

# Disability-Inclusive Education: Understanding the Context



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Recognizing barriers to disability inclusion, a series of reports were developed with the aim of understanding education trends for young people with disabilities in Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Senegal, Ghana and Nigeria. This brief presents a summary of the series' findings on supporting disability-inclusive education.

## Key Findings

- Across these 7 countries, rights-based policy frameworks to promote inclusive education for children and young people with disabilities are being adopted.
- There is a lack of specific policies, strategies or programs focused on supporting access to secondary and tertiary education, and weak policy enforcement.
- Poor policy implementation, high cost, lack of assistive devices, inaccessible infrastructure, and stigma, mean that educational inequalities persist.
- There are disparities in school enrolment, school completion, and out-of-school rates between children and youth with and without disabilities.
- Exclusion of learners with intellectual disabilities and girls and young women is particularly widespread, and starts at a young age.
- Approaches to improving education among people with disabilities include training of mainstream teachers, and improving digital literacy and access.
- Gaps in epidemiological and monitoring and evaluation data make it hard to accurately estimate the scale of exclusion and develop effective intervention.

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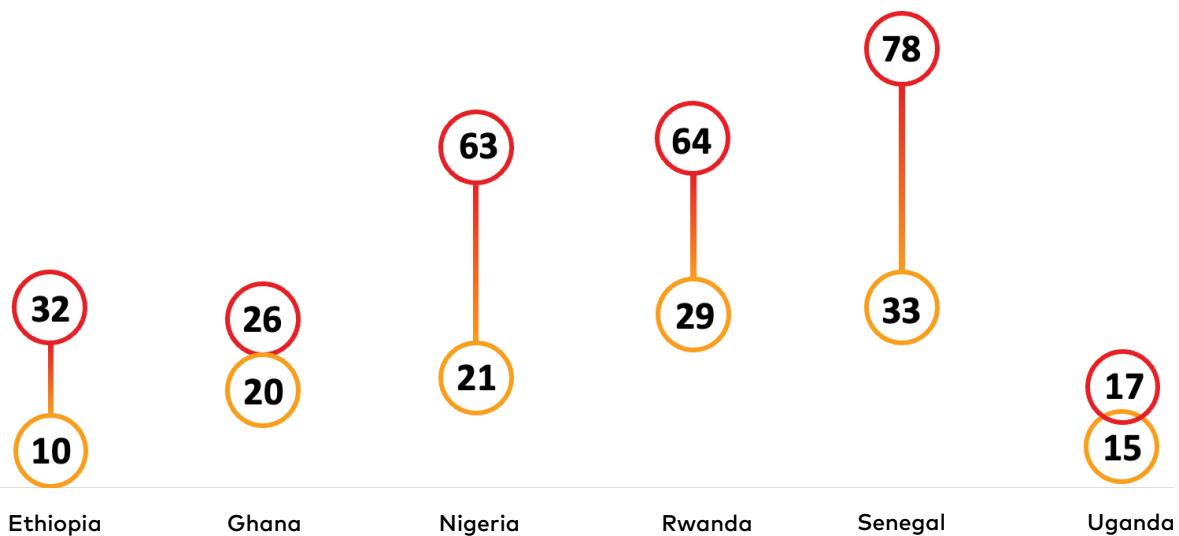


## Despite Progressive Policy, Educational Exclusion is Pervasive



All countries have some provisions for inclusive education. However, rates of school enrolment and completion are lower among individuals with disabilities compared to their peers without disabilities, and out-of-school rates are higher. Across countries, between 11 and 61% of children with disabilities are out of school, a non-attendance rate up to 23% higher than among children without disabilities.

Disparities between people **with** and **without** disabilities in the proportion of youth who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) (%).



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## Inadequate Teacher Training and Scarce Resources Hamper Progress Towards Inclusive Education

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Teachers in mainstream schools still lack the necessary training, skills, and resources to teach young people with disabilities in the classroom, resulting in exclusion from learning. Inaccessible buildings and a lack of accessible materials, and assistive devices are key barriers to inclusion in mainstream settings.

*"In any library, if you are a blind person, you have no resources that allow you to read a book."*  
- Key Informant, Senegal

*"Teachers only have one semester for introduction to special education."*  
- Key Informant, Ghana

There are examples, in countries, of strategies which are being used to increase the accessibility of mainstream schools, and the number of learners with disabilities in attendance at them, including through teacher training and accessibility audits of school infrastructure.

## Access to Technology Needs to be Improved, and Young People's Digital Skills Developed

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Mainstream initiatives aimed at improving digital access may not be inclusive of children and youth with disabilities. Combined with cost and inaccessibility of technologies, lack of basic digital skills creates a barrier to learning for youth with disabilities

There is a cascading effect, with the gap in basic computer training for people with disabilities at secondary schools creating challenges within higher education, and this then spilling over into the employment sector, where people with disabilities are unable to access technology-driven jobs due to a lack of skills.

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## Diverse Strategies are Needed to Increase Educational Access and Retention



Teacher training in disability-inclusive education, and collaboration between specialized and mainstream teachers.



Providing scholarships, monthly allowances, and 'adaptive tools' for education, including higher education.



Awareness-raising on disability-inclusive education for families and communities.



Creating physically accessible spaces, equipped with appropriate materials.



Conducting capacity building activities for inclusive education activists.



Establishing e-learning and online resources to better include students with disabilities.

## A Variety of Research Strategies are Needed to Generate Knowledge to Improve Inclusion

- Generate disability-disaggregated data to inform planning, implementation, and monitoring of disability inclusion in education.
- Explore perspectives and provisions on disability inclusion among teachers and management in mainstream secondary and tertiary education. Assess the extent and nature of training on disability inclusion within teacher training curriculum and continuing professional development.
- From the perspective of youth with disabilities, investigate the challenges, enablers, agency, and aspirations relating to education.
- Generate evidence on 'what works' for strengthening education inclusion and to improve attitudes and reduce stigma towards disability, and research priorities should be determined collaboratively with OPDs.

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## Acknowledgements and References

**Data sources:** The reports drew from four main sources of data: a rapid online literature review to identify relevant policy and programs regarding disability and inclusion of youth with disabilities in education; in-depth qualitative interviews with key informants in each country; a secondary analysis of Demographic and Health Survey (DHS); and analyses of data from the ILOSTAT database.

**Notes:** All figures should be interpreted with caution as the use of inconsistent methodologies makes cross country comparison difficult. Grey circles indicate missing data. See full reports for further detail and additional references. Image credit: Ranplett via Getty Images Signature.



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