative from education sector)

Education

Frequent changes of ministers and unstable organisational structures were also considered barriers to policy implementation. According to KIs, the structure and priorities of inclusive education change based on incoming ministers. People responsible for inclusive education work in different departments within different administrative systems and there is limited coordination. Further, regional disability "*experts*" were reportedly playing this role alongside other key responsibilities, so that "*special education needs*"...are considered "*an extra job ... burdensome*" (Representative from government).

iii) Insufficient resources

In general, a lack of learning materials, assistive devices, accessible infrastructure, and sign language interpreters in mainstream schools were highlighted as barriers to education. Particular resource gaps for disability inclusion in secondary schools and Technical and Vocational Education and Training schools (TVETs) were noted. For example, while resource centres have been established to support students with disabilities in some primary schools in every region, these are reportedly lacking for secondary schools.

> *"Higher education institutions supporting teachers/schools in delivering inclusive education at the primary level where they can get better support."* (Representative from an OPD)

Policymakers reported there are provisions around disability inclusion within TVET systems (e.g. resource centres in approximately 20 TVET colleges), but they were unable to provide details on this. Previously, students with disabilities would take skills trainings in school when they discontinued their general education. Now, this system may be changing. When asked what support is provided to these students to connect them with TVETs, KIs noted that students would be enrolled after completing grade 10 or pursue a Certificate of Completion (COC), a technical skills competency exam for TVET graduates, on their own. However, this begs the question of how students can be expected to complete a COC independently without adequate training. This points to a need to strengthen skills training within schools, or the process of enrolling students in TVETs when their general education is stopped. In general, participation of young people with disabilities in TVET colleges is considered to be low, due to barriers and discrimination.

> *"Most TVET colleges are not comfortable for disabled students and they say disabled people don't learn this and that."* (Representative from an OPD)

One KI explained they try to advocate for TVET colleges that create opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities, but faced government resistance as well as negative attitudes and poor awareness among education providers.

Education

iv) Insufficient training and lack of career structure for teachers in disability inclusion

Lack of appropriate training for teachers in mainstream education was reported as another barrier, resulting in poor awareness, skills, and motivation to foster disability inclusion among teachers. Courses were reported to be too theoretical and lacking in skills training; therefore, graduates were often not recruited. Further, for teachers working in specialised education, the lack of career structure, opportunities, and training was identified as a problem.

Another concern raised was the lack of sign language interpreters trained to work in education contexts, which puts students with hearing impairments at a particular disadvantage. Further, one KI felt there was under-appreciation of the complexity of sign language interpretation and translation in education and expressed concern about low pay, feeling undervalued, and limited career progression opportunities.

Attitudinal barriers among education providers continue to hamper action. For example, at universities, negative attitudes may be linked to a lack of resources.

> *"They say we will not work for the sake of one physically disabled person...they tell you they don't have the budget to buy a cane and hire a reader for a visually impaired person."*
>
> (Representative from education sector)

And within schools and TVETS, this was related to lack of awareness:

> *"They [a TVET institution] ban us from entering. We argued that it was our right to enrol students there...the Dean did not know what to do. He got confused as to how to train such children, what sort of training program would be best, what kind of teacher would be best, and whether the compound was safe."* (Representative from an NGO)

v) Lack of IT/digital skills training at secondary schools

According to some KIs, there is a gap in basic computer training for people with disabilities at secondary schools, which creates challenges within higher education.

> *"If the Ministry of Education helped blind students to be trained on basic computer skill at high school level ... because the text reader is ready and the system is working. But when they came here some of them haven't touched a computer before ... students should be well-equipped when they join to university ... we can't train them starting from zero."* (Representative from education sector)

Education

vi) Lack of employment opportunities linked to training

For people with disabilities who do undertake higher education (e.g. TVET or university degrees), employment opportunities are still reportedly lacking. According to KIs, there is a lack of opportunity for obtaining start-up finance or identifying job opportunities as well as communication and attitudinal barriers. For example, the following was described related to people with hearing disabilities applying for jobs:

> *"Since they can't communicate with them they will lose their chance. Even if they find an interpreter, there is an awareness problem among the community and they think that these disabled people will not finish their work or they will fight each other."* (Representative from education sector)

Source: Global Partnership for Education/ Alexandra Humme

Education

1.4. Examples of innovative and promising practises

KIs highlighted several examples of initiatives aimed at creating enabling and inclusive environments within mainstream higher education for young people with disabilities.

i) Scholarships and mentoring

The University of Gondar (UoG), in partnership with Queens University (Canada) and supported by Mastercard Foundation, provides training for UoG staff at Queens University (including occupational therapy MSc and PhDs), as well as undergraduate scholarships for students with disabilities at UoG. The programme also provides mentoring, experiential learning, engages people with disabilities in decision-making processes, and aims to raise wider awareness on disability inclusion at the university. While there were some challenges such as in improving accessibility of infrastructure and provision of assistive technology, support from university management was reported to be improving as more students with disabilities are included through undergraduate scholarships.

ii) Financial and accessibility support

Addis Ababa University has a Centre for Disability which provides a small stipend for students with disabilities, accessible learning materials/aids (e.g. large font printing, braille, sign language interpreters), and assistive devices (e.g. wheelchairs, crutches) obtained through collaboration with an NGO. They also run additional training and capacity-building such as computer training for students who are blind, rights-based training, and job searching skills. At the institutional level, they improve building accessibility, provide guidelines on disability-inclusive teaching, and advocate for rights of students with disabilities, ensuring their needs are taken into account in decision-making and university regulations. Income-generating activities for sustainability include a campus shop opened by Unilever with profits given to the Centre. The Centre is reportedly well-used, and the policy environment and university management were felt to be supportive. They also run sign language training for non-Centre staff and students and suggested there were plans to start a new Masters course in educational sign language interpretation, in recognition of the gaps in this area.

> *"At the University the senate legislation medium of instruction says English and sign language. This is a very good achievement …This means it is one sign of inclusion"* (Representative from education sector)

Education

iii) Technical and vocational training and resource centres

The Entoto Technical and Vocational Training Centre based in Addis Ababa runs training programmes (e.g. metal work, secretarial science, IT, woodwork, and beauty training) and have taken steps towards disability inclusion, particularly for Deaf students, through providing sign language interpreters and advocacy efforts.

> *"Most of [all,] deaf students come here because there is a sign language interpreter. Yeah, there is no sign language interpreter at other places. Because there is no awareness about sign language and very few people were aware about it."* (Representative from education sector)

Several NGOs/OPDs such as the Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association, Ethiopia National Association on Intellectual Disability, and Ethiopian National Association of Persons Affected by Leprosy, run short technical and vocational trainings specifically for people with disabilities. The Ethiopian Centre for Disability and Development, in collaboration with CBM, also run short trainings in Work Integrated Soft Skills (WISE) and Employability and Basic Business Skills (BBS) for TVET and polytechnic trainees with disabilities. Topics include how to start and improve small businesses and job vacancy searching.

> *"In some places the Ministry of Education establishes resource centres, but they use it as a recreation place ... When we observe these things we train teachers [on] why the resource centres are established, what is the objective of the resource centres, what are their advantages?"* (Representative from an NGO)

Humanity & Inclusion run teacher training programmes (mainly related to primary education) to improve disability awareness and attitudes. They also train teachers and students with and without hearing impairment in sign language to promote peer support and help establish, equip, and maximise use of educational resource centres.

2. Employment

2.1. Employment indicators disaggregated by disability status

According to estimates from the ILOSTAT database [10] (using 2013 as reference year), youth (15-29 years) with disabilities (32%) were more likely to be not in employment, education, or training compared to youth without disabilities (10%). Monthly earnings for adults with disabilities who are working are also estimated to be lower (by 59%) than their peers without disabilities.

Table 2. Estimates from the LOSTAT database Disability Labour Market Indicators (DLMI), with 2013 as reference year.

	People with disabilities	People without disabilities
Share of youth (15-29 years) not in employment, education or training	32%	10%
Inactivity rate (adults with disabilities)	46%	18%
Monthly earnings for adults with disabilities (as % of earnings for persons without)	59%	

Employment

2.2. Policies and programmes

One of the strengths of the Proclamation Concerning the Rights to Employment for Persons with Disabilities (2008) is it obliges government ministries to take responsibility for mainstreaming disability into their respective areas of work. As a result, parliamentarians have the right to monitor inclusivity and affirmative action for people with disabilities, giving feed back on gaps and improvements when they visit sector offices. The Parliament Standing Committee members have a mandate to conduct visits to government offices for monitoring and feedback for improvement. Although offices are given such feedback, their improvements are likely inadequate due to the lack of established monitoring systems and subsequent follow-up measures.

Agriculture and manufacturing are key sources of income in the country. However, specific policies, programmes, or strategies related to employment and job opportunities for people with disabilities within these sectors are lacking. According to one KI:

> *"We work by being inclusive. The subject of women and disability is addressed in all programmes...affirmative action is given to those with disabilities."* (Representative from agriculture sector)

However, KIs were not able to provide any specific mechanisms or information on the extent to which "inclusion" is being enacted. There was recognition of environmental barriers at the level of production, as well as the need to identify and meet specific needs of some people with disabilities to facilitate their participation. However, there appeared to be a lack of specific initiatives to address these and other barriers, that may occur across the agricultural value chain.

> *"Agriculture, by its very nature, necessitates a lot of energy, a lot of travel, and a lot of hard work...so it will be difficult for us to include them...the lower government structure will look for finances and NGOs that work in that area so that they can receive assistance with agricultural machinery, such as a hand-driven tractor...We will make every effort to allocate assistance so that they can receive the assistance they require. However, this is not that much implemented, and a lot of work is needed in this regard."* (Representative from government)

Policymakers recognised that disability inclusion in agriculture needed to be strengthened and that they should learn from efforts around general equality in agriculture. They also highlighted a data gap on disability in agriculture that needs to be addressed more generally.

Employment

2.3. Implementation gaps and challenges

Several KIs described a lack of employment opportunities for young people with disabilities, even for those who have completed post-secondary education. The data highlighted several factors that may be contributing to this exclusion.

i) Attitudes and awareness of employers

A key gap, according to KIs, is the scarcity of private sector companies providing job opportunities for people with disabilities. We were unable to identify examples in the agricultural or manufacturing sector through this study, although we note the relatively limited sample size, which doesn't necessarily mean they don't exist. This gap is attributed, in part, to lack of awareness and negative attitudes. Several KIs highlighted misconceptions among employers about the capacity of people with disabilities to work, as well as the extent of extra costs associated with hiring disabled people. For example, some employers prefer to pay fines rather than hire a person with a disability.

> *"Rather than hiring those disabled people they violate the law. And the punishment is also acceptable because it easy to pay 2000 Birr [approximately 35 USD] rather than hiring two disabled people."* (Representative from an OPD)

One KI also suggested there should be incentives, such as tax reductions, for private companies when they employ people with disabilities—a policy common in many other settings, such as Kenya.

ii) Lack of disability data and evidence

According to some KIs, the lack of disability disaggregated data (e.g. related to agriculture) and the mismatch between prevalence estimates from national data collection (e.g. census 1% prevalence) and WHO estimates (15%) can be challenging.

> *"When we say the number of persons with disabilities in Ethiopia is 2% we are saying they are 2 million and they are minorities. But when it is 17% it will be about 20 million, which is significant for the country as a resource. For sure data has a relationship with budget. So when we review our data many things will be improved."* (Representative from an OPD)

There is some progress in this regard. For example, there may be an increase in national surveys collecting data on disability. However, another information gap is the lack of follow-up with programmes and participants to identify needs, priorities, and to assess programme impact.

Employment

iii) Risk of exploitation

Some KIs identified risk of exploitation among employees with disabilities as a potential barrier.

> *"Deaf people are highly exploited because they don't talk too much like other employees and they will be hired in garment industry ... there are two extremes ... we should amplify those employers who hire disabled people. On the other hand, those manufacturers who choose disabled people because they do not move or can't leave the job is not fair. We should do awareness on this."* (Representative from an OPD)

iv) Limited access to social media, internet, and IT training

The KIs, in general, did not cite any specific initiatives around promoting or using digital skills within their programmes. However, they did highlight the lack of access to and use of the internet and social media, particularly in rural areas, as a challenge in terms of raising awareness of their programmes. The need for better IT training for people with disabilities at the university and secondary school level was highlighted.

2.4 Examples of innovative and promising practices

Despite the gaps and challenges to achieving disability inclusion, KIs identified several examples of promising programmes and practices to improve access to employment for young people with disabilities.

i) Training, empowerment, and start-up capital

Several NGOs and OPDs facilitate programmes to promote livelihood opportunities and employability for youth with disabilities through training, capacity-building, and providing start-up capital for small businesses. For example, the Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association (EWDNA) provides: (1) social empowerment activities (e.g. peer group sessions) so that women can build confidence and feel they are not alone; (2) short vocational (e.g. cooking) and general business skills trainings; and (3) start-up capital for small enterprises.

One challenge is that despite the provision of this training and capital, women may not be able to access the wider support and infrastructure necessary to start or sustain small business, such as renting space or accessing electricity. The EWDNA negotiates with the government to allocate work spaces and trading licences to mitigate some of these challenges. Reportedly, women felt it would be particularly beneficial to work in groups to set up small businesses, due to shared support and economic capacity. However, formal evaluation or follow-up of participant schemes was lacking. Additionally, people who are educated beyond secondary school may be falling through the cracks, as the EWDNA reported their organisation does not work with "educated women," but recognised that they still struggle to gain employment.

Employment

Another example of promising practice is the Ethiopian National Association of Persons Affected by Leprosy which facilitates income-generating activities:

> *"Because we are unable to persuade other employers to hire people with leprosy, we … shall provide work opportunities and assist them in earning their own income … we engage them in agriculture, small businesses, and handcraft manufacturing … assisting people with disabilities who have been afflicted by leprosy to become self-employed and work in many sectors."* (Representative from an NGO)

ii) Advocacy and awareness

In effort to increase awareness and combat negative attitudes, some NGOs conduct advocacy and disability-inclusive awareness training with employers. These include efforts to raise awareness around disability rights, the benefits of workplace disability diversity, and to challenge fears and misconceptions around the extent of extra costs associated with hiring disabled people.

> *"Most of the time people perceive that hiring disabled people costs too much. But the price of exclusion is higher than inclusion at national level."* (Representative from an OPD)

A previous programme by Humanity & Inclusion, together with the Ethiopian Centre for Disability and Development, provided training to employers and supported internships, which led to employment for some people with disabilities. Although this programme is not currently active, the organisations reportedly continue to receive requests for interns with disabilities.

> *"It's about employment opportunities, but no one with an intellectual disability is hired in any organisation, private or public. That is why, at the moment, we are urging individual businesses to hire them at various levels, such as in hotels and other industries. They can be … guards or waiters in hotels, as we are aware of their capacity. So that's what we're advocating for."* (Representative from an NGO)

The Ethiopia National Association on Intellectual Disability also advocate for employment opportunities within hotels. There were also initiatives (past and present) to support employability for graduates with disabilities, such as training on writing a CV, job application letters (working with EthioJobs), and writing letters of support.

Employment

> *"There are also educated young people … up to the Masters degree level, after which we have written them a support letter, and they have been hired in the Addis Ababa Social Affairs Office … and sub-city offices."* (Representative from an NGO)

One hotel specifically recruits people with hearing loss as hotel staff (e.g. as waiters). In addition to providing an income, this was perceived to have broader benefits around building the self-esteem of participants while also improving attitudes towards disability inclusion among other hotel staff and guests.

Source: Light for the World

3. Social and political context

Signs of increasing attention to disability at the policy level, including rights-based policy frameworks and involvement of FEAPD and other OPDs in the policy development process, may indicate some progress. However, political and socio-cultural challenges to implementation still exist.

Regarding policy-related implementation gaps, we previously described the challenges around frequent organisational restructuring creating an unstable policy environment, as well as a lack of coordination between people responsible for disability inclusion within different administrative systems. Within the federal government system, regions were reportedly autonomous to make their own policy decisions and, according to KIs, they do not all implement policies and strategies with equal degree or pace due to resource availability, priority, capacity, or familiarisation with national policies and strategies. Ongoing conflicts and war in Ethiopia also exacerbate disability-related challenges in the country, driving unmet psychosocial, economic, and rehabilitation needs, as well as increasing structural barriers to education and work.

Negative attitudes, stigma, and discrimination related to societal norms and expectations persist at the community, institutional, and government levels toward people with disabilities. KIs indicated that a spiritual explanatory model of disability (e.g. perceiving disability as "sin" or "curse") and viewing people with disabilities as objects of charity (i.e. the "charity model") are still common in Ethiopia.

> *"The practice is still not good even among educated people who design policy because they consider disability as charity work."* (Representative from an OPD)
>
> *"When they see people with disabilities what they think is not more than collecting money for them at the churches."* (Representative from an NGO)

As described throughout this this report, discrimination and negative attitudes among education providers, employers, and policymakers also continue to inhibit opportunities for disabled people.

> *"Even though they [person with disability] have the skill, government or nongovernmental employer organisations do not accept persons with a disability and me equal-ly."* (Representative from government)

4. Opportunities

In order to combat discrimination, one KI suggested the importance of disability champions to challenge negative attitudes, stereotypes, and the idea of people with disabilities as objects of charity.

> *"He is a person who achieved academically and professionally. Using these people is useful because, a person defines his vision by seeing other's. Right? As children see their parents, students see their teachers, we all follow our ancestors."* (Representative from an NGO)

With the Disability Act being ratified, KIs also identified a need for collective effort and commitment to awareness-raising at all levels. KIs recommended strengthening both individual empowerment and collective awareness to foster change.

> *"After it [the Disability Act] takes the ground, everyone must know that this is everyone's responsibility. It must not be taken as for only MOLSA [Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs]. Everyone one should apply and work on it starting from the lower one up to the upper level. Especially the people with disabilities...they must ask for their rights. They must know the rules with each level...this requires everyone's effort—the non-governmental bodies and the government too—to lay on the ground."* (Representative from government)

Source: Global Partnership for Education/Kelley Lynch

Programme and policy recommendations

This section outlines key recommendations to strengthen the inclusion of people with disabilities in education and employment. Focus is given to policy, programming, and opportunities for future research.

For policy developers

- Strengthen policy dissemination as well as disability awareness training to regions and other lower government bodies.

- Provide clarity on key persons responsible for disability inclusion within government systems and explore models where coordinating mechanisms or committees in government (often externally funded) are responsible for ensuring disability issues are coordinated across government portfolios.

- Provide guidelines, checklists, and assign a responsible government body to monitor mainstreaming of disability inclusiveness in education and employment.

- Strengthen assistive technology provision and provide tax exemptions or subsidies for assistive devices. Promote in-country production of assistive technologies: identify, train, and financially support local private producers and build capacity of companies working in printing, plastic, metal sectors to produce assistive devices.

- Implement structural (e.g. enforcement of policies around accessible buildings, affirmative action) and behavioural interventions, and incorporate lessons learned from social and behaviour change communication interventions.

For programme and policy implementers

- Engage and collaborate with OPDs and groups of people with lived experience in the design, implementation, and evaluation of programmes.

- Identify and implement strategies to strengthen disability inclusion, with a gender-sensitive approach, for secondary schools.

- Motivate private companies to employ people with disabilities (e.g. through training on disability rights and the value of disability diversity), discuss extra costs (e.g. in providing reasonable accommodation), and provide incentives.

- Scale-up programmes to improve attitudes towards disability. At the community level, implement these through existing local structures (e.g. clan and religious leaders) using media and community gatherings. Consider engaging disability champions (e.g. aspirational figures in education, employment, and innovation) in media, trainings, motivational speeches.

- Programs on disability should be inclusive of all impairment types, especially people with intellectual and multiple disabilities who have been more marginalised in accessing education and employment opportunities. For example, educational programs should be designed to be adaptive of people with intellectual disabilities

- Ensure disability inclusive education programming is gender sensitive from primary school levels.

Programme and policy recommendations

- Strengthen links between education and vocational training with job opportunities and solutions such as microfinancing, creating space for dialogue, training in entrepreneurship for people with disabilities, as well as behaviour change interventions targeted at employers.

- Develop strategies to provide employment opportunities for people with disabilities in the leading economic sectors of the country (agriculture and manufacturing). For example, highlight the potential of inclusive employment within the manufacturing sector when supported by adequate financing and appropriate infrastructure; create links between TVETs and manufacturing companies to establish progression for trained people with disabilities.

For researchers

1. Explore lived experiences of youth with disabilities:

- Explore challenges, enablers, agency, and aspirations related to education and work in Ethiopia. Specifically to explore:

  - Access and opportunities related to assistive technology and digital skills as enablers to education and work.
  - Experiences and aspirations, challenges and enablers to participating across the agricultural value chain.
  - Specific individual, institutional, and system-level challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities in accessing and progressing through education

2. Explore socio-cultural attitudes towards disability:

- Explore local cultural understandings of disability and drivers of social attitudes, including the specific implications these have for education and employment. For example, if priority social representations hampering inclusion in livelihoods can be identified, areas for attitude change can be highlighted and targeted.

3. Explore experience and perspectives of education providers:

- Explore perspectives and provisions on disability inclusion among teachers and management in mainstream secondary and tertiary education

- Assess extent and nature of training on disability inclusion within teacher training curriculum and continuing professional development

- Explore the impact of educational resources centres and areas for improvement.

4. Conduct rigorous impact evaluations of policies, programmes, and interventions:

- Address the gap in evidence on 'what works' for strengthening i) livelihoods; ii) inclusive education and outcomes; iii) improving attitudes/reducing stigma towards disability.

- Conduct rigorous evaluations on the impact of programmes and interventions in these areas. Priority interventions/programmes to evaluate should be determined collaboratively with OPDs, NGOs, and policymakers. Evaluations should assess outcomes as well as processes to understand mechanisms and specific components that lead to change.

Programme and policy recommendations

5. Address gaps in disaggregated data, process, and practice:

- Strengthen disability data: collect routine data on disability within mainstream programmes and population surveys to provide disability disaggregated indicators. The WG questions are generally recommended for this as being simple and rapid and having an ICF focus. However, thorough training in the purpose and methods of administration is essential to ensure quality data that is used.

- Review blanket terminologies such as "inclusiveness" as these do not appreciate specific needs of different impairment types. Programs and strategies should be recognise this in their design.

- Strengthen understanding of local culture to inform programmes so that sustainability, community participation, and local ownership are enhanced. For example, in clans from Somali and Afar regions, leaders protect the lands of people with disabilities so that their right to benefit will not be violated.

- Explore how ongoing conflicts, war, and drought, coupled with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of global economic crisis in Ethiopia, make people with disabilities increasingly vulnerability (such as losing their jobs, school dropouts). Better data is need to understand the magnitude and extent of needs to provide appropriate psychosocial, economic, and rehabilitation services for young people with disabilities.

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Appendix A: Methodology

This report forms part of a multi-country study, investigating disability-inclusive education and employment across seven countries in Sub-Saharan Africa: Ghana, Senegal, Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya. This report drew from two main sources of data. First, a rapid online literature review was undertaken to identify relevant policies and programmes regarding disability and inclusion of people with disabilities in education and employment in Ethiopia.

Qualitative data collection

Next, in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with 16 key informants to gain insights into the process, context, and actors involved in selected policies and programmes, as well as identify challenges, gaps, opportunities, and examples of best practices about education and employment for young people with disabilities. In Ethiopia, the research focused on the sectors of agriculture and manufacturing selected in discussion with Mastercard Foundation.

Relevant key informants were identified through the document review and input from local partners, as well as through snowball sampling. Table A1 below provides a breakdown of participant characteristics.

Table A1. Sample of Key Informants

Key informant type	n
Government	5
Organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs)	4
NGOs	2
Education providers	2
Employers	3
Total	16

Interviews were conducted in Amharic language by Eshetu Girma from May to June 2022. Topic guides for the interviews were developed in discussion with the wider project team, Mastercard Foundation and two Advisory groups comprising youth with disabilities based in Uganda and Ghana. Prior to data collection, researchers participated in training workshops (jointly with other country teams) covering ethical protocols, interview techniques, maintaining data quality, and in-depth discussion of topic guides. These were pilot-tested, and researchers participated in feedback workshops after conducting at least one pilot interview.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the College of Health Sciences, Addis Ababa University, Institutional Review Board (IRB). All participants were provided information about the study, and informed consent was obtained (signed or verbal) before the interview.

Interviews lasted between 30 and 120 minutes. All 15 interviews were conducted face-to-face and were audio-recorded following participant consent. In addition, detailed notes were taken during the interview. Interviews were transcribed and translated to English for analysis. Researchers participated in an analysis workshop (jointly with other country teams in this project) to discuss approaches to coding and analysis. A coding scheme and codebook were developed based on study objectives and emerging themes. Transcripts were coded using the atlas-ti software and analysed thematically.

Appendix B: Table of disability inclusion programmes

Table A2: Disability inclusion programmes related to education and employment in Ethiopia

Programme	Implementers & Funders	Category and type of work	Target group	Region	Further details
Cap-Able (2021– unclear)	Light for the World Funded by Mastercard Foundation	Education: An online resource platform with resources on inclusive practices Resources include how-to guides for institutions, best practices	All impairment types All ages	National	Website here
Addis Ababa University, Centre of Excellence for Special Needs scholarship Continuous program (regular public budget)	Funded by Addis Ababa University, government funding source Support from Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)	Education: Financial support ICT support Administrative support Skills training	University students	Addis Ababa (students join from all corners of the country)	http://www.aau.edu.et/ https://sida.aau.edu.et/index.php/special-needs-support-center-officially-launches-its-newly-organized-unit/
Employment in a hotel service	Mosaic hotel	Employment Creating job opportunity to be employed the hotel	People with hearing impairment	Addis Ababa	http://themosaichotel.co/
Sign language support	Entoto technical and vocational training center, funded by government	Education Give sign language services in classroom for people with hearing impairment	College students with hearing impairment	Addis Ababa	
Jobs opportunities	Federal Jobs Creation Commission	Employment Networking Capacity building	All ages	National	https://jobscommission.gov.et/
Employment, education and advocacy	Ethiopian National Association of Persons Affected by Leprosy (ENAPAL) Various sources of funding	Employment, education, and capacity building	People with leprosy All ages	National	https://enapal.org/
Capacity building for employment	Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association (EWDNA) Various sources of funding	Employment Capacity building and advocacy for women with disabilities	Women with Disabilities	National	
Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program	University of Gondar Funded by Mastercard Foundation	Education: Supports people with disabilities to complete university education Pilots models for support such as integrating provision of accessibility tools (e.g. wheelchairs), accessible versions on material (e.g. books in Braille), and access to rehabilitation labs	All impairment types University ages	National	Website here

Appendix B: Table of disability inclusion programmes

Table A2: Disability inclusion programmes related to education and employment in Ethiopia (cont.)

Programme	Implementers & Funders	Category and type of work	Target group	Region	Further details
Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed Technical Assistance (READ TA) Project (2012 – 2017)	RTI International, working with the Ministry of Education Funded by USAID	Education: Includes the Assistive Technology Capacity Building Initiative (ATCBI) that involves: Exploring use of technology in teaching and screening for disability Facilitating use of inclusive practice in teaching, including adapting material to make inclusive lesson plans Address teachers' attitudes and efficacy	Hearing and visual impairment Primary school age	Six regions	Summary here [33]
INCLUDE (2008 – unclear)	Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development (ECDD) Funded by ILO-Irish Aid Partnership Programme	Livelihoods: Established the Disability Inclusion Support Service Provided Disability & Development Training (DDT) to employers and organisations Provided vocational training and micro-finance opportunities for people with disabilities	All impairment types Working age	Addis Ababa, and 4 regions (Amhara, Oromia, Tigray and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State)	Project case story here [32]
Employment Support Programme for Trade Union Workers with Disabilities in Ethiopia Project (2016– 2019)	Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions (CETU) Funded by TUC Aid	Livelihoods: Provided training in disability rights for trade union officials and affiliated organisations Created 'disability champions', an employment support programme Worked with private and public sector employers and employees Advocacy skills development among workers with disabilities, especially women	All impairment types Working age	National	Website here
Various programmes	Ethiopian Business & Disability Network (EBDN)	Employment Supports private companies to be more inclusive in their employment practices, through knowledge sharing and capacity building, to be more 'disability confident' Conduct accessibility audits of work environments, assisting them to make reasonable adjustments	All impairment types Working age	National	Website here

Appendix B: Table of disability inclusion programmes

Table A3: Key Stakeholders related to disability inclusion in Ethiopia

Organization name	Role (funder, implementer, etc)	Work/activities on inclusive employment and education	Region	Further details
Ministry of Agriculture	Policy maker and also plays implementer roles as well	Works on inclusiveness, affirmative actions and support with food items for those who are economically disadvantaged and with disability	National	http://moa.gov.et/
Ministry of Education	Policy maker and capacity building, plays facilitation roles to make sure that policies are implemented	Works on policy revisions, monitoring and implementation of some projects like educational resource centres for people with disabilities	National	https://moe.gov.et/ file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/A%20Master%20Plan%20for%20Special%20Needs%20Education%20-%20Inclusive%20Education%20in%20Ethiopia%202016-2025.pdf
Federal Jobs Creation Commission	Policy maker	Create job opportunities and networking, affirmative actions for people with disabilities	National	https://jobscommission.gov.et/
Ministry of Women and Social Affairs	Policy maker	Have directorate for people with disability. Makes policies and monitors the implementation of policies	National	https://www.mowsa.gov.et/
Addis Ababa University, Centre of Excellence for Special Needs	Program implementer	Creates favourable environment (living and learning space) for university students with disabilities, training and capacity building	Addis Ababa (but students with disabilities join the university across the country)	http://www.aau.edu.et/ https://sida.aau.edu.et/index.php/special-needs-support-center-officially-launches-its-newly-organized-unit/
University of Gondar (Mastercard Scholars programme)	Program implementer	Creates favourable environment (living and learning space) for university students with disabilities, training, assistive devise support, and capacity building	Amhara region (but students with disabilities join the university across the country), the catchment area and students from Djibouti and Somalia	https://uog.edu.et/ https://mastercardfdn.org/partners/university-of-gondar/

Appendix B: Table of disability inclusion programmes

Table A3: Key Stakeholders related to disability inclusion in Ethiopia (cont.)

Organization name	Role (funder, implementer, etc)	Work/activities on inclusive employment and education	Region	Further details
Entoto Polytechnic College	Program implementer	TVET training for people with disabilities and gives sign language for people with disabilities	Addis Ababa	-
Humanity & Inclusion	Program implementation	Education and capacity building	National (it is an international NGO)	https://www.hi-us.org/ethiopia
International Labour organisation (ILO)	Program implementation	Education and support in micro-finance	National (it is an international NGO)	https://www.ilo.org/africa/countries-covered/ethiopia/lang--en/index.htm
Ethiopian centre for disability and development (ECCD)	Program implementation	Education and capacity building (project based interventions) and advocacy	National (OPD)	https://www.ecdd-ethiopia.org/
Ethiopian National Association of Persons Affected by Leprosy (ENAPAL)	Program implementation	Employment, education and capacity building of people with leprosy	National (OPD)	https://enapal.org/
Fikir Ethiopia National Association on Intellectual disabilities	Program implementation	Education, training, and advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities	National (OPD)	
Ethiopian Blind People National Association	Program implementation	Education, training, and advocacy for people with visual disabilities	National (OPD)	https://ethionab.org/
Federations of Ethiopian Association of persons with disability (FEAPD)	Program implementation	An umbrella organization of OPDs, funding and program distributions to other OPDS, advocacy	National (OPD)	-
Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association (EWDNA)	Program implementation	Capacity building and advocacy for women with disabilities	National (OPD)	-
Mosaic hotel	Program implementation	It provides a hotel service and employs people with hearing impairment	Addis Ababa	http://themosaichotel.co/
Ethiopian National Association of Deaf Blind	Program implementation	Training and advocacy for people with visual and hearing disabilities	National (OPD)	-
Ethiopian Lawyers With Disabilities Association	Program implementation	Training and advocacy for people with visual and hearing disabilities	National (OPD)	-

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