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STUDY



Diversity and Inclusion in Education Policy Advocacy work in the Horn, Eastern and Southern African region

EDUCATIONOUTLOUD
advocacy & social accountability

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Education

FOREWORD

Implemented by Oxfam Denmark and financed by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), Education Out Loud supports civil society to become more active and influential in shaping education policy to better meet the needs of communities, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized.

In response to feedback, a mid-term review conducted in 2021 advised Oxfam Denmark to establish an EOL gender and social inclusion policy. This policy would serve to enhance comprehension and integration of these themes within project activities, ultimately benefiting all grantees within the program.

The EOL program operates across several countries in the Horn, East, and Southern African Region as well as countries in West Africa (Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nigeria), each characterised by unique cultures, beliefs, and ethnic backgrounds. The program actively encourages grantees to embrace this rich diversity and inclusivity in their policy advocacy and influencing efforts.

This study entails a comprehensive research endeavour, with the learning partner, MS Training Centre for Development Cooperation (MS TCDC), taking responsibility for designing, conducting, and compiling the research report.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report emphasises the significance of inclusivity that surpasses differences in factors affecting education access, quality, and outcomes in the Horn, Eastern, and Southern Africa (HESA) Region. Focusing on promoting inclusion in education policy advocacy, the study underscores the need for equal opportunities in social institutions, particularly in the socio-cultural right to education, considering factors like ethnicity, culture, language, gender, class, race, sexual orientation, and religion.

The study's goal is to explore diversity and inclusion dynamics in HESA and three West African countries, examining their impact on education access and quality. It investigates how these diversities influence access to quality education and how civil society organisations (CSOs) can incorporate them into advocacy efforts for equitable and inclusive education.

Covering 18 countries in the Horn, East, Southern, and West Africa, the study engages in interviews with NGO Coalition and other network leaders, government officials in education policy-making, and CSO leaders managing disability education activities.

The report outlines diverse strategies for diversity and inclusion advocacy, including leadership representation, cultural sensitivity, consultations with marginalised communities, training programs, collaboration, policy monitoring, awareness campaigns, legal avenues, policy recommendations, and alignment with international frameworks.

The study employs a mixed-method approach, incorporating document reviews and primary data collection through interviews and focus group discussions. Common themes across African countries include disparities in infrastructure, teacher distribution (i.e. teacher–learner ratio), macro-level socio-economic factors, gender biases, linguistic challenges, and the impact of natural disasters, all affecting the overall quality of education. Challenges intersect to impact education access, including lack of inclusive policies, policy implementation gaps, dynamics of diversity and inclusion during crises, infrastructure and climate impact, gender biases, high dropout rates, resource constraints, and poverty affecting both genders.

Education Policy Advocacy coalitions prioritise inclusivity by diversifying leadership, ensuring policies are accessible, leveraging social media, collaborating with international partners, participating in events, and raising awareness on specific issues. They adopt a holistic approach, addressing challenges like teenage pregnancy through sensitization, cultural pressure management, stigma reduction, and awareness promotion. Regional commitments emphasise comprehensive sex education. Advocacy extends to the plight of teachers in rural areas, inclusive policies for learners with disabilities, and engagement with communities for data gathering.

CSOs actively participate in policy development, advocating for legal frameworks promoting inclusive education. Affirmative action policies, addressing specific needs like menstrual hygiene, poverty, education through sports, and Conditional Cash Transfer Programs aim to eliminate disparities. Challenges faced by CSO coalitions include limited government prioritisation, policy implementation gaps, resource constraints, and communication challenges. Government challenges include attitude and knowledge gaps, curriculum inflexibility, skill gaps, policy barriers, economic barriers, and commitment to international protocols. Specific country challenges include policy implementation issues, cultural practices limiting girls' education, challenges in ensuring teachers possess necessary skills, and resource gaps for special needs education.

This report underscores the complexities and challenges in promoting inclusivity in education policies across the HESA region and West African states. It emphasises the shared commitment of CSOs and governments to address these challenges through various strategies, requiring sustained efforts, collaboration, and a deep understanding of local contexts. The study provides valuable insights and recommendations for advancing inclusivity in education policy advocacy. These findings are a contribution to the existing body of knowledge that can benefit policy and decision makers at the community and national levels towards ensuring better learning outcomes both for learners and the diverse range of societies in which they live.

BACKGROUND

An inclusive society, according to expert definitions and international consensus, transcends differences based on various factors such as race, gender, class, generation, and geography. This concept ensures equal opportunities for all individuals to participate in social institutions, with a particular focus on the socio-cultural right to education. This right encompasses multiple dimensions, including ethnicity, culture, language, gender, class, race, sexual orientation, and religion. In Africa, civil society organisations supported by Education for All (EOL) emphasise the promotion of diversity and inclusion, particularly for marginalised groups, in their advocacy efforts.

In an inclusive society, individuals, regardless of their diverse backgrounds, are valued, respected, and provided with equal opportunities and access to resources. This inclusivity fosters a sense of belonging, enabling full participation in various aspects of life, including social, economic, political, and cultural realms. Achieving inclusivity involves continuous efforts to challenge biases, eliminate barriers, and create a just and equitable environment. This requires promoting empathy, cultural competence, and eliminating discrimination while addressing historical and systemic disparities.

To realise inclusivity, active participation in social, economic, and political processes is crucial. This includes ensuring diverse representation in decision-making bodies and acknowledging that different individuals may require varying levels of support for equal outcomes. The ultimate goal is to build strong social bonds, connections, understanding, tolerance, and collaboration among diverse individuals and communities.

This study investigated the dynamics of diversity and inclusion in the Horn, Eastern and Southern Africa (HESA) Region and the three West African countries of Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone and their impact on education access. It evaluated how these diversities influenced access to quality education and how civil society organisations could harness them in advocacy efforts to overcome barriers, striving for equitable and inclusive education for all. The findings will contribute to the broader understanding of creating inclusive societies and the role of education in fostering social equity.

PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

- Assesses the diversity and inclusion issues and patterns in the Horn, East and Southern African region and how they constrain access to quality education for all;
- Examines the knowledge, understanding and practice of diversity and inclusion by civil society organisations and implications on education policy advocacy work; and,
- Identifies ways in which CSOs can embrace/use diversity and inclusion to enhance their policy advocacy efforts to address the needs of the vulnerable and/or marginalised groups.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study covered 18 countries in Horn (Egypt, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Somaliland, and Somalia) East (Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda), Southern Africa (Malawi, Lesotho, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and West African nations of Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone.

It involved interviewing NGO and Network leaders; government officials in education policy making and implementing positions; leadership of CSOs managing disability education activities.

THEORY OF CHANGE

Through understanding, embracing and using diversity and inclusion, Education Advocacy CSOs effectively deliver equitable and accessible education systems, ensuring that the voices and needs of vulnerable marginalised groups are heard and addressed. This will be through one or several of the Diversity and Inclusion Advocacy Strategies and Activities such as:

- Ensuring CSO leadership and membership reflect the diversity of the communities they serve including having members from marginalised groups in decision-making positions to attain informed and inclusive policy advocacy;
- Ensuring cultural sensitivity in advocacy approaches by first understanding the cultural contexts of the communities in which the CSO works and ensuring organisational policies respect and incorporate these cultural nuances, and that advocacy materials and communication are available in multiple languages to reach non-native speakers and those with limited English proficiency;
- Engaging in meaningful consultations with marginalised communities, including students, parents, and educators from diverse backgrounds, to understand their specific needs and concerns; Conducting research that specifically highlights the disparities faced by marginalised groups in education and use data and evidence to support policy recommendations, making them more compelling to policymakers;
- Offering training and capacity-building programs to empower marginalised groups to advocate for their own education rights;
- Collaborating with other CSOs, advocacy groups, and networks that focus on diversity and inclusion in education to amplify their advocacy efforts and elicit diverse perspectives, and recognize and address intersecting factors that contribute to the marginalisation of certain groups, such as gender, ethnicity, disability, or socioeconomic status and thus tailor policy recommendations to account for these intersections;

- Continuously monitoring the implementation of education policies to ensure they benefit marginalised groups to hold policymakers and institutions accountable for any disparities or discrimination;
- Conducting awareness campaigns to educate the public, policymakers, and the media about the importance of diversity and inclusion in education; advocating for policies that promote inclusive education environments, accommodating students with disabilities and diverse learning needs while highlighting success stories, and showcasing the benefits of inclusive policies;
- Utilising legal avenues, like public interest litigation, when necessary, to challenge discriminatory policies or practices that negatively impact marginalised groups;
- Developing clear and specific policy recommendations that address the unique needs of marginalised groups such as advocating for targeted measures to close educational gaps and promote equity;
- Aligning organisational advocacy efforts with international frameworks and conventions related to education and human rights, and leveraging these global standards to support organisation's policy advocacy at the national or regional level; and,
- Establishing feedback mechanisms that allow marginalised communities to provide input on the effectiveness of implemented policies and use this feedback to refine the organisation's advocacy strategies.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed method approach including document review of reports and publications; on-line key informant interviews and focus group discussions conducted through Education Advocacy NGOs and Networks in the Horn, Eastern, and Southern Africa (HESA) and West Africa regions.



LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a growing body of literature on disparities in access to education in Africa, including issues related to rural versus urban education, socioeconomic factors, and the challenges faced by marginalised groups. Key among these documents are reports from:

- UNESCO including "Education for All Global Monitoring Report- UNESCO's annual reports on education that provides information on access to education in Africa, including disparities between urban and rural areas, gender, and marginalised groups; Pauline Rose, UNESCO, Rural Education in Africa: A Review" (Pauline Rose) : an overview of research on rural education in Africa, highlighting the disparities and challenges faced by rural communities, and "Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2013/14 - Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All" a report that discusses the quality of education and how it impacts disparities, including those in rural and urban settings.
- Africa Union including Education in Africa: placing equity at the heart of policy; continental report, Africa Union/ UNESCO Office Dakar and Regional Bureau for Education in Africa and the "African Youth Report" 2011 – which among others addresses the Youth Education Crisis in Africa and examines the education challenges faced by African youth, including disparities in access and quality between rural and urban areas.
- The World Bank including "Facing Forward: Schooling for Learning in Africa" a report of the World Bank that discusses the challenges of access to quality education in Africa, with a focus on rural areas and marginalised populations; "Education Inequalities in Africa: Evidence from Household Surveys" a study that analyses household survey data to explore education inequalities in Africa, including disparities in access, quality, and outcomes, and "Girls' Education in Africa: The Impact of Family Income and Gender Attitudes" exploring the relationship between socioeconomic factors, gender attitudes, and girls' access to education in African countries.
- African Development Bank "Education for All in Africa: Are We on Track?" a report assessing progress and challenges related to access to education in Africa, with a focus on marginalised populations.
- Brookings Institution "Equity in Education: Breaking Down Barriers to Social Mobility" a report that discusses the role of socioeconomic factors in education disparities in African countries with several policy recommendations
- Other documents reviewed included national reports such as the National Planning Commission of South Africa "Improving Education Outcomes in South Africa" of 2011 a report that addresses disparities in South Africa's education system, including those related to socioeconomic factors and urban-rural divides.

APPROACH TO PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

Primary data collection approach to this study leverages a Participatory Action Learning and Action Research (PALAR) training workshop for Education Advocacy Networks in the HESA Region, held in September 2023. Sponsored by Oxfam Denmark, the workshop involved twenty-two Education Advocacy network lead Learning Partners and focused on PALAR principles, facilitated by experts in research and human-centred design. The participants committed to implementing new strategies, incorporating qualitative and quantitative methods, and upholding PALAR principles in their advocacy networks. The study engaged the PALAR trained leaders of Education Advocacy networks and Associations for interviews and recruitment of other NGO leaders, and government leaders in each country with particular focus on disability NGOs and stakeholders for key informant interviews by the Researchers. Employing key informant interviews and discussions, the study investigated the influence of diversity and inclusion dynamics on education policy advocacy efforts of organisations, governments, and networks using open-ended interview schedules that were administered on-line.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Using on-line interactions, e-mails and phone calls the PALAR-trained Education Advocacy CSO trained leaders were interviewed with an open-ended schedule (Appendix 1A), and on request, identified and mobilised officials in government, leadership of Persons with Disability CSOs, international and local NGOs and other stakeholders to participate in the study through questions in the study tools (Appendix 1A-Appendix 1C). Overall, a total of 69 respondents of the targeted 80 respondents (86%) were interviewed (Figure 2).

DATA ANALYSIS

The study collected data through a three-stage data analysis process. The response to each of the questions in this study, regardless of the methods used to obtain it, were transcribed and entered into an MS Excel application spreadsheet guided by each question. The unit of analysis was the Country and the category of respondents (Network Coalitions/NGOs), government leaders or Disability NGO leaders.

With the questions seeking specific themes the data were organised thematically. Where responses to questions were found more suited to other related questions, such responses were duly placed appropriately in the right sections. If a common diversity or inclusion issue cropped up in more than one country the analysis took this into consideration.

At the third and final stage responses were grouped in accordance with each of the specific objectives of the study that form the findings Chapters of the Report. Based on these findings the main body of the report has been prepared and besides the Executive Summary, Introductory, and Findings chapter, the report is presented with a discussion and concluding chapter. The database was saved for Subsequent organisation assessment comparisons.



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ISSUES AND PATTERNS IN THE HESA REGION

Education, as a cornerstone of societal progress, is intricately woven into the diverse fabric of the Horn, Eastern, Southern, and West African (HESA) countries. A complex interplay of factors - geography, culture, ethnicity, religion, and socioeconomic status - shapes the educational landscapes of the countries in the region. This chapter outlines these intricacies, unravelling the underlying educational experiences across the region.

From the economic disparities hindering educational opportunities in Eswatini to Kenya's rich mosaic of ethnicities posing challenges to inclusivity, each country presents a unique narrative. In Malawi, gender disparities influenced by long distances, poverty, and cultural norms underscore the need for culturally sensitive strategies in ensuring inclusive education. While Rwanda removed ethnicity from its constitution, underlying marginalisation of particularly learners who were poor or had parentage that were already disadvantaged in education persists and especially so for children with disabilities. South Sudan, with its 64 ethnic groups, emphasises equal educational opportunities, yet cultural practices affect girls' education. Uganda's urban-rural divide in handling disability illuminates the importance of equitable resource distribution. Zimbabwe's ethnically diverse landscape and language choices pose challenges for individuals with disabilities, emphasising the need for inclusive policies.

As we navigate through these diverse educational landscapes, we uncover challenges and initiatives unique to each country. Egypt's regional mentalities and Sierra Leone's ethnic groups contribute to distinctive challenges. Ethiopia grapples with harmful traditional practices and political unrest, while Liberia addresses disabilities, linguistic diversity, and financial barriers. Nigeria's diverse fabric influences regional access and gender norms. Somaliland focuses on challenges related to disabilities and marginalised groups.

In South Africa, legislative mandates emphasise inclusive education, yet challenges persist, and Zambia's tribal makeup influences educational dynamics. Through these explorations, the chapter aims to provide insights that inform policy development, inspire collaborative initiatives, and contribute to the pursuit of inclusive and equitable education for all in the diverse nations of the HESA region. As we delve into the heart of each nation's educational journey, we shed light on the complexities, advocate for inclusivity, and inspire collaborative solutions for an equitable educational future.

Country-specific Disparities and Inclusion Issues

Across the region, diversity and inclusion issues in education manifest in multifaceted challenges. An assessment of CSO insights into the barriers faced by marginalised populations in ensuring access to quality education in the HESA Region and West African countries of Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone reveals cross-cutting factors such as disability, gender disparities, poverty, cultural expectations, and inadequate infrastructure as leading challenges. However, each country has specific barriers to access to education for young people from marginalised population groups. Addressing these barriers requires a comprehensive and context-specific approach, involving policy changes, community engagement, and targeted interventions to ensure inclusive and quality formal education for all.

Egypt and Somalia distinctly face disability-based marginalisation. Disabled persons in Egypt often lack the necessary attention and services tailored to their needs. While some areas like Lower Egypt have dedicated schools, most of the country integrates disabled persons into mainstream education without specific facilities or support. For example, schools in Lower Egypt offer facilities and tailored support for disabled students, while other regions lack such accommodation. The country also faces gender disparities. While some women in Egypt complete education, there is still a 20 percent gender gap of girls of school-going-age who are not in school. , and efforts are being made to change cultural attitudes towards education. These include CSO-led initiatives focusing on working with parents to shift cultural norms and increase female participation in education.

Kenya faces an educational infrastructure barrier in rural areas that lack proper educational infrastructure, including classrooms, sanitation facilities, resource centres, and libraries. Limited investment in these areas affects the overall quality of education and impedes access to essential learning tools. Poverty and economic disparities are yet another barrier to education in the country, making poverty a key factor limiting access to education. Families facing economic challenges struggle with paying school fees, buying uniforms and learning materials, thereby hindering enrollment and retention in formal education.

In Eswatini, the gender disparities are revealing changing dynamics. While the initial focus was on girls' education, there has been a shift, and currently, boys are disengaging from education. Studies are needed to understand the extent of gender gaps and reasons for boys dropping out.

There are disparities in enrollment and performance between boys and girls are observed, leading to a need for further research. In addition, urban poverty in Eswatini, particularly in rural areas, affects access to secondary education, which is not free, creating barriers to education. Thus, lack of resources and economic challenges in urban areas hinder access to secondary education.

In Ethiopia, harmful traditional practices, including child labour and early marriages, historically hindered students' enrollment, and despite improvements, challenges persist. Cultural norms prioritising childlabour and early marriages have affected the education of children in rural areas. In addition, health issues, including disability, contribute to children being out of school. Limited access to health services, especially in conflict-affected regions, compounds the problem with scarcity of health services leads to untreated disabilities, creating additional barriers to education, particularly in conflict zones.

In Liberia the cost of school fees is a key barrier to access to quality learning for children in marginalised population groups. The cost of school fees, especially at the early childhood education level, serves as a significant barrier, with high fees being cost-prohibitive for families. Fees are levied in the form of registration fees, such as the 3,500 Liberian dollars for early childhood education. This is a key disincentive for families to send their children to school. Another barrier is the Segregated Education System in the country that creates barriers for marginalised populations, especially students with disabilities, limiting opportunities for inclusive education. There is limited inclusion of students with visual, hearing, or physical impairments in mainstream schools.

Lesotho confronts disparities where boys herding flocks receive payments directed to parents, while girls in hard-to-reach rural areas face child marriages.

For Malawi the key barrier is poverty which hinders access to education. Economic disparities at the household level impact enrollment and retention in formal education especially for girls and contribute to early marriages and teenage pregnancies. Like in rural Kenya, in Malawi, inadequate infrastructure, limited availability of schools and basic facilities makes it difficult for learners in several rural communities to access quality education.

Nigeria faces multidimensional poverty, linked to lack of school enrollment, particularly in rural areas. Economic hardships, are forcing especially girls from internally displaced due to conflict in the country to engage in activities like hawking, and hinder their access to education. Poverty in rural areas of Kano State and the South West is forcing young girls into hawking and out of school altogether. In addition, significant rural-to-urban migration, driven by poor economic conditions, affects access to education, especially for insurgency-affected migrants lacking resources. Insurgency in northern Nigeria has led to increased migration to the south, challenging the education system's preparedness.

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Tanzania struggles with the marginalization of women due to patriarchal structures, traditional norms, barriers to financial independence, practices such as FGM and early marriages, negative perceptions towards enrollment of children with disabilities, resistance from education officials, and fund diversion.

In Uganda, unregulated privatization, focused on profit over service, hampers access and completion rates. The absence of a comprehensive, inclusive education policy adds to challenges for disabled individuals, compounded by inadequate funding and infrastructure. Additionally, stigmatizing community attitudes towards child disability and a lack of accurate disability data contribute to low enrollment and retention rates for learners with disabilities.

There are some positive signs and efforts by the government. Sierra Leone's radical inclusion policy has opened doors for many, including pregnant girls, to access education. Free quality education permits all children to attend school. Further, government policies and budget allocations support inclusive education, promoting access for marginalised groups, including pregnant girls.

In Rwanda, Like Kenya and Malawi with around 30 percent of people below the poverty line, poverty is a significant exclusion factor preventing marginalised students from enrolling in schools. In addition, insufficiency of inclusive school infrastructure limits access for children with physical disabilities in education. Inadequate facilities make it challenging for students with physical limitations to navigate and participate fully in the educational environment.

In Somaliland, though cultural expectations that girls stay at home for housework have improved, challenges persist. Awareness creation and support are needed especially in pastoral communities. It is noteworthy however that there have been significant improvements in narrowing gender gaps in access to schooling in the past decade, with a narrowing gender gap noted in urban areas. In the past 10 years, boys and girls in Somaliland have experienced increased access to education, with the gender gap narrowing, especially in urban areas.

For South Sudan it is not the lack of good policies but the absence of effective implementation mechanisms for educational policies that contributes to a lack of commitment from parents. Limited awareness and understanding of education's importance remains an additional barrier. The country also faces traditional expectations that assign girls household responsibilities, impacting their ability to attend school and societal norms that prioritise boys' education, influencing parental perceptions.

Many Zimbabwean schools are yet to have accessible infrastructure, lack of ramps, suitable toilets and have doorways that enable students with disabilities to access educational opportunities. Similarly, negative attitudes toward pupils with disabilities create a discriminatory environment, impacting the well-being and educational experiences of students. Furthermore, financial constraints, despite policies preventing exclusion based on inability to pay fees, persist. Outdated payment fee structures and lack of effective assistance modules create financial barriers in schools, affecting marginalised students.

Pages that follow elaborate these issues in each country further.

Egypt

Geographic, cultural, and gender-related disparities, with challenges including varying qualities of education in marginalised areas, long distances to schools in Sinai, cultural preferences favouring boys' education over girls' in Upper Egypt, and the influence of distinct cultural practices on education, ultimately contributing to a complex and unequal educational landscape.

Egypt is geographically diverse with distinct regions, including Lower Egypt (e.g., Alexandria, Cairo) and Upper Egypt. Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt have different mentalities and cultural characteristics. Lower Egypt is described as having an older culture that may be more restrictive. Cultural beliefs influence preferences for separate schools for girls and boys. Arabic is the official and predominant language spoken in Egypt. Slang and formal Arabic are used, with variations between the more colloquial spoken language and the formal language studied in schools. marginalised communities exist, such as Aswan and Sinai, each with unique challenges. In Sinai, people live in camps and have distinct cultural practices, such as consuming camels.

The diverse linguistic, geographic, cultural, and gender-related factors in Egypt contribute to a complex educational landscape. The quality of education differs, and negatively affects marginalised groups and regions. First, geographically, there are challenges in marginalised areas, like flooding in Aswan, and long distances to schools in Sinai negatively impact access to education.

The diverse linguistic, geographic, cultural, and gender-related factors in Egypt contribute to a complex educational landscape. The quality of education differs, and negatively affects marginalised groups and regions. First, geographically, there are challenges in marginalised areas, like flooding in Aswan, and long distances to schools in Sinai negatively impact access to education.

Second, culture also poses a challenge. In Lower Egypt, girls and boys may have different interactions and educational experiences compared to Upper Egypt. In Upper Egypt, there is a prevalent belief favouring the education of boys over girls. Families prioritise educating boys, viewing it as an investment in their future employment and family-building, while considering girls' education unnecessary due to expectations of marriage and homemaking. Some communities prefer separate schools for girls and boys, influenced by cultural beliefs.

Geographic and economic disparities contribute to challenges in marginalised areas, affecting the availability and quality of education. Significant distances between schools, particularly in Sinai, pose a barrier to education, especially for girls. Natural challenges, like flooding in Aswan, also limit educational opportunities. Cultural beliefs impact educational practices, such as the preference for separate schools and gender-based educational approaches. The resistance to mixed-gender schools in certain regions reflects cultural preferences that impact educational accessibility. For example, the prevalent belief in Upper Egypt favouring the education of boys perpetuates gender inequality in access to education. Traditional mindsets, such as the belief that educating a girl is unnecessary, hinder efforts to promote gender equality in education. Gender-based differences in education experiences contribute to disparities between boys and girls.

Efforts to address these diversities are crucial for promoting inclusive and equitable education across the country.

Eswatini

Economic disparities and poverty contribute to significant challenges in accessing education, as financial constraints hinder opportunities for marginalised learners, while uneven wealth distribution, dependence on school meals, and insufficiencies in government funding result in exclusion and barriers to education for orphaned and vulnerable children.

Economic disparities contribute to uneven wealth distribution in the country. Poverty is declared a national disaster, with 60% of the population living below the poverty line. Poverty as a national disaster hinders educational opportunities for a significant portion of the population. There are challenges in accessing education for marginalised learners due to financial constraints. Uneven wealth distribution affects access to education, especially for marginalised and economically disadvantaged learners. Financial constraints lead to challenges for marginalised learners in accessing education. Dependence on school meals creates additional barriers for those unable to attend school.

Eswatini is described as having one ethnic group, fostering a sense of cultural unity. Thus, there is limited friction related to ethnicity as the population considers themselves one big family. However, while an influx of Asians (Pakistanis and Indians) is acknowledged, distinctions exist based on foreign vs. Swazi status. The Constitution allows for the practice of all religions, promoting religious harmony. Eswatini is predominantly Christian, with Christianity deeply ingrained in the country's culture. Recent growth in Islam due to an influx of Asians, but still a minority. There is a presence of other religions like Baha'i alongside Christianity. Most schools in the country were established by missionaries, reflecting historical ties between education and religion. Noteworthy is the constitutional provisions promoting religious freedom and harmony contribute to a tolerant and diverse society.

Free primary education exists on paper, but challenges persist, particularly for marginalised learners. Schools often charge top-ups as government funding is insufficient to meet school needs. Orphaned and vulnerable children face exclusion due to socioeconomic factors impacting access.

Ethiopia

Gender disparities perpetuated by cultural traditions like some harmful; Religious influences shaping societal norms; armed conflicts disrupting learning environments and adversely affecting learners; social marginalisation of Disabled Children and Youths (CYWDs) in rural areas, and educational struggles of nomadic pastoralist communities due to their transient nature.

Ethiopia is home to various ethnic groups, with 83 nations and nationalities living in harmony. Cultural diversity is evident, and certain regions are culture-bound, holding onto Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs). Cultural traditions, such as girls being taken out of school, hinder educational opportunities, especially for girls adversely affecting enrollment and retention of female students and increasing gender disparities in education.

Ethiopia is characterised by religious diversity, with various religions coexisting. Different religious beliefs influence societal norms and practices.

The country faces conflicts that have affected every corner over the past five years. Ongoing conflicts in the country have disrupted learning environments and increased disability adversely affecting learners' access to education and overall well-being.

Disabled Children and Youths (CYWDs) face social marginalisation, particularly in rural areas dominated by Harmful Traditional Practices. There are wide ranging community misconceptions and stigma towards disabled children who are passive and cannot succeed in their educational careers.

Nomadic pastoralist areas, constituting about 12% of Ethiopia, face high marginalisation and struggle to provide proper education due to their transient nature. Many pastoral communities lack accessible educational infrastructure and support.

Projects focusing on inclusive education aim to address these challenges by providing support to disadvantaged and out-of-school CYWDs.

Educational subsidies and support are crucial for enabling education in these challenging environments.

Initiatives focusing on inclusive education aim to provide support to marginalised groups, including disabled children, through educational subsidies, learning materials, uniforms, and accommodations.

Lesotho

Boys engaged in herding flocks, with payments directed to parents, and girls in hard-to-reach rural areas facing child marriages.

For Lesotho notable disparities include (a) Boys who herd flocks and at times for payment directed to the parents, and (b) girls in the hard to reach and rural areas who are caught up in child marriages.

Kenya

The impact of retrogressive cultural practices hindering access and progression, poverty's influence on enrollment and retention, and inadequate infrastructure development posing challenges for learners with special needs

Kenya is home to various ethnic groups, including the Kikuyu, Luo, Luhya, Maasai, Kalenjin, and many others. Each ethnic community contributes to the cultural diversity of the nation, bringing unique traditions, languages, and perspectives. The rich cultural diversity is reflected in practices, languages, and traditions across the country. Some cultural practices may be retrogressive and hinder learners' access, retention, and progression in education.. Some cultural norms may hinder the educational opportunities of certain groups, impacting inclusivity. The country is also religiously diverse, with Christianity in diverse forms, Islam, and traditional African religions being practised. Religious diversity adds to the cultural tapestry and influences societal norms and perspectives.

Poverty influences access to education, particularly for learners from families unable to afford it. Financial challenges hinder enrollment, retention, and progression in the education system. Limited infrastructural availability creates challenges, with few facilities compared to the needs of learners. Inadequate investment by the government in developing existing schools and education facilities hampers educational quality and accessibility. Lack of resources impacts the overall quality of education, affecting learners across diverse communities.

Lack of infrastructural development poses a considerable challenge, especially for learners with special needs. Inadequate availability of specialised institutions tailored to the needs of learners with special needs creates barriers to their education.

Efforts to address poverty, cultural barriers, infrastructural challenges, and low investment are crucial for promoting inclusive and quality education for all learners. Government efforts to ensure inclusivity in education, with a strong focus on special education and policies in place to support inclusive education, and government officials responsible for special needs education are actively involved in policy development and implementation.

Organisations find it challenging to engage and support learners with special needs when necessary infrastructure is lacking. The absence of effective avenues for support hinders organisations' ability to address the unique challenges faced by these learners.

Liberia

Challenges for children with disabilities due to limited access and discriminatory policies; obstacles in accommodating disabilities in schools; linguistic diversity hindering early language development; difficulties in reducing school fees impacting various socio-economic groups, and an urban-rural divide affecting teacher placement.

Liberia's diverse challenges, ranging from disabilities and linguistic diversity to urban-rural disparities, financial barriers, and infrastructure limitations, impact access to quality education.

The annual census reports an enrollment rate for disabilities at 0.9% in early childhood education. There is limited access to education for children with disabilities, especially in private schools. Discriminatory policies and perceptions of disability as a burden hinder enrollment. Liberia has schools for the blind and visually impaired but these face challenges in accommodating disabilities. Infrastructure in schools is not always conducive to students with disabilities, particularly in rural areas.

Liberia has several languages and ethnic groups, but English is the only language of instruction. Challenges arise from the lack of mother tongue instruction in the education system.

The use of only English as the language of instruction limits early language development. In addition, ethnic backgrounds and county-based divisions may impact education opportunities as challenges arise in addressing diverse linguistic backgrounds and tribal affiliations.

Getting students to enrol and attend school is difficult also due to school fees and opportunity costs. Reduction of fees is a challenge, with hidden costs impacting different socio-economic groups. Barriers to access due to fees collected by Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) or the central government. Limited school choice, with only 44% of schools being public, impacting access for those unable to pay registration fees.

The urban-rural divide impacts enrollment, attendance, and teacher placement. There are challenges in getting teachers posted and performing effectively, particularly in rural areas.

Civil society organisations play a critical role in education reform advocacy. Challenges in advocating for reform, especially concerning access for children with disabilities. Efforts to ensure equal access to education, counteracting discriminatory policies. Open dialogue and constructive criticism contribute to discussions on improving education.

Malawi

Diverse ethnic, linguistic, religious, and socio-economic background; Difficulties for rural learners to access schools; obstacles for girls in secondary education due to long distances; poverty, and cultural norms leading to high dropout rates.

Malawi is divided into the southern, central, and northern regions with distinct ethnic groups, including Yawa, Longwe, Manganga, Chiawa, Ngoni, Tumbuka, Tonga, Lambia, and Ngonde, among others. This presents rich cultural diversity contributing to the nation's identity with various cultural practices and traditions among different ethnic groups. Linguistically, there is less diversity in Malawi. English as the official language.

Chichewa, a Bantu language, serves as the national language. In terms of religion Malawi has predominantly Christian and Muslim populations, with smaller communities adhering to traditional beliefs and non-believers. Socio-economically, Malawi is a landlocked country with an economy primarily dependent on agriculture. There are varied economic backgrounds and livelihoods among the population.

The above diversities present a number of education challenges. Rural learners, in general, find it difficult to reach schools, particularly when they are situated far from their villages. In Malawi, girls face challenges accessing education, especially in secondary schools due to factors like long distances, poverty, geographical location (long distances between homes and schools) and cultural norms. Despite improvements in gender equity, factors such as early marriages and cultural norms, particularly affect girls leading to high dropout rates related to early marriage and teenage pregnancy.

Strategies and initiatives that are culturally sensitive and inclusive are crucial to overcoming barriers and ensuring equitable access to education for all. CSOs initiatives like those of CSEC adopt (a) an inclusive approach, allocating efforts to address gender-based violence comprehensively (70% to females and 30% to males).

The 70-30 approach aims to address these challenges, focusing on girls while recognizing the importance of inclusivity for boys. Strategies aim to involve both genders and promote inclusivity in education. (b) Culturally Sensitive Programming with recognition of the importance of inclusivity in programming which includes: (i) engagement with local communities to understand cultural dynamics and involve them in the planning process; (ii) Collaboration with community leaders and parents in decision-making processes; Cultural awareness workshops and integration of local traditions into educational materials, and (iv) creation of a more inclusive environment that respects and reflects the cultural diversity of the communities served.

Nigeria

Diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural background; regional disparities; gender norms; economic factors, and social-cultural differences, impacting access to education across the country.

Nigeria's diversities in ethnicity, religion, and culture significantly impact the educational landscape. Regional disparities, gender norms, economic factors, and social-cultural challenges contribute to varying levels of access to education across different parts of the country. Understanding and addressing these diversities are crucial for developing effective educational policies and interventions that promote inclusivity and equal opportunities for all.

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic country with diverse ethnic groups, each contributing to the cultural richness. Different ethnic groups have varying perspectives on education, impacting access and participation. Nigeria is also multi-religious, with a significant Muslim population in the north and a mix of Christians, Muslims, and traditional religious practices across the country. Religious differences influence educational practices, policies, and access to education. Cultural diversity exists, influencing attitudes towards education and gender roles. Cultural norms shape perceptions of education, affecting the enrollment of boys and girls in different regions.

Gender norms vary across regions, influencing access to education for boys and girls differently. In the far north, there is a gender disparity in education, with more girls attending school than boys. Economic challenges in the West impact school attendance, as children engage in work or learn trades.

In the East, cultural norms contribute to the perception that education is more suitable for girls, leading to higher female enrollment compared to boys. Historical challenges, such as a high number of out-of-school children, are also influenced by factors like population size and the distribution of schools.

The economic situation in some regions hinder children's access to education, leading to engagement in work or vocational training instead of formal schooling. Economic factors influence the level at which children can attain education, with disparities across regions.

Social-cultural differences present challenges in the implementation of a uniform education system. Norms related to gender and religious interpretations affect inclusion in educational service delivery. In Kano, the strong emphasis on both Western and Islamic education reflects the religious diversity in the region. Social norms related to gender and religion may hinder the inclusion of certain groups in the educational system. Incorrect interpretations of religious norms can impact the accessibility of education for specific communities. Diverse socioeconomic dynamics create varied educational needs, making a one-size-fits-all approach challenging.

Somalia

PWD restricted access to educational facilities, insufficient awareness and understanding, and occasional social stigma against disability.

Somalia Persons with disabilities face various challenges, including limited accessibility to educational facilities, lack of awareness and understanding, and sometimes social stigma.

Somaliland

Individuals from minority communities; CWD lack enabling infrastructure for access; lack of inclusive learning environment impacting social and educational interactions; regional variations in the availability of specialised schools.

Somaliland exhibits homogeneity in terms of ethnic and religious composition. The population shares common ethnic and religious backgrounds. The primary diversity in Somaliland is related to disabilities. This includes individuals with disabilities, marginalised groups, minorities, and women.

Two key groups facing challenges in education are individuals from minority communities and people with disabilities. Access to equal education is hindered by challenges such as poor infrastructure in schools. Limited facilities are available for students with disabilities, preventing them from fully participating in educational activities.

There is a lack of inclusive learning environments where disabled children can integrate with others seamlessly. Physical facilities, such as schools, are not adequately equipped to accommodate the needs of disabled students, impacting their educational experience. The absence of inclusive learning environments limits the integration of disabled children with their peers, affecting social and educational interactions.

There is a scarcity of specialised schools designed to cater specifically to disabled students, such as those who are deaf. While challenges persist in the main city of Hargeisa, there are initiatives in other regions, like Burma, where a school addresses the educational needs of disabled students.

Disparities in the availability of initiatives, with one school working in Burma but not in Hargeisa, underscore regional variations in addressing the educational needs of disabled students.

In Somaliland, while ethnic and religious homogeneity prevails, the focus on addressing challenges related to disabilities, marginalised groups, and minorities is crucial for creating a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape. Efforts to improve infrastructure and promote inclusive learning environments can enhance educational opportunities for all.

Tanzania

Marginalization of women due to patriarchal structures and traditional norms; barriers to women's financial independence and land ownership, practices such as FGM and early marriages, negative perceptions towards enrollment of CWD, resistance from education officials, and fund diversion.

For Tanzania (a) patriarchal structure and traditional norms in some ethnic groups contribute to the marginalisation of women, affecting their ability to make decisions, especially regarding budget allocation for education-related needs such as menstrual hygiene management; (b) Cultural taboos, such as women not owning land in certain ethnic groups, limit financial empowerment for women; (c) Students are faced with negative sociocultural practices, including female genital mutilation (FGM), hindering girls' education besides posing health risks and subjecting girls to early marriage, and hence depriving them of their right to education; (d) There are also negative perceptions of sending disabled children to school that create additional challenges; (e) Changing community perceptions and deeply ingrained sociocultural practices pose persistent challenges; (f) Resistance from some education officials and the diversion of allocated funds remain ongoing issues, and (g) While positive shifts have been witnessed, holistic change requires sustained efforts and collaboration.

Rwanda

Cultural and religious diversity; marginalised populations; cultural beliefs stigmatising children with disabilities, hidden disabilities impacting late identification and intervention, and barriers faced by indigenous, extremely poor, disabled, and LGBTQ+ populations.

Rwanda exhibits differences in culture and religion, contributing to the diversity in the educational landscape. Ethnicity was removed from the Constitution; however, cultural barriers persist, hindering education, especially for children with disabilities. Some cultural beliefs stigmatise children with disabilities, leading to their concealment at home, making it challenging to identify and address their educational needs.

Rwanda's diversity, including cultural, religious, and socio-economic aspects, has implications for education, especially for marginalised populations. Identifying and addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that considers cultural sensitivities, data deficiencies, and the unique needs of marginalised groups.

The marginalised learners, estimated at 3% of the total learner population, face obstacles in accessing socio-economic and cultural services. Factors such as living in inaccessible rural areas, socio-economic conditions, cultural norms, and religion contribute to the challenges faced by marginalised learners. Marginalisation is influenced by socio-economic factors, cultural norms, and religious beliefs, creating disparities in access to educational opportunities.

Cultural beliefs about disabilities result in children being hidden at home, leading to late identification and intervention. This significantly impacts their educational development.

Lack of comprehensive data for children with disabilities hinders targeted educational interventions. Identifying and addressing their needs requires government efforts, as some children are hidden in home for years. The government must invest efforts in identifying and addressing the needs of this population.

Religion plays a role, particularly in remote areas where the importance of education is not universally acknowledged. Some areas face challenges in prioritising education for children. In remote areas where cultural and religious norms prioritise other aspects over education, children face challenges in accessing quality education.

Indigenous, extremely poor, disabled, and LGBTQ+ populations encounter barriers in accessing education due to their socio-economic status, cultural norms, and religious beliefs. The marginalised and excluded populations in Rwanda include indigenous people in inaccessible rural areas near the forests, individuals with disabilities, those in extreme poverty especially in rural areas, and the LGBTQ+ community more localised in urban areas.

Efforts to address marginalisation should include policies and interventions that consider the unique challenges faced by each group, promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities in education.

Sierra Leone

Geographical challenges impacting accessibility, political situation influencing government policies such as the introduction of free quality education and the Radical Inclusion Policy, and the positive role played by civil society organisations like Education for All in advocating for inclusivity, particularly for children with disabilities and pregnant girls.

Sierra Leone is composed of 16 ethnic groups, and it is divided into 16 districts and 5 regions. Regional diversity includes the Western Area, Northern Region, Northwest, Southern Region, and Eastern Region. The two main religions in Sierra Leone are Islam and Christianity. Religious tolerance is generally observed in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone's topography consists of hilly areas and lowlands, providing fertile land for agriculture. Geographical features impact accessibility to education, especially in remote or hilly regions.

Political situations and government policies significantly affect the education sector. The commitment to free quality education and targeted policies reflects a positive trajectory for the nation's education system. Government will and commitment play a crucial role in shaping education policies and initiatives. The government, in response to advocacy, introduced a free quality education system, leading to increased enrollment in primary and secondary schools. The government introduced the Radical Inclusion Policy in 2021 to ensure schools are accessible and inclusive for all children, irrespective of gender and societal status. In 2022, the government implemented the Comprehensive School Safety Policy, addressing safe schools, facilities, disaster risk reduction, and violence prevention. Policies like the Radical Inclusion Policy and the Comprehensive School Safety Policy promote inclusivity in education, addressing the needs of children with disabilities and pregnant girls.

The government introduced the Persons with Disability Act in 2011, emphasising inclusivity and the rights of persons with disabilities in education. The introduction of a free quality education system led to a notable increase in enrollment, especially in primary and secondary schools.

The involvement of civil society organisations, such as Education for All, in policy advocacy and implementation contributes to positive changes in the education sector. Education for All focuses on basic education and has influenced policy development for inclusive education. The organisation has engaged with the government to advocate for increased budget allocation to education. The Education Outloud project aims to strengthen national civil society and promote gender-responsive education policy development and implementation. Education for All has advocated for total inclusiveness in the education sector, including children with disabilities and pregnant girls.

South Sudan

Cultural representation within the curriculum hindering equal educational opportunities for diverse ethnic backgrounds, deeply rooted cultural beliefs affecting girls' rights and access to education through practices like early and forced marriage, and marginalised populations facing barriers due to historical inequalities, systemic discrimination, and lack of inclusive policies.

South Sudan is home to 64 tribes, creating a diverse cultural landscape within the same society. The constitution emphasises equal educational opportunities for all, irrespective of ethnic background. Challenges arise in cultural representation within the curriculum, reflecting diverse traditions and practices. Lack of cultural representation in the curriculum may result in an education system that doesn't effectively address the diverse needs and perspectives of students. The impact of cultural diversity on the curriculum hasn't been thoroughly studied, but it poses potential challenges.

Deeply rooted cultural beliefs sometimes infringe on the rights of girls, hindering their access to education. Cultural practices such as early and forced marriage affect girls' education leading to higher dropout rates and limited educational attainment. Some girls are forced into marriage, curtailing their educational opportunities. Extreme cases, like a father removing his daughter's eyes for refusing to attend school, highlight the severity of challenges in certain communities.

Marginalised populations, encompassing those disadvantaged due to ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and disability, face barriers to education. Historical inequalities, systemic discrimination, and a lack of inclusive policies contribute to the challenges these populations encounter.

In certain communities, cultural expectations designate boys, especially firstborns, as responsible for family duties like cattle rearing, impacting their schooling. The focus on settled communities neglects the unique challenges faced by pastoralist communities, limiting educational opportunities for nomadic children. Varied lifestyles, including sedentary and pastoralist communities, present challenges in education provision. Nomadic pastoralist communities face difficulties due to the education system's focus on settled communities, neglecting their specific needs.

Disability is perceived differently within communities, with some offering sympathy and support while others view it as abnormal. Persons with disabilities often face neglect, receiving minimal support for survival rather than comprehensive development. Mixed perceptions of disability contribute to insufficient support and resources for persons with disabilities, hindering their overall development through education.

Cultural practices like early and forced marriage directly impact girls' education. Extreme cases, such as the mutilation of a girl for refusing school, underscore the urgent need for addressing cultural practices that hinder education.

South Africa

Challenges related to climate and infrastructure, particularly in rural areas affecting access and attendance, linguistic diversity with 11 official languages; strides in education infrastructure including special needs schools, efforts to address the needs of differently-abled students; teenage pregnancy, and ongoing efforts to provide inclusive education for marginalised groups; learning materials and modified infrastructure.

Climate-related issues and infrastructure challenges, especially in rural areas, affect walking distances to schools, posing challenges for access and attendance. South Africa boasts 11 official languages, including sign language, contributing to a linguistically diverse population. Local-level planning and budgeting in diverse languages ensures effective communication and engagement with communities, promoting inclusivity in education.

Inclusion is mandated by the constitution, ensuring the right to participate for all citizens. The three spheres of government are empowered to include diversities, emphasising a comprehensive and legislative approach to inclusivity. A legislative mandate emphasises inclusion, ensuring that education policies and practices consider the diverse needs of the population. A dedicated department focuses on the inclusion of differently-abled individuals, women, children, and youth in planning processes. Public services and infrastructure are designed to be accessible, aligning with principles outlined in the 1998 White Paper on Public Service.

Strides have been made in education infrastructure and standards, including the establishment of special needs schools and modifications for differently-abled students. The presence of a dedicated department for inclusion demonstrates a commitment to addressing the needs of differently-abled individuals, women, children, and youth in education planning.

Despite progress, challenges such as teenage pregnancy persist, impacting the education of young girls. Government initiatives provide sexual and reproductive health services in schools, but budget constraints and reduced awareness campaigns contribute to rising teenage pregnancy rates. Government initiatives for sexual and reproductive health services in schools demonstrate an awareness of gender-related challenges, although persistent issues like teenage pregnancy require ongoing attention.

Challenges for marginalised groups in education include limited availability of learning materials, stationery, and textbooks. Limited access to learning materials and infrastructure challenges disproportionately affect marginalised groups, potentially hindering their educational progress.

Efforts have been undertaken to modify infrastructure to cater to the needs of differently-abled students, reflecting a commitment to inclusive education. Strides in education infrastructure benefit students with special needs, contributing to a more inclusive learning environment.

Uganda

Challenges related to climate and infrastructure, particularly in rural areas affecting access and attendance, linguistic diversity with 11 official languages; strides in education infrastructure including special needs schools, efforts to address the needs of differently-abled students; teenage pregnancy, and ongoing efforts to provide inclusive education for marginalised groups; learning materials and modified infrastructure.

Uganda exhibits significant demographic diversity, particularly in the distinction between urban and rural areas in handling disability impacting education, health, workforce participation, and political representation differently. Resources, including inclusive schools, infrastructure, and teacher training institutes. These are concentrated in urban areas. Even inclusive schools are concentrated in urban areas, offering better educational facilities and infrastructure with ramps, modified washrooms, and facilities catering to the needs of disabled students. Special needs education teachers or instructors are also more available to support disabled students in urban schools, thus making urban schools better suited for individuals with disabilities.

In rural settings, there is a lack of inclusive schools and facilities, resulting in less favourable conditions for individuals with disabilities. Educational infrastructure, such as ramps and modified washrooms, is limited in rural schools. Fewer specific teachers or instructors are available in rural areas to support disabled students.

Zambia

Gender inequalities, diverse tribal makeup, learners with disabilities and special education needs, marginalisation of immigrant populations and displaced individuals impacting access to education, economic and poverty-related challenges exacerbating educational inequalities, and the intersectionality of economic and disability-related challenges faced by Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC).

In Zambia Efforts to address gender inequalities in education are crucial for achieving inclusivity. Understanding and addressing these diversities are essential for developing targeted policies and interventions that promote inclusivity, address disparities, and ensure equal educational opportunities for all in Zambia.

Zambia is home to approximately 72 ethnic groups, reflecting rich ethnic diversity. Despite the diverse tribal makeup, the education system aims to be all-inclusive, emphasising equal access to education regardless of tribe or ethnicity.

Advocacy issues in the education sector often focus on learners with disabilities and special education needs. Children with disabilities, both boys and girls, from vulnerable homes and communities are marginalised in education. Limited advocacy efforts have been observed in promoting accessibility for learners with disabilities, leading to the establishment of a parliamentary caucus on disability to address this gap.

Marginalisation in urban areas, especially among immigrant populations, creates disparities in education. Immigrants from Zimbabwe, particularly in Lusaka's Mandevu and Chazanga Compound, face marginalisation, especially among girls who lack basic necessities, those out of school, early married, and those who dropped out due to unwanted pregnancies.

Immigrant and displaced populations, including those in refugee camps integrated into Zambian communities, face challenges in accessing education.

Economic and poverty-related challenges contribute to the marginalisation of various groups, affecting their access to education. Wealth gaps between urban and rural areas worsen existing educational inequalities with economic challenges in rural areas contributing to educational inequalities. Learners from rural areas, particularly those facing economic challenges, find it difficult to access education, contributing to rural-urban inequalities.

Further, marginalisation of girls, particularly those lacking basic necessities or facing early marriage, perpetuates gender-based educational disparities. Marginalisation affects girls in both urban and rural areas, including those lacking basic necessities, out of school, early marriage, or dropping out due to unwanted pregnancies. Economic and poverty factors contribute to existing gender inequalities, particularly in rural areas.

Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) , including those with disabilities, face marginalisation, highlighting the intersectionality of economic and disability-related challenges. Further, economic factors limit the ability of parents in rural areas to afford education for their children, exacerbating existing inequalities.

Language exclusivity, particularly the use of English, Shona, and Ndebele limiting access for many other ethnic groups, challenges faced by children with disabilities in accessing quality education due to physical, cultural, and attitudinal barriers, limited implementation of sign language affecting communication for individuals with disabilities, rural population marginalisation due to limited infrastructure development creating disparities between rural and urban learners, and the marginalisation of the girl child perpetuating gender inequality in education through early child marriages and cultural beliefs.

Zimbabwe is ethnically diverse, with major groups identified as Shona and Ndebele. However, there are 16 recognized ethnic groups in total. The constitution recognizes all 16 languages for education, but English, Shona, and Ndebele are predominantly used, excluding other languages and potentially marginalising certain ethnic groups. While the constitution recognizes all 16 languages for instruction, the practical implementation involves using English, Shona, and Ndebele. This exclusionary practice limits the inclusion of other ethnic groups and may affect the quality of education for those whose mother tongue is not English, Shona, or Ndebele. The choice of language for instruction limits access to quality education for individuals whose mother tongue is not English, Shona, or Ndebele. This can affect their comprehension and overall learning outcomes. Sign language is recognized within the constitution, but its practical implementation as a language of instruction and a subject in schools is limited. This exclusionary practice affects individuals with disabilities, specifically those who rely on sign language for communication.

Children with disabilities face challenges in accessing quality education. The lack of data on disabilities contributes to a limited understanding of the challenges these children encounter. Physical, cultural, and attitudinal barriers may hinder their enrollment and participation in schools. Learners with disabilities in both communities and schools encounter challenges due to inadequate physical structures and a lack of learning materials tailored to their needs. This limits their access to education and compromises the quality of their learning experiences.

Limited implementation of sign language and inadequate facilities exclude students with disabilities, impacting their ability to fully participate in the educational process.

Various organisations, including the Zimbabwe Network for Early Childhood Development (ZINECDA) and regional initiatives like TRANAC, advocate for the education rights of children with disabilities. Despite advocacy efforts, existing policies may not be fully inclusive, leading to the exclusion of children with disabilities. Despite advocacy efforts, existing education policies may not be fully inclusive, leading to inequities in access to quality education for marginalised groups, including those with disabilities and in rural areas.

The rural population, constituting more than 60% of Zimbabwe's population, faces marginalisation due to a lack of infrastructure development. Challenges include limited internet connectivity, communication infrastructure, power access, road infrastructure, and critical skills. These factors create a divide between rural and urban learners.

The girl child is marginalised due to social norms and beliefs that do not prioritise the education of girls. Early child marriages, influenced by religious and cultural beliefs and exacerbated by poverty in rural areas, further hinder the educational opportunities and rights of the girl child. The marginalisation of the girl child perpetuates gender inequality in education. Early child marriages and cultural beliefs hinder the fulfilment of the right to education for girls.

Marginalisation of the rural population contributes to disparities in educational opportunities between rural and urban learners, exacerbating existing inequalities.

Geographical and structural differences Affecting the Quality of Education

Several geographical and structural differences in Eswatini impact the quality of education. Rural areas often face challenges such as poor roads, limited accommodation for teachers and boarding students, and inadequate transportation. These factors make it difficult for teachers to work in rural schools and for students to access education. In addition, due to perceived better-quality education in urban areas, students from rural settings migrate to urban centres, seeking improved educational opportunities further exacerbating the disparities between urban and rural schools.

Structural differences include teacher Recruitment and Retention with most teachers reluctant to work in rural areas due to the lack of accommodation, poor infrastructure, and transportation challenges and less alternative opportunities to supplement their incomes. This leads to a shortage of qualified teachers in rural schools. Resource constraints for schools in rural areas that lack educational materials, technology, and proper facilities are also noteworthy. Limited access to libraries, laboratories, and other learning facilities in rural schools hinder the development of students' academic and practical skills in rural areas.

Poor roads and inadequate transportation options make it difficult for students to commute to school, impacting attendance and overall participation in education. The movement of students from rural to urban areas for better educational opportunities contributes to congestion and resource strain in urban schools, potentially affecting the quality of education for all students.

Additionally, economic challenges in rural areas affect families' ability to support their children's education, leading to a cycle of poverty and limited access to quality learning experiences, and

Effective implementation of education policies, especially in rural areas, face challenges due to limited resources and infrastructure.

Ethiopia rural areas have limited access to quality infrastructure, including transportation, electricity, and potable water, which impacts the quality of education. On the other hand, urban areas tend to have better access to schools and resources. Further, economic challenges in rural areas often limit families' ability to support their children's education. The lack of economic opportunities discourages students from pursuing education beyond a certain level.

Pastoralist areas, constituting about 12 percent of Ethiopia, generally lack stable educational infrastructure due to the nomadic nature of these communities and the transient settlements make it challenging to establish and maintain schools.

Gender disparities persist, particularly in rural areas where early marriage practices, traditional beliefs, and safety concerns for girls travelling long distances to school contribute to lower enrollment and retention rates for girls compared to boys. This is exacerbated by traditional practices, such as the tradition of girls being taken away on their way to school, which acts as a barrier to girls' education, in some regions. Gender preference for sending boys to school over girls is another challenge.

Structural differences including lack basic infrastructure, poor transportation, electricity, and potable water negatively affects the overall well-being of students and their ability to engage effectively in the learning process in disadvantaged communities of Ethiopia.

Though local governments, NGOs/CSOs, and community-led initiatives, such as the establishment of schools by NVDA, contribute positively to expanding educational opportunities in peripheral areas, challenges persist in ensuring sustainable infrastructure and quality teaching resources. Strategies like intentionally ensuring a balanced enrollment rate for boys and girls (e.g., 51% enrollment for girls) are positive steps toward addressing gender disparities and promoting fairness in education. This requires involvement of NGOs, CSOs, and community mobilisation in establishing schools and reflects a collaborative effort to address educational gaps. This approach is essential for reaching underserved communities.

While improvements are being recorded, ongoing efforts are needed to address the outlined challenges. This includes sustained investment in rural infrastructure, targeted interventions to promote gender equality, and community engagement to ensure the continued success of educational initiatives. Additionally, incorporating feedback and experiences from organisations like NVDA can inform broader strategies for enhancing the quality of education in Ethiopia.

Besides challenges related to infrastructural development for learners with special needs, several other geographical and structural differences in Kenya affect the quality of education. Urban areas often have better access to educational resources, qualified teachers, and infrastructure compared to rural areas. This divide results in varying educational opportunities and outcomes. Qualified teachers are usually concentrated in urban areas, leading to a shortage of skilled educators in remote or rural regions.

This impacts the overall quality of education in those areas. In addition, urban schools generally have better access to technology, including computers and internet access. In contrast, rural schools largely face challenges in providing students with the same technological resources.

Socio-economic factors play a significant role in education. Students from wealthier backgrounds easily access private tutoring, extracurricular activities, and additional learning resources, creating disparities in educational outcomes.

Kenya is linguistically diverse, with many ethnic languages spoken. The use of English and Kiswahili as the main languages of instruction poses challenges for students whose first language is different, affecting their learning experience.

Unavailability and access to early childhood education varies between urban and rural areas. Often, rural children may have limited access to quality early childhood education programs.

Beyond the challenges related to learners with special needs, general infrastructural challenges persist. Some schools lack proper classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and sanitation facilities.

In areas affected by insecurity, conflict, or natural disasters like drought, educational infrastructure is destroyed or attendance gets disrupted, sometimes for extended periods of time. Here learners and teachers face safety concerns, impacting the overall quality of education.

In regions with nomadic communities, the transient nature of settlements makes it challenging to establish and maintain stable educational infrastructure.

The effectiveness of government policies in improving education quality varies based on factors such as implementation challenges, resource allocation, and coordination at the regional and local levels.

In Lesotho, the rural-urban divide is wide regarding the number of schools and options available. There are also less hard and fast rules in urban areas, compared to rural areas. For example, a girl falling pregnant while in one school may deliver and pursue education in another school, a choice which is hard to get in the rurals. Other factors include differences between urban and rural infrastructure, roads, telecommunication etc. The wider range of schools and educational options available in urban compared to rural Lesotho allows for more choices for students, providing flexibility in pursuing education that suits their needs. Moreover, rural areas often have fewer schools and limited educational options with the lack of diversity restricting students' choices and opportunities for pursuing education that aligns with their individual needs. The limited options and logistical challenges hinders the continuation of education in a different school. Urban areas typically benefit from better infrastructure, including roads and telecommunication. This facilitates easier access to schools and enhances connectivity, supporting the overall educational experience. Rural areas face challenges in terms of infrastructure, including poorly developed roads and limited telecommunication, challenges that impede access to schools, making it difficult for students to commute and for educators to communicate effectively.

In Liberia, several geographical and structural differences impact the quality of education notably urban schools tend to have better physical infrastructure, including classrooms, libraries, and laboratories. Rural schools often lack these facilities, leading to a challenging learning environment; in remote rural areas, students have difficulty accessing schools. Poor transport infrastructure further contributes to low attendance rates and limited educational opportunities.

Conversely, in some rural areas, schools experience larger class sizes and higher teacher-student ratios, making it difficult for teachers to provide individualised attention to students. Liberia's post-conflict recovery poses additional challenges in rebuilding education infrastructure and addressing the trauma resulting from years of conflict are ongoing concerns.

The country also faces uneven distribution of qualified teachers with rural schools having perennial shortage of trained and experienced teachers; the lack of financial incentives to enhance motivation and commitment of teachers, leads to lower teaching quality and student outcomes; Challenges in accessing textbooks and other educational resources, and limited availability of teaching materials further hinders the overall quality of education. Gender disparities persist, with girls facing barriers to education such as early marriage and cultural norms that prioritise boys' education over girls.

Where there is limited community involvement in education, there is lack of awareness or resource needs for schools resulting in reduced support for educational initiatives and infrastructure development. The effectiveness of government policies in addressing educational disparities varies and limited resources and challenges in policy implementation impacts the success of education initiatives in different regions;

In some communities of Malawi cultural norms and traditions favour boys over girls in education, limiting girls' access to schooling. There are instances where initiation ceremonies emphasise traditional roles, discouraging girls from pursuing education. Some families and communities stigmatize learners with disabilities, leading to their isolation and exclusion from educational opportunities.

Many rural schools are underserved with teachers; teaching and learning materials and the geographical location makes them more disadvantaged as there is no electricity, access to technology is limited, and mostly no laboratories and no libraries. Rural learners are not exposed to information that their peers in the urban areas are exposed to.

Despite these limitations, rural and urban learners end up sitting for the same national examinations where they end up performing poorly. This is evident in the national examination results where learners from Community Day Secondary Schools performed poorly and this is where most rural learners are as compared to their urban learners who go to private schools and also national secondary schools.

For Nigeria, besides poverty, there is a cultural issue where girls' education is not prioritised as much as boys. This stems from the perception that girls will eventually get married, so investing in their education is seen as less crucial. Cultural beliefs in certain communities discourage girls from pursuing education, favouring activities like farming or cattle rearing.

Distance from homes to schools pose a significant challenge, especially in rural areas. Between rural and urban areas, there is a lot of disparity, the education in the rural areas is incomparable to that of the urban. In most rural areas, they hardly have three, four hours of learning in a day.

Everybody wants to live in the urban area. You post a child there today, to the rural area, before you know it, they're already seeking for transfer. "There are some riverine schools in Lagos that are in remote areas where teachers would not even want to live. You want to go to some of our schools in the riverine schools. You follow the boat that is fishing in the morning. And they will only stay in the school as far as that fishing boat is still on water. When the fishing boat is coming back, then they will quickly rush to meet the fishing boat. So, if they spend only one hour, two hours. That's the most learning they have because of that situation. But in the urban areas there are schools, there are houses, there are teachers.

The COVID-19 pandemic and insecurity further disrupted education, especially for those in rural areas without access to online learning resources. There are some liberal arts schools.

Rwanda no longer has cultural norms that prevent girls and boys from regularly attending studies. Children in rural Rwanda still walk long distances to schools, which is a big challenge to children with disabilities. Terrain is also a challenge where communities are located across hills to the school. Rwanda has initiated programs to support all learners in the country. But in remote areas, they lack sufficient infrastructure to implement components like the education technology – ICT and in some villages, there is no electricity, some schools find difficulty accessing ICT materials, others do not have playgrounds.

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Sierra Leone urban areas are fair and advantageous than the rural areas that have some hard-to-reach communities such as riverine communities, and communities with few schools that require children to walk longer distances to go to school, a very difficult exercise, especially during the rains with a very bad road network. Electricity is a problem; schools are not enough to accommodate free quality education. Retention is a challenge to the Government's favourable policies notwithstanding. In riverine communities it's difficult to cross rivers to areas where schools are located. Other communities are hilly making it arduous for children to commute from villages to the schools and back.

In South Sudan, there are communities prone to adverse climatic changes like floods that make it impossible for children to continue schooling. There are also disparities in educational opportunities and access between rural and urban areas. Urban schools attract more qualified teachers due to better living conditions and professional opportunities; have better educational infrastructure, including modern facilities, libraries, and laboratories. In contrast, rural areas face challenges in retaining and attracting well-trained educators; lack such resources, and often face transportation challenges, making it difficult for students to travel to schools located far from their homes, all of which adversely affect the overall quality of education. Furthermore, urban households have better economic stability, enabling families to invest in supplementary educational resources for their children. In rural areas, economic challenges limit access to educational materials, private tutoring, or additional support. Regarding the structure, the curriculum, and preparations in place are not sufficient to provide education for disabled children, especially those with movement, hearing and sight impairment.

In Uganda, some regions have been historically left behind a phenomenon that has continued to the present situation. Regions like Karamoja were historically underdeveloped compared to others like Central. In underdeveloped Karamoja, and Busoga region schools are far apart, with some sub-counties not having a single government school and sharing a single community, non-government primary school in a radius of 50 kilometres. Yet in Central and Western regions there is a government primary school in every parish. Poverty levels in some of the regions that do not access education because of poverty. Even free primary and secondary level education in actual sense is not free but has direct and indirect costs. Scarcity of teachers, overcrowded classrooms force schools to levy Parents Teachers Association fees.

The geographical vastness of Zambia has posed infrastructure challenges. In terms of geographical barriers, like the three West African states of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria, the country has rivers and some learners have to cross a river to access the schools. With rainy season flooding, some learners will stay at home for as long as a month or two until the river subsides.

Due to the patriarchal system that embodies Zambian society, more boys enrol at Grade 8, which is Junior Secondary Education, compared to girls. Most families opt to pay for their boy child first and then the girl child. For the past 2 years the enrollment for the girls has changed a bit due to free education where learners are not required to pay for their school fees and there is an upward trajectory for the girls' enrolment and retention. There is also a need for better provision of teaching and learning materials.

Zimbabwe urban setups have more schools while the schools in rural areas are few and distance to school for rural learners is long with some learners having to walk about 10kms one way to get to school. Lack of any or reliable public transport infrastructure compounds the challenge of access to schools for rural areas.

Poverty is a problem especially in rural areas. Most urban schools receive help from parents through School Development Associations to support purchase of learning materials but schools in rural areas barely have any extra support from parents because of poverty.

Majority of rural schools in Zimbabwe lack electric power and connectivity. While during the Covid-19 pandemic on-line methods of teaching and learning were introduced in urban areas and learners got access to teachers, radio lessons, the learning passport while rural schools could not introduce alternative methods of learning. Rural schools also don't have water close by and there are not enough well-kept boreholes in the schools.

There has been CSO and government support to make sure girls access school and there is notable improvement because of that action in terms of the enrollment, persistence and performance rates for the girls at primary, lower and upper secondary levels. In the South, towards the border with Botswana and South Africa especially, there is high drop out for boys upon acquiring basic literacy because boys see no value in attending school.

Zimbabwe also has issues with child marriages and early pregnancies, as elsewhere in Africa. Many girls are not able to access school because of early marriages and pregnancies despite the continuous (re-entry) policy which allows girls to go back to school after giving birth but in reality, they are not allowed or supported to go back to school and stigma is high.

In addition, some religious sects that do not believe in sending the girl-child to school, promote early marriage for girls.

Some areas are prone to natural disasters like seasonal rain and flooding and Cyclone Ida in 2019 which destroyed school buildings and stopped teaching in some provinces. There are also provinces prone to drought where learners fail to concentrate due to hunger. Natural disaster hit areas need more supplements in terms of the school feeding programs and the disasters affecting learning in those areas, yet the government has failed to provide basic resources and the two most affected provinces keep recording no pass rates.

Intersecting Factors Adversely Affecting Education Access and Quality

Some intersecting factors adversely affecting education access and quality relate to one country while others cut across different countries. For example, developing inclusive policies is an issue in Egypt. But in South Sudan, Lesotho and Eswatini the implementation of policies is the main challenge. In Ethiopia the inclusion of marginalised children, especially those with disabilities, through consultative meetings and inclusive education policies is on course as is the case for most marginalised children in Sierra Leone.

Kenya, Zimbabwe and Zambia note dynamic diversity and inclusion challenges and CSOs and government attempted to adapt to ever-changing diversity challenges, providing support during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and addressing barriers to inclusive education but rural areas face more challenges in responding to these challenges because of poverty, and infrastructural challenges.

Infrastructure issues, climatic conditions, and historical gender disparities remain issues in many countries. For example, Liberia grapples with gender issues, high dropout rates, and a segregated system affecting students with disabilities. Malawi deals with issues of long distances and lack of infrastructure affecting girls. Nigeria faces challenges in accessing schools due to poor infrastructure and geographical remoteness. Zambia's rural areas lack access to educational materials, ICT, and qualified teachers. Zimbabwe highlights urban-rural disparities, limited access to educational materials, and stigma affecting children with disabilities. Children with disabilities in Zimbabwe face compounded social inequalities, including poverty and infrastructure-based challenges impacting their education. Rwanda experiences disparities in opportunities and access to education between rural and urban areas, leading to school dropouts.

Sierra Leone continues to deal with resource constraints, especially in facilities like WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene). South Africa confronts issues related to learning materials and access challenges, particularly in rural areas. South Sudan's challenges include poverty affecting both boys' and girls' education, along with low prioritisation of the education sector.

Uganda has made progress in gender equality but faces challenges like teenage motherhood, cultural barriers, and gender-based roles affecting girls' education. The intersecting factors affecting education access and quality in the different countries are detailed as follows:

The Eswatini, Education Sector Policy of 2018, had interventions to ensure that rural schools are well-equipped and resourced. However, implementation of this and other education policies is slow. In Ethiopia, Cultural and gender disparities are not significant issues in the education system or schools and attitudes of the communities have been improved to narrow disparities.

In Kenya the nature of diversity and inclusion challenges is ever-changing, a multifaceted approach that requires collaboration at various levels. CSOs thus maintain a proactive stance on learning and adaptability and prioritise ongoing training and development to ensure their capacity remains relevant and effective.

For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, learners facing difficulties were shifted to the use of technology and support for those who couldn't readily access it was used as a solution. CSO assistance was adapted towards learners from families facing literacy and financial barriers. CSOs have an ongoing process of self-assessment, learning on the job, and maintaining a keen awareness of the ever-evolving landscape of diversity and inclusion. Educate Kenya has been actively involved in collaborating with government institutions and other CSOs to design and implement inclusive education policies including advocating for financial support to bridge economic gaps and actively engage with local communities to understand and address cultural and linguistic barriers.

Lesotho's low per capita income makes college education inaccessible to many learners. While there are attempts to improve access, issues like infrastructure, climatic conditions, and teacher quality compromise education quality, impacting rural areas the most. Quality education varies with learners in rural, mountainous areas facing compromised conditions. Historically, boys dominated education, but recent factors like gender-based violence and HIV have impacted girls more. Pregnant girls face challenges returning to school, exacerbating exclusion.

The LGBTQ+ community is more visible due to legal acceptance, but societal acceptance remains an issue, leading to discrimination and exclusion in mainstream education. Cultural norms, structural issues, and an education system designed to cater to only 30% of learners perpetuate inequalities. Families with a history of educational failure struggle, creating a cycle of poverty.

In Liberia, intersecting factors adversely affecting education access and quality include gender issues where boys and girls are treated differently and affected by decisions in the education system; high dropout rates due to overage at enrolment into primary with many overage students for their grade, implying older students at primary level still in the system getting to puberty and becoming young women or young men with capacity to help with income generation, yet still in primary school; the segregated system for the students with disabilities that leaves many school-going age children with disability from school in the absence of schools with the capacity to support them.

In Malawi, girls are mostly affected by issues of long distance to school as well as lack of adequate infrastructure to support their needs for example the availability of wash rooms and sanitary pads in the school. Rural learners are mostly affected by their geographical divide due to the remoteness of their communities and their schools, and they are grossly under-resourced contributing to poor performance in national examinations across the country. International organisations have a role to play. They can provide financial support, facilitate knowledge exchange and capacity building, support advocacy at the international level, and foster partnerships and networks. This support enhances the impact of local organisations and contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of challenges and solutions.

Nigeria has schools that are not easily accessible; lack adequate teachers' housing, poorly served with road networks to access the schools, so children are not really learning in those schools. Families in geographically remote areas also happen to be too poor to support children's education and hence require completely free education that is sustainable.

Rwanda has disparities in opportunities and access to education between rural and urban areas; the existence of inclusive school infrastructure; information and communication technology, and support for enrollment. These disparities lead to school dropouts and non-enrollment. There are family issues including boys that take responsibility for families at an early age missing out on education; families in conflict, children abandoned by fathers to be cared for by their mothers only and female domestic workers.

Education for All Sierra Leone Coalition has a membership of 51 institutions with focal person representation in each of the 16 districts in the country and each of the regions namely the western area, southern province, northern province, and eastern province. Education for All as a member of the local education group (LEG), takes part in all discussions and planning processes of basic education in Sierra Leone with the government and attends quarterly meetings with the government where situational assessments and problems that are affecting education in communities are discussed. However, resources are not enough for all facilities, such as WASH. The geographical and structural differences affecting access and quality of education are influenced by issues such as limited accessibility, lack of awareness, and social stigma, particularly for persons with disabilities.

In Somalia, persons with disabilities encounter difficulties accessing educational facilities, due to infrastructural barriers. There is also limited awareness and understanding about disabilities, suggesting a need for educational initiatives to address misconceptions and promote inclusivity. Social stigma surrounding disabilities acts as a barrier to education, affecting the quality of learning environments.

In South Africa, learning material (stationery provision and textbooks) is emerging as an issue in the rollout of free education. Access issues arise, in rural areas affected by climate problems. While pupil-teacher ratios are fair, there are irregularities in educator recruitment.

South Sudan's intersecting factors include poverty which affects boys' and girls' education; Prioritising sectors in development planning and budgeting puts the education sector at the bottom of the priorities.

Tanzania's educational landscape is faced with challenges deeply rooted in cultural, gender, linguistic, and conflict-related factors.

- With over 121 ethnic groups, each having unique norms and sociocultural practices, there's a need for education policies that respect and accommodate this diversity. The dominance of a patriarchal structure in economic activities affects women's decision-making, impacting education indirectly.

- In some ethnic groups, taboos against women owning land contribute to their lack of financial empowerment, affecting education quality. Moreover, women, being primary caregivers, face challenges in budget decisions, impacting areas like menstrual hygiene management and leading to school dropouts.
- Issues like female genital mutilation (FGM) persist in some rural ethnic groups hinder girls' education, impacting their right to education and potentially leading to early marriages.
- Negative perceptions around sending disabled children to school poses challenges for inclusive education. Changing community perceptions and deeply ingrained sociocultural practices pose persistent challenges.
- Resistance from education officials and diversion of allocated funds remain ongoing challenges.
- The abrupt shift in the language of instruction from Swahili to English in secondary school poses a significant challenge for students.
- Advocacy efforts have led to changes in the education training policy and curriculum to enhance language competence.
- The existence of the education in emergencies strategy at the national level highlights awareness of the challenges with access to education in refugee camps is challenging due to basic needs taking precedence, involving issues like food, health, and gender-based violence.

Uganda has progressed a lot in gender equality in education. However, in some communities, girls are still marginalised in education because of their gender. Teenage mothers have been left out of programming, the policy and a guideline that instructs them to re-enter school six months after giving birth notwithstanding. Some communities will not even accept to listen to interventions to implement the re-entry after childbirth policy. Early marriages and unbalanced participation in domestic work also affect enrolment and persistence in school. The country also has not come to terms with the retention of girls in school and the regularity of attendance associated with menstruation. Thus, some girls drop out due to failure to handle the pressure that comes with puberty (adolescence) age. Other factors include poor distribution of teachers in rural areas due to poor conditions of service; and failure of parents in some rural areas to afford PTA charges. In some communities, child labour demands also negatively affect the access of children to schools.

Poverty levels in some regions are adversely affecting education to the extent that some parents are marrying young girls.

Most Zambians are rural dwellers and yet there are better opportunities in the urban areas with learners having easier access to educational materials and education content. During the COVID-19 Epidemic of 2020-2021, schools in Zambia were closed for six months. The Ministry of Education in collaboration with Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation, issued the alternative modes of education provision (AMEP) programs that included lessons on TV, and radio and opened an extra channel called TV4 to provide TV lessons that issued online lessons.

A study by the Zambia National Education Coalition to ascertain the accessibility or the continuity of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic discovered that while learners in the urban areas were able to access that information, there was a lack of Television signals in the rural areas and rural learners were not able to access those lessons which in turn is also interlinked with economic dynamics.

For example, while many parents in middle-class urban areas could afford laptops, tablets and smartphones and make them accessible to their children in rural areas only a single parent had a phone that was not even a smartphone.

Access to qualified teachers in rural areas is also a challenge due to a lack of basic necessities such as housing facilities, access to medical facilities, and water and sanitation facilities that would enable teachers to remain and teach there. While the Government deploys teachers to rural areas, within one year, most of them seek transfer to urban areas, or simply leave the system altogether because of the challenges they face in the rural areas raising the rural student-to-teacher ratio.

Many parents and guardians do not prioritise the education of children with disabilities, contributing to the pervasive stigma.

In Zimbabwe disability tends to compound existing social inequalities, such as poverty or place of residence. Children with disabilities often face additional barriers due to their socioeconomic status, which can impact their access to quality education.



KNOWLEDGE OF DIVERSITY AND PRACTICE OF INCLUSION

This Chapter applies findings from a set of questions to explore the knowledge, understanding and practice of diversity and inclusion by civil society organisations and implication on education policy advocacy work. This study sought information from network organisations/coalitions, and government officers about the factors they identified that adversely affect education access and quality in their countries or regions; the manner the organisations addressed intersectionality of different factors such as gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and disability in their education policy advocacy; challenges faced in promoting diversity and inclusion in education policy advocacy and how they address them; and ensure that programmes continue to have a positive impact. Language barriers, conflict, refugee situations and displacement were further singled out as factors to closely examine in the way they affected education and what advocacy efforts are ongoing to address them. The chapter concludes by emphasizing the critical question of policy gaps and how policies support diversity or inclusion.

In addition, the Chapter explores the manner in which marginalised groups and communities are involved in education decision making; how coalitions and networks approach diversity and inclusion; the capacity of networks, coalitions and member organisations have included their research, monitoring and evaluation of diversity and inclusion in advocacy.

HESA Education Policy

Advocacy CSOs' Approach to Diversity Intersectionality

Education Advocacy Networks in Africa employ diverse strategies to address diversity and intersectionality in education notably:

Opening their membership to marginalised groups, ensuring inclusivity and representation;

- Undertaking training to improve strategic plans, with a focus on including diversity and inclusion in their work;
- Employing a variety of communication mediums, such as audio-visual output, and storytelling, to introduce policies in a way that everyone can understand;
- Leveraging social media as a tool for advocacy;
- Using national and international days, festivals, and feasts to raise awareness about specific topics;
- Collaborating with international partners such as UNESCO, UNFPA and UNICEF to address teenage pregnancy, and other complex challenges.
- Adopting a holistic approach to education, recognizing the impact of teenage pregnancy on girls' education and the future of countries. Their strategy involves preventing school dropouts due to pregnancy through measures like sensitization, cultural pressure management, stigma reduction, and awareness promotion.
- Implementing regional commitments such as the Eastern and Southern African Commitment, involving comprehensive sex education to empower young people to make informed decisions;
- Advocacy for the plight of teachers deployed to rural areas to ensure they access basic facilities and housing to retain teachers in these areas;
- Advocacy for inclusive policies to improve accessibility of formal education to learners with disabilities, showcasing a commitment to inclusive education practices.
- Actively engaging with communities, districts, regions and countries to gather data and information from the ground, facilitating necessary interventions such as establishing schools closer to children's residences.
- Participation in the development of policies to influence legal frameworks for inclusive education.
- Advocacy for affirmative action policies targeting marginalised groups, providing additional support, scholarships, or incentives to ensure their access to and retention in the educational system.
- Addressing specific targeted group needs through project work such as menstrual poverty by providing sewing machines and materials for reusable sanitary pads.
- Education through sports approaches to create awareness of equity in education and dismantle systems of inequality based on various factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, and class.
- Conditional Cash Transfer Program, address economic disparities by providing cash transfers to families, conditional on children attending school. This initiative encourages marginalised families to prioritise education.

A detailed assessment of the manner different countries have addressed Education Policy Advocacy to Diversity and Inclusion Intersectionality is indicated below:

One Education Policy Advocacy Network in Egypt notes that it is the first coalition for research and education policy in Egypt that works in the education field, and has opened membership to let all marginalised groups in the country become members. To bridge gaps, in 2022, they undertook training to improve their strategic plan with one of the main objectives being to include diversity and inclusion in their work. They have also included on the Coalition Board, representatives from marginalised groups and girls.

The Coalition works to introduce policies in a way that everyone can understand, using various mediums like sound, pictures, movies, and storytelling adapting an approach based on the education levels of the audience. They also use social media that everyone in Egypt, regardless of background, uses as a tool for advocacy to share information, articles, and policies in a way that suits different audiences. CSOs actively engage with people through social media to understand their opinions on various issues. Additionally, CSOs leverage national and international days, festivals, and feasts to raise awareness about specific topics.

Despite this work there remains a cultural gap between civil society and the government in Egypt. Education Policy Advocacy networks in Egypt note it is challenging to share policy papers with the government and there seems to be a perception that civil society is trying to point out flaws and demand improvements, even when that's not the intention.

CSOs in Eswatini approach the issue of teenage pregnancy and its impact on education with a comprehensive strategy that involves collaboration with international organisations, addressing cultural factors, promoting awareness, and advocating for education policies that include comprehensive sexuality education.

The approach reflects a commitment to diversity and intersectionality by recognizing the interconnected and complex nature of the challenges faced by young girls in the education system. Eswatini Coalition CSOs approach the issue of Diversity and Intersectionality, particularly in the context of teenage pregnancy prevention and management, with a multifaceted strategy namely:

Collaboration with UNESCO to address the issue of teenage pregnancy. This collaboration involves the development of a pregnancy prevention and management policy and guidelines, indicating a coordinated effort with international organisations to tackle the challenge.

A Holistic Approach to Education recognizing the impact of teenage pregnancy on girls' education and, consequently, the future of the country. They aim to prevent school dropout due to pregnancy by implementing comprehensive measures, which include sensitising headteachers, managing cultural pressures, reducing stigma, and promoting awareness.

Noting that the numbers and rates of teenage pregnancy increased during the COVID-19 pandemic the network has been actively working to prevent further dropout rates, understanding the potential long-term consequences for both the individuals and the country.

To realise the 2013 Eastern and Southern African Commitment to HIV, Eswatini, with UNESCO's support, is implementing a commitment to curb HIV. This commitment includes comprehensive sex education as a means to empower young people to make informed decisions and realise the broader perspective on health and well-being, recognizing the interconnected issues affecting the Coalition and networks.

The network advocates for life skills education, specifically comprehensive sexuality education, to be taught in schools so as to equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health. The network is also actively involved in sensitising headteachers to manage pressure within a cultural context in which teenage pregnancies occur and an effort to navigate and mitigate these cultural challenges.

Ethiopia's, Basic Education Network Ethiopia (BENE) and New Vision Development Association (NVDA) address diversity and intersectionality in education by integrating diversity issues into their strategic plans, engaging in consultative processes, focusing on marginalised areas, implementing child protection policies, advocating for the rights of CYWDs, and promoting inclusive education beyond disability to include cultural and gender disparities:

Although Ethiopia has no clear policy on managing diversity and inclusiveness in education, BENE incorporated diversity and intersectionality issues into their 5-year strategic plan. BENE engages in consultative meetings with various stakeholders, including governments, communities, parents, and the Ministry of Education at different levels; recognizes and address disparities in pastoralist areas, which constitute about 20 percent of the country; actively works on child protection by formulating a policy that is translated into the local Oromo language. Child Protection Committees have been established at both district and village levels.

NVDA focuses on the rights of children and youth with disabilities (CYWDs); has supported establishment of Disability Youth Clubs in schools engages in various activities, including advocacy events, drama, and theatre, to promote the rights of CYWDs; organised regular training for teachers, law enforcement bodies, and local stakeholders emphasises the need to promote inclusive education for CYWDs; broadened the scope of inclusive education beyond disabilities to encompass cultural and gender disparities.

While acknowledging that ethnic and gender disparities are not glaring problems in the education system in Ethiopia, the CSOs emphasise the objective of promoting inclusive education for all, irrespective of cultural and gender differences. The CSOs highlight that, in Ethiopia, ethnicity and socioeconomic status do not make a difference in enrolling needy children in education.

Kesho Kenya recognizes poverty as the most prominent inclusion gap in Kenya's access to education. Others are retrogressive cultural practices that hinder learners' access, retention, and progression in education; infrastructural availability and inadequate government investment in schools and education facilities. Educate Kenya reports a notable success in the implementation of inclusive curriculum frameworks; emphasises collaborative efforts with the government to address diversity and inclusion issues, and has introduced educational materials reflecting the diversity of cultures and languages within the region, and notes that implementation of inclusive curriculum frameworks and diverse educational materials to contribute to a more inclusive learning environment.

In Lesotho, there is a gender imbalance on the board of directors in Lesotho but ongoing efforts to address this discrepancy and improve internal gender diversity and inclusion exist.

In Malawi, FAWE actively participates in various commemoration events; engages in national-level technical working groups, such as sexual reproductive health rights and gender groups, that provides them with a platform to report on their diversity and inclusion initiatives; uses these availed platforms to share experiences, challenges, and successes, and thus contributes to a broader understanding among government departments and stakeholders.

FAWE Malawi has noted resistance/slow response by government to address challenges but continues to engage government through continuous sensitization and awareness campaigns in communities to achieve positive results.

Civil Side Education Coalition (CSEC) of Malawi collaborates with disability-focused organisations to promote inclusive education. They advocate for policies that ensure schools are equipped to accommodate students with diverse learning needs, involving infrastructure modifications, teacher training, and awareness campaigns; have specific programs dedicated to girls' education, addressing challenges such as early pregnancies and cultural beliefs; engage with adult literacy organisations to include those who may have missed out on formal education, and collaborate with media organisations to further promote awareness about the importance of education and diversity.

Being part of the process as consultants during the development of policies on behalf of the Minister of Education, CSEC played a significant role, especially in the gender policy, that is in the final phase of finalisation. As a secretariat, CSEC has a policy on gender though not specifically on inclusive education. The CSEC approach involves aligning programming with national policies, such as Malawi 2063 which includes human capital development, where education falls. In program design, CSEC ensures their alignment with legal frameworks. In monitoring, CSEC tracks policy implementation at various levels, from schools to districts including budget tracking to ensure allocated funds reach the intended schools.

All regions have regional heads through whom communication from the national Secretariat to and from the districts and communities on education is communicated by NGOs. Education for All is a member of the local education group (LEG) enabling the Coalition to participate in the discussions and planning process with the government. This enables Education for All to Secretariat to gather data and information from the communities and districts and have it channelled to the secretariat and from there to the LEG quarterly meetings. Most times the government responds and carries out necessary interventions such as (a) ensuring schools and public education centres are established closer to children's residences to enable access to examination centres in their communities, and construct more classrooms to accommodate increased enrolment.

In Rwanda, education Coalitions and networks have used the National Education Policy to advocate construction of more schools in rural areas by the government to bridge the rural and urban gap in access to education. Rwanda has adopted a new competence-based curriculum but teachers have not mastered it and there is a challenge with the materials being used. Laboratories still lack materials and they lack inclusivity for especially children with disabilities to participate. Though schools have girls' rooms, many are not adequately equipped with materials, especially sanitary pads. Coalitions such as USADEC advocate with local authorities and partners for community mobilisation on education for all children, facilitating education for children with disabilities, eliminating gender disparities in education and supporting children from poor families in school materials and school fees.

Somalia needs comprehensive and coherent policies for inclusivity. The DAF strategy includes advocacy efforts to push for the adoption and effective implementation of alternative or improved policies. The DAF communication and media strategy is designed to raise awareness of the benefits of disability-inclusive education.

South Sudan education policy advocacy network in 2022 participated in the conference on domestic education financing that involved key decision makers, and who discussed interlinked issues that affected the provision of education.

In November 2023, a meeting was held with the Parliamentary Committee on Education, to examine how they could engage as stakeholders. The network members, in engagement with communities, bring all key education stakeholders including headteachers, educational stakeholders together to discuss and address key gaps.

Another network focuses on affirmative action policies targeting marginalised groups, to provide them with additional support, scholarships, or incentives to ensure their access to and retention in the educational system; inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstream education aimed to eliminate barriers and provide accessible learning environments, resources, and support services. As a result, governments have formulated inclusive education policies to ensure that educational systems accommodate the diverse needs of all learners, including those from marginalised or excluded groups.

The Community-Based Education for Women (CBE-W) programme's aim is to overcome cultural and location disparities by providing education in rural and remote areas, particularly for girls and women. Conditional Cash Transfer Programme have been put in place to provide cash transfers to families, conditional on children attending school. These initiatives address economic disparities, encouraging marginalised families to prioritise education. The Girls' Education Initiatives focused on promoting educational opportunities for girls, recognizing and addressing cultural barriers that hindered girls' access to education.

The current strategy for South Africa networks focuses on systemic issues in the national budget, rather than specific sectors.

The network collaborates with education-focused organisations, providing budget analysis and a systemic lens. In the past the network focused on budget tracking and policy analysis at the provincial level.

In Tanzania, the gaps identified revolve around the Education Act of 1978, the Marriage Act of 1971, and the lack of gender-responsive budgeting. The Education Act of 1978 is no longer able to adequately address the evolving needs of diverse learners or incorporate inclusive practices. Amendments are needed to address current challenges in education, such as language transitions and inclusivity. Similarly, the Marriage Act of 1971 needs amendment. The absence of clear gender-responsive budgeting guidelines in sectoral budgets is yet another gap.

It is recommended there should be advocacy for:

- The timely amendment of the Education Act of 1978 and the Marriage Act of 1971 to align with contemporary needs and promote inclusivity.
- The integration of clear gender-responsive budgeting guidelines in sectoral budgets to ensure that financial resources are allocated to address gender-specific challenges in education.
- The finalisation of the constitution to establish a strong legal foundation that supports diversity, inclusivity, and the protection of the rights of all citizens.

CSO Education Advocacy Networks in Zambia address diversity and intersectionality through a combination of strategic prioritisation, technology use, advocacy with government bodies, community engagement, initiatives to address cultural factors and menstrual poverty, and the promotion of inclusive education policies.

Comfort, adopt strategic prioritisation by focusing on areas where the need is most pressing. Their approach involves careful planning and coordination to allocate limited staffing resources to districts with the greatest need. To overcome the geographical vastness of Zambia, Comfort and sister CSOs leverage technology by using digital platforms for communication, training, and monitoring. This approach allows for maintaining engagement and support, especially in remote areas where physical presence is challenging.

The CSOs actively engage in ongoing dialogues with government bodies and stakeholders to communicate challenges on the ground and propose collaborative solutions. By participating in policy discussions and sharing experiences, CSOs aim to influence decisions that can positively impact the education system.

Success is noted in the increased awareness and recognition of unique challenges faced in remote areas. Government bodies have shown openness to collaboration and have incorporated insights into planning processes. However, challenges persist, particularly in aligning diverse stakeholder interests and securing resources for comprehensive solutions. The response from the community has been largely positive. CSOs, like Teach for Zimbabwe, involve local leaders and parents, building trust and gaining support for initiatives. This community engagement recognizes the value of education and empowerment and involves adapting programs based on community feedback to ensure relevance and impact.

Volunteers Welfare for Community-Based Care of Zambia (VOWAZA) in cooperation with ZANEC, advocate for increased budget allocation to the education sector. Zannik, advocate for the plight of teachers deployed to rural areas, emphasising the need for basic facilities and housing to retain teachers in these areas.

Zambia networks advocate for inclusive policies, such as the inclusion of children with disabilities in the same learning environment as those without disabilities. They also advocate for a two-tier system to provide access to entrepreneurship skills for both boys and girls.

Recognize cultural factors that contribute to girls' school dropout, such as early marriage, network initiatives also focus on bringing back girls to school, advocating for inclusive policies, and addressing cultural practices that hinder girls' education. Teach for Zimbabwe, address menstrual poverty by providing sewing machines and materials for reusable sanitary pads. This initiative acknowledges the intersectionality of gender, socio-economic status, and education access.

Others use education through sports approaches to dismantle systems of inequality based on various factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, and class. This method is designed to create awareness of equity in education.

Education Advocacy Networks in Zimbabwe address diversity and intersectionality differently. This is through legislative advocacy, targeted initiatives for marginalised groups (including persons with disabilities and girls), engagement with rural communities, and efforts to bridge the digital divide. SAFOD has developed a SADC disability protocol with a focus on intersectionality, recognizing the diversity and uniqueness of persons with disabilities. This approach acknowledges the varied experiences of different groups within the disability community, including children, the elderly, women, and girls with disabilities. The protocol serves as a blueprint for all advocacy efforts for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, indicating a comprehensive and region-wide approach to disability advocacy.

Through CSO advocacy, the Zimbabwe Education Act was amended in 2020 to stipulate that each school should strive to be accessible to learners with disabilities, considering the availability of resources. This legislative change demonstrates a commitment to inclusive education practices. However, many schools, especially in rural areas, face challenges in implementing inclusive practices due to lack of financing.

Teach for Zimbabwe addresses diversity and inclusion by deploying staff to marginalised schools, helping fill gaps in both quantity and specialist subjects like ICT and STEM. This intervention has educational content that can be accessed by learners without internet access, recognizing the intersectionality of socio-economic disparities and digital access. They also address the digital divide by providing servers to 18 schools in marginalised areas.

The Let Girls Thrive programme seeks to promote the quality of education for girls in marginalised areas, addressing the intersectionality of gender and geographical marginalisation. It specifically targets menstrual poverty and promotes the production of reusable sanitary pads by trained fellows, showing an understanding of the unique challenges faced by girls. The Rural Youth Collectives engage learners who have dropped out of school, encouraging them to re-enroll and complete their formal education. The Marimba Church of God is engaging parents and guardians through Family Pac meetings and involving church leaders in Parents-Teachers' meetings.



Challenges and Strategies to promoting inclusion in education for CSOs

1. Limited Government prioritisation: Governments in some countries, like Egypt, are yet to prioritise the education needs of individuals with disabilities, women, and refugees. Lack of attention and responsiveness from the government hinder advocacy progress.
2. Policy Implementation Gaps: Existing education policies are not tailored to address the specific challenges faced by marginalised groups. There is often a gap between policy formulation and effective implementation that impedes progress.
3. Resource Constraints: Many advocacy coalitions and networks face challenges in securing sufficient funding for their projects. Sustaining funding over the long term is especially challenging, impacting the continuity and impact of initiatives.
4. Communication and Collaboration Gaps: Effective communication strategies are needed to convey the urgency and importance of inclusive education. Strengthening collaboration with government entities, NGOs, and other stakeholders is crucial for meaningful changes in education policies and practices.

COUNTRY SPECIFIC CHALLENGES FACING EDUCATION POLICY ADVOCACY COALITIONS & NETWORKS

In Eswatini deep-seated social and cultural norms stigmatising pregnancy out of wedlock pose challenges. Strategies include raising awareness, bridging the gap in understanding between communities, and promoting community attitudes toward early marriage and the societal acceptance of pregnant girls continuing their education. For Ethiopia Challenges include early marriage, cultural issues, poverty, and managing education in armed conflicts. Strategies involve addressing early marriage through awareness and policy changes, tackling cultural issues through community engagement, and adapting interventions for conflict-affected areas.

Kenya's education policy Coalitions and networks' challenges include gender disparities, addressing diverse needs of marginalised groups, resource mobilisation, and cultural nuances. Strategies involve tailored interventions, collaboration with communities and stakeholders, effective resource mobilisation, and addressing cultural sensitivities. In Lesotho, success has been recorded in influencing policies for persons with disabilities and interventions for girls returning to school after pregnancy. Challenges involve limited local financial investment, political will, and staffing/resources. Recommendations include sustained engagement, resource mobilisation, and building strategic partnerships.

COUNTRY SPECIFIC CHALLENGES FACING EDUCATION POLICY ADVOCACY COALITIONS & NETWORKS

Liberia's challenges include insufficient financial investment, lack of supporting structures, and limited infrastructure. Recommendations include adequate training, continuous collaboration, and addressing barriers to diversity and inclusion in education. Malawi challenges involve slow progress at the policy level, deep-seated attitudes, and economic vulnerability. Strategies include collaboration, grassroots efforts, cultural sensitivity, and continuous engagement with stakeholders.

Nigeria's country and network's challenges include inadequate sensitization, poverty, lack of infrastructure, and cultural norms. Strategies adapted involve second-chance education, economic empowerment, advocacy for increased budgets, and addressing language barriers. Rwanda challenges involve inadequate resources for education, despite policy recommendations. Strategies include advocating for increased education budgets to address materials for children with disabilities and training teachers. Somaliland challenges involve limited access for persons with disabilities and policy gaps. Strategies include advocacy, awareness campaigns, collaboration with schools, and training programs for teachers. South Sudan challenges include lack of supporting structures, weak laws, and competing interests. Strategies involve strategic planning, engagement with stakeholders, and advocating for increased education budgets.

South Africa challenges involve resistance to inclusion and limited community involvement. Recommendations include comprehensive awareness creation and community engagement. Challenges involve policy implementation gaps and political considerations. Strategies include advocating for increased budgets, engaging traditional leaders, and continuous collaboration.

Challenges involve resistance to inclusion and decision-making at high levels. Strategies involve collaboration with traditional leaders, community meetings, and awareness campaigns.

SAFOD (Southern Africa) challenges include limited funding for disability studies and lack of data. Strategies involve raising awareness, lobbying, resource mobilisation, and continuous advocacy efforts.

The **Egyptian** government still needs to prioritise the education needs of individuals with disabilities, women and refugees. Lack of attention and responsiveness from the government hinders progress of advocacy initiatives.

Existing education policies are not tailored to address the specific challenges faced by individuals with disabilities, especially women and refugees and there is a gap between policy formulation and effective implementation.

There is also struggle to influence policy changes that are essential for inclusive education and policies translating into tangible improvements in education for vulnerable individuals. Individuals with disabilities, women and refugees, experience marginalisation in terms of attention, facilities, and support.

Advocacy networks face challenges in securing sufficient funding to implement their projects and initiatives effectively. Moreover, given the three-year project focus, sustaining funding over the long term may be a challenge. Ensuring ongoing financial support beyond the project duration is essential for continued impact.

Effective communication strategies are needed to convey the urgency and importance of inclusive education for individuals with disabilities. Fostering collaboration with government entities, NGOs, and other stakeholders needs strengthening and building effective partnerships to achieve meaningful changes in education policies and practices remains a gap.

COUNTRY SPECIFIC CHALLENGES FACING EDUCATION POLICY ADVOCACY COALITIONS & NETWORKS

To promote diversity and inclusion in education in Eswatini, Education Advocacy networks and CSOs face challenges of deep seated, complex social and cultural norms stigmatising pregnancy out of wedlock not just for the pregnant girl, but the family as well. These lead to exclusion from mainstream education for girls that get pregnant out while in school. There is a gender-based element to the challenges, with societal expectations reinforcing the idea that girls who become pregnant should prioritise marriage over continuing their education.

This perpetuates gender inequality and denies girls the chance for a second opportunity in education. Some families also discourage girls from pursuing education after becoming pregnant and encourage early marriage instead.

Economic challenges, including poverty, drive some minors into transactional sex for survival. Grandparents may encourage these relationships as a means to secure resources for the family, complicating the issue of underage pregnancy and limiting educational opportunities.

Individual CSOs and advocacy networks need to raise awareness about the importance of inclusive education and challenging ingrained cultural beliefs; bridging the gap in understanding between communities, families, and educational institutions is essential; promoting community attitudes toward early marriage and the societal acceptance of these practices ought to create an environment where providing education to pregnant girls is normalised.

While there are champion schools and headteachers working towards inclusivity, scaling up these initiatives to influence a broader network of schools and educators is needed. CSOs need to address the alignment of existing legal and policy frameworks with the principles of diversity and inclusion in education. Advocacy for policy changes is necessary to create an enabling environment.

Education Advocacy CSOs and networks in Eswatini promotion of inclusion in education have:

- Promoted use of the mother language (Siswati) in schools including especially among learners among learners who haven't had the opportunity to attend preschool. They have designed and been involved in advocacy campaigns to promote the use of the mother language (Siswati) in schools. This involves raising awareness about the importance of incorporating Siswati alongside English to enhance the learning experience for all students and working to influence educational policies that support the use of both English and Siswati in schools.
- Undertaken community engagement through outreach programs, town hall meetings, and community workshops to discuss the benefits of bilingual education and address concerns raised by parents and community members.

Civil Society organisations (CSOs) and Country Education Advocacy networks in Ethiopia have marked successes in working with the Ethiopian Ministry of Education to address quality issues in education. Strategies for inclusive education have been developed with the involvement of BENE. The remaining gaps relate to early marriage, cultural issues, poverty, and the management of education amidst armed conflicts. In addition, the government sometimes perceives CSOs as a threat, which can hinder CSO and networks work. In the past, there were even laws restricting NGOs, but they have been amended recently.

Insufficient budgetary allocation for training and workshops hampers CSOs' ability to share new learning and experiences, hindering the impact of their programs. Limited financial resources also impede efforts to support out-of-school children, youth, and women with disabilities (CYWDs) in accessing nearby schools. Furthermore, CSOs encounter challenges in maintaining accessible and inclusive education in conflict-affected areas. Addressing the impact of conflicts on education necessitates innovative and context-specific approaches.

COUNTRY SPECIFIC CHALLENGES FACING EDUCATION POLICY ADVOCACY COALITIONS & NETWORKS

Empowering local Community-Based organisations (CBOs), Faith-Based organisations (FBOs), and Civil Society Institutions is a feasible strategy, but scaling up these initiatives to cover a broader geographical area and population and ensuring sustainability of empowerment efforts is a challenge.

In Kenya addressing gender disparities to ensure equal access to educational programs for both male and female students in some regions, remains a notable challenge. Achieving gender equality in education necessitates continuous collaboration with communities and stakeholders. Resistance or traditional beliefs in certain regions may require tailored approaches to foster acceptance and promote inclusivity.

While CSOs and networks primary focus is on children with disabilities, teen mothers, and girls, the inclusion of other marginalised groups, such as school dropouts and those who have never attended school, presents its own set of challenges. Tailoring interventions to address the diverse needs of these groups requires careful planning and resources. Expanding the scope to address the needs of other marginalised groups requires a delicate balance between breadth and depth, ensuring that interventions are both comprehensive and impactful is challenging, especially with limited resources.

Promoting diversity and inclusion demands sufficient resources, including funding, manpower, and materials. CSOs face challenges in mobilising the necessary resources to address the unique needs of various marginalised groups comprehensively.

Adapting interventions to the cultural nuances of different communities is crucial. CSOs face challenges in navigating and addressing cultural sensitivities likely to impact the acceptance of inclusive education initiatives.

Addressing the distinct challenges faced by different marginalised groups involves recognizing the intersectionality of their experiences. CSOs need to develop strategies that acknowledge and navigate the complexity of issues faced by each group. Continuous monitoring and evaluation are essential to assess the impact of interventions. Kenya CSOs face challenges in developing effective metrics that capture the progress and outcomes of diverse initiatives targeting various marginalised groups.

Kenya Advocacy networks encounter challenges in influencing policy changes that support and prioritise inclusivity in education. Ongoing network and CSO efforts are needed and need strengthening to address policy gaps and ensure a supportive legal framework.

Ensuring that communities and stakeholders are equipped to support inclusive education requires capacity-building efforts. CSOs face challenges in providing adequate training and resources to enhance the capabilities of educators, parents, and community leaders.

Education Advocacy networks in Kenya address the challenges towards promoting diversity and inclusion in education through building community support, engaging with the Government and addressing infrastructure gaps.

The networks invest time and effort in continuous advocacy and awareness programs to address low morale and limited engagement by community members. Thus, programs aim to inform and educate the community about the importance of diversity and inclusion in education. At the same time the Networks empower community members, encouraging them to champion the cause of education inclusion; designing and implementing training programs, workshops, and other initiatives that equip individuals to actively support and promote diversity in education.

COUNTRY SPECIFIC CHALLENGES FACING EDUCATION POLICY ADVOCACY COALITIONS & NETWORKS

Kenya education advocacy networks engage with the Government highlighting the importance of not only formulating policies but also ensuring their effective implementation. They have ongoing dialogues, partnerships, and advocacy efforts to emphasise the need for policies that promote diversity and inclusion in education. In addition, networks lobby to secure increased budget allocations for education. This involves ongoing efforts to influence policymakers, demonstrate the impact of inclusive education, and advocate for financial support to address the diverse needs of learners.

To address infrastructure challenges, Kenya Education Advocacy networks collaborate with other stakeholders including supporting partnerships with nonprofits, businesses, and other organisations aimed to pool resources and expertise for addressing infrastructure gaps in addition to exploring innovative solutions to address infrastructure gaps.

The **Lesotho** Coalition is committed to creating a more inclusive and equitable education system for all learners in Lesotho. For the disabled the Coalition pushed for the ratification and domestication of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; influenced the development of an inclusive education policy, and ensuring learners with disabilities receive proper accommodations.

The Coalition is implementing interventions for girls returning to school after pregnancy, ensuring a more inclusive and equitable education system. EOL has been instrumental in providing support, enabling the Coalition to conduct policy reviews, research, and implement interventions. It has helped us address critical issues in Lesotho's education system.

For the Coalition in Lesotho, the LGBTQ+ community faces a challenge of discriminatory definitions to enable their organisations to register freely. Their advocacy is also for gender-neutral language and encouraging societal acceptance.

The Coalition interventions also include a non-formal education policy, allowing certification for those outside formal education. The Coalition lobbied for funding for departments dealing with out-of-school learners and influenced strategic planning for inclusive education.

Through EOL, the Coalition conducted policy reviews, policy briefs, and initiated research on curriculum issues and were by the time of survey assessing applications for curriculum-related research addressing diverse learner needs.

The main challenges Civil Society organisations (CSOs) and Education Advocacy networks in Liberia are faced with include lack of sufficient financial investment to promote diversity and inclusion in education. Shortage of resources hinders the implementation of policies aimed at fostering inclusivity, particularly for children with disabilities who may face additional challenges such as long distances to schools. There is limited local financial investment and political will to contribute to solving challenges in implementing inclusive policies. While advocacy efforts are crucial to mobilise support and resources for the education sector, institutional limitations, including insufficient staff or personnel dedicated to supporting inclusion and diversity, present challenges.

Necessary staffing and resources to effectively implement inclusive practices are also a challenge. Moreover, the number of schools equipped to accommodate diverse needs is limited. This lack of infrastructure hampers efforts to provide inclusive education and exacerbates disparities in educational opportunities. Schools with the right infrastructure have high fees, creating barriers to access for many students. Financial constraints contribute to disparities in educational opportunities and hinder progress toward inclusivity.

Even when policies are developed and passed into law, their effective implementation is hindered due to inadequate funding. This gap between policy formulation and implementation poses a significant challenge to achieving diversity and inclusion in education.

Challenges faced and attempted solutions by Education Advocacy CSOs and Networks in Malawi include:

- Slow progress at the policy level and government response to demands presents a persistent challenge.
- Changing deep-seated attitudes and stigma at the community level, especially regarding people with disabilities, is a slow process. Resistance to altering traditional views poses a significant challenge.
- Economic vulnerability of girls limiting the ability to provide direct financial assistance and thus referral to district social affairs or other organisations becomes necessary.
- Heavy dependence on external funding, leading to limitations in their ability to support vulnerable groups that cannot easily access or continue with education. Dependency creates a perpetual challenge in addressing economic vulnerabilities.
- Achieving substantial changes, such as establishing dedicated sections or institutes, takes time.

The strategies employed by CSOs and Networks in Malawi:

- Design programs with inclusivity in mind, addressing the specific needs of marginalised groups. Teacher training initiatives focus on providing skills to educators for engaging learners with disabilities.
- Prioritise engagement with community leaders and involving them in decision-making processes ensures cultural sensitivity. Open communication and alignment with cultural values build trust in the communities served. Continuous sensitization and awareness campaigns have been conducted to address resistance and change community mindset towards desired cultural shifts. Some CSOs facilitate open days where learners speak about challenges directly to duty bearers to hold the latter accountable and create a platform for addressing education-related challenges.
- Strategically partner with local and international organisations, networks in the region and governmental agencies to maximise resources and extend their reach. This collaborative approach helps provide additional support to vulnerable girls.
- Despite time-intensive processes, CSOs persist in their advocacy efforts. Ongoing goals include elevating dedicated sections to directorates and establishing institutes for inclusive education. Continuous engagement, despite resistance or slow response, for increased education financing by engaging with relevant government ministries and parliamentary committees. CSOs and networks have thus influenced resource allocation and utilisation in the education sector to address challenges such as limited secondary schools, and inadequate teaching materials. CSOs undertake budget tracking to ensure allocated resources for inclusive education are used appropriately, a practice that forms a basis for advocacy for more resources and ensuring accountability in resource utilisation.
- Passionate volunteers mobilising resources through grassroots fundraising efforts with their involvement and networks significantly securing resources for programs.

Challenges and attempted solutions by Education Advocacy CSOs and Networks in Nigeria:

- Inadequate sensitization to make parents, families, school-based committees, and the community understand the importance of allowing children to access education.
- Poverty at family and community levels is the biggest barrier to education with parents prioritising immediate survival needs over education due to financial constraints.
- Lack of proper infrastructure, including classrooms, sanitation facilities, and learning materials, poses a challenge to creating an inclusive and conducive learning environment.
- Cultural norms and challenges, including economic hardships, contribute to parents' reluctance to prioritise education.
- Insecurity, forced migration force children to engage in economic activities instead of attending school.
- In some regions, a language barrier exists, where teachers and students may speak different languages. This diversity, particularly in post-propositional states like Lagos, can hinder effective communication and learning.

Strategies employed by CSOs and Advocacy Networks in Nigeria:

- Undertaking initiatives like second-chance education have been implemented to provide non-formal education in students' locations, often under trees, to ensure accessibility. Teachers are deployed to facilitate learning.
- Placing emphasis on addressing root causes, including economic hardships, cultural norms, and insecurity, to create sustainable solutions. A holistic approach considers economic empowerment and cultural sensitivities to ensure inclusive and quality education for all.
- Household economic empowerment initiatives to create an environment where education is seen as a viable option for children.
- Advocacy efforts focus on the need for an increased budget for education, aligning with UNICEF or UNESCO standards. Adequate funding is seen as crucial for improving facilities and providing opportunities for every child to attend school. Advocacy for improved facilities in schools including engaging with the government and other stakeholders to address the deficiencies in classrooms, sanitation facilities, and overall learning resources.
- In regions with a language barrier, deploying teachers from diverse language backgrounds and when language issues arise, interpreters or teachers fluent in multiple languages are used into the class to ensure understanding and facilitate communication.
- CSOs and advocacy networks collaborate with communities to understand their specific challenges and cultural sensitivities. Engaging with local communities helps tailor interventions to address their unique needs.

Challenges and attempted solutions by Education Advocacy CSOs and Networks in Uganda:

- Securing adequate funding and resources for their advocacy initiatives, which limits the scale and impact of their efforts.
- Deep-rooted cultural beliefs and societal norms present obstacles to promoting diversity and inclusion in education, especially in terms of gender, ethnicity, refugee situations and other identity factors.
- Unequal distribution of educational resources and infrastructure leads to disparities in access and quality of education, particularly for marginalised groups including those who are from poor families, refugees and internally displaced persons, those evicted from their land, orphans and other vulnerable children.
- Even with supportive policies in place, there are challenges in the effective implementation of these policies at the grassroots level.
- Limited data on the educational status of diverse groups and challenges in monitoring and evaluation hinder evidence-based advocacy.
- Low awareness among communities about the benefits of diversity and inclusion in education poses challenges to advocacy efforts.

Strategies used by Education Advocacy networks in Uganda:

- Uganda Education advocacy networks engage in lobbying and advocacy efforts to influence the development and implementation of inclusive education policies at the national level.
- CSOs work on grassroots levels, mobilising communities and creating awareness about the importance of diversity and inclusion in education.
- Building the capacity of local organisations, educators, and communities to understand and implement inclusive practices.
- Conducting research to gather data on the educational status of diverse groups, which can be used to advocate for policy changes and targeted interventions.
- Some organisations like FAWE Uganda specifically focus on advocating for girls' education, addressing gender disparities, and promoting gender-sensitive policies.
- Conducting awareness campaigns through various media channels to reach a wider audience and change societal attitudes.

Challenges and attempted solutions by Education Advocacy CSOs and Networks in Sierra Leone:

- Some cultural norms in specific communities pose obstacles to promoting diversity and inclusion in education. For instance, resistance to allowing pregnant girls to attend school.
- High poverty level and the overall economic situation in the country significantly impacts access to education. Economic challenges prevent families from affording basic educational necessities, leading to disparities in access and quality of education.
- Gender norms and stereotypes hinder efforts to achieve gender equality in education. Addressing issues such as allowing pregnant girls to attend school requires challenging deeply ingrained gender norms.
- Engaging with the government to implement policies that support diversity and inclusion, such as allowing pregnant girls to go to school, is challenging. Bureaucratic hurdles and resistance to policy changes exist.

Strategies used by Education Advocacy networks in Sierra Leone:

- The network conducts community outreach programs to engage with local communities, raise awareness about the importance of diversity and inclusion, and address misconceptions or resistance related to cultural norms.
- The network works closely with government officials and policymakers to advocate for policies that promote diversity and inclusion in education. The network is collaborating with relevant stakeholders to build support for inclusive policies.
- Implementing gender-sensitive programs and interventions that specifically address issues related to gender inequality in education. This includes advocating for and implementing policies that support pregnant girls' access to education.
- Developing and implementing economic empowerment programs to alleviate poverty-related barriers to education which involves providing financial support, scholarships, or vocational training to marginalised communities.
- Conducting public awareness campaigns using various communication channels to reach a broad audience and challenge societal norms that impede diversity and inclusion in education.

Rwanda Education Advocacy networks submit position papers, and policy briefs, and most of the recommendations were considered. However, resources for education and the budgetary allocations remain inadequate and slow down policy implementation. For example, to train teachers or do campaign awareness on children with disabilities, or girls' education, especially in STEM to increase the number of girls attending sciences. Strategies to solve the challenges include advocating for education budget increase to enable the networks to have the materials for children with disabilities to attend school, and have teachers trained to teach especially in inclusive schools.

Persons with disabilities in **Somalia** have limited accessibility to educational facilities, lack of awareness and understanding, and face social stigma. DAF, a network organisation addresses these challenges through advocacy and awareness campaigns; collaboration with schools and educational authorities to implement inclusive practices; providing assistive devices, and conducting training programs for teachers to better support students with disabilities. This is in addition to engaging policymakers to influence the development and implementation of inclusive education policies so as to create a more inclusive educational landscape where everyone, regardless of their abilities, has equal access to learning opportunities.

Somaliland has a policy for free education in primary schools that does not extend to the secondary and tertiary levels. In Somaliland poor school infrastructure for disabled students, financial problems, and lack of policies to support marginalised groups and advocates for them in the quest to access the goal of education for all remain key challenges. Disabled students have their own challenges in getting jobs to pay school fees or higher education fees.

The strategy is for the network to undertake advocacy for them to get free education for the disabled students at all levels; engage with donors for grants and partner organisations such as women organisations and minority groups; provide them special grants to support their communities. The strategies have been successful and many organisations and PWDs have benefitted from grants.

South Sudan Education Advocacy networks lack supporting structures and laws to enable equal education for girls. It lacks a legal framework and therefore power to influence policy significantly. They make recommendations for policymakers and government to adopt and though part of planning in the Ministry where they try to raise the key issues, their advocacy comes against competing interests and influencing key decision-making levels remains a challenge. Further, handling advocacy in a post-conflict situation and a weak state poses a challenge, as advocates need to be conscious about their own contextual operational environment.

By way of Strategy, the South Sudan Ministry of Education is working on a girls' education strategy and frameworks being established in the country. The Coalition's Strategic plan, makes specific actions targeting some of these issues. Further, the Coalition engages stakeholders including parents, teachers, community leaders on issues of gender equality and disability inclusion in the schools.

For **South Africa**, inclusion faces resistance, and decisions often seem removed from learners. The conversation about marginalised groups' inclusion in policy decision-making is nearly non-existent. Education discussions happen at high levels, limiting community involvement. The right to education needs comprehensive awareness creation, especially among learners.

According to Coalitions and Education Advocacy Networks, Zimbabwe has good policies for inclusion to ensure all learners access education. There is however an implementation gap and coalitions and networks risk facing political victimisation or political labelling as opposition or enemy to Government.

Budget tracking is sometimes necessary but accessing information and data but though this should be publicly availed, it's not. Advocacy for passing of policies that have been negotiated and agreed is also sometimes mired in politics.

In **Tanzania**, the National Education Coalition (NEC) and Action on Disability and Development (ADD) as Policy Advocacy Organizations face challenges to confront the country's extensive ethnic diversity, distinct cultural practices, and well-defined gender roles, especially in rural areas. The patriarchal structure dominating decision-making, including the taboo of women owning land in some ethnic groups, poses barriers to women's financial empowerment and decision-making in education budget allocation, impacting girls' access to resources like sanitary pads and leading to school dropouts. Others include, addressing broader barriers for marginalized students involves tackling negative sociocultural practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM), hindering girls' education and subjecting them to early marriage. Additionally, the negative perception of sending disabled children to school presents a complex challenge.

While NEC has engaged in initiatives like gender-responsive budgeting training for lawmakers, active participation in policy review, and advocacy for amendments related to child marriage and education laws, challenges persist in changing community perceptions and deeply ingrained sociocultural practices. Resistance from education officials and fund diversion remain ongoing issues, necessitating sustained efforts.

Language emerges as a significant challenge, with shifts from Swahili to English in secondary school impacting students' comprehension. Advocacy efforts led to changes in the education training policy and curriculum, aiming to enhance language competence for better job market competitiveness. Addressing education in conflict or refugee areas involves advocating for the awareness and implementation of the education in emergencies strategy, acknowledging challenges like resource limitations and facility constraints affecting access to education in refugee camps.

Key policy gaps include the Education Act of 1978 and the marriage act of 1971, necessitating amendments. Advocacy for gender-responsive budgets from the Minister of Finance is crucial to address budgetary shortcomings. Continuous monitoring is conducted through government documents, parliamentary sessions, research, and field visits.

Future strategies involve massive awareness of the amended education training policy, discussions with teacher training institutions, strengthening members' capacity, and collaborative planning with responsible education ministries for effective implementation of policies. Overall, the challenges involve changing mindsets, ensuring effective resource allocation, addressing policy gaps, and collaborating for sustained efforts towards holistic change.

Recognizing the deep-rooted nature of cultural influences, **Zambia's** coalitions and networks have found collaboration with traditional leaders, integral to their strategic approach. In many instances, traditional leaders are respected figures in these communities, and their endorsement of education advocacy initiatives has a significant impact. The coalitions and networks therefore leverage their influence to challenge norms that may hinder girls' education. Through community meetings and awareness campaigns, the networks address misconceptions about the role of girls in society and emphasise the importance of their education.

Coalitions and networks thus work closely with traditional leaders to create awareness about the importance of girls' education. They engage in dialogue with them, emphasising the long-term benefits that education brings not only to the individual but also to the community as a whole.

For the disabled, based in **Zimbabwe**, SAFOD's main challenge is limited funding to conduct studies and gather data on pupils with disabilities in the region. Lack of or limited data on disability issues prohibits informed policies, therefore the existing policies often do not cater entirely for the needs of pupils with disabilities because the interventions implemented are not well informed by data from relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries. SAFOD's aim is to continue raising awareness; creating discussions around the needs of persons with disabilities in all aspects of life, for the betterment of their lives. This includes lobbying, resource mobilisation and advocacy efforts to reach the main goal of having PWDs enjoy their human rights freely, equally and equitably.

Government perspective on challenges towards inclusivity

While development and implementation of policies is crucial in creating awareness and fostering an environment conducive to inclusive education, governments in the Horn, Eastern, and Southern Africa (HESA) region face several challenges in promoting diversity and inclusion in education policy advocacy. Attitude and knowledge gaps pose challenges in various countries. Inflexibility within the curriculum, skill gaps, and the need for continuous improvement in understanding diversity and inclusion are evident. Policy barriers contribute to the challenge of creating an inclusive education environment. Economic barriers, and commitment to international protocols affecting both individuals and schools, are significant issues in most HESA countries, not just for the marginalised but the public education systems in general.

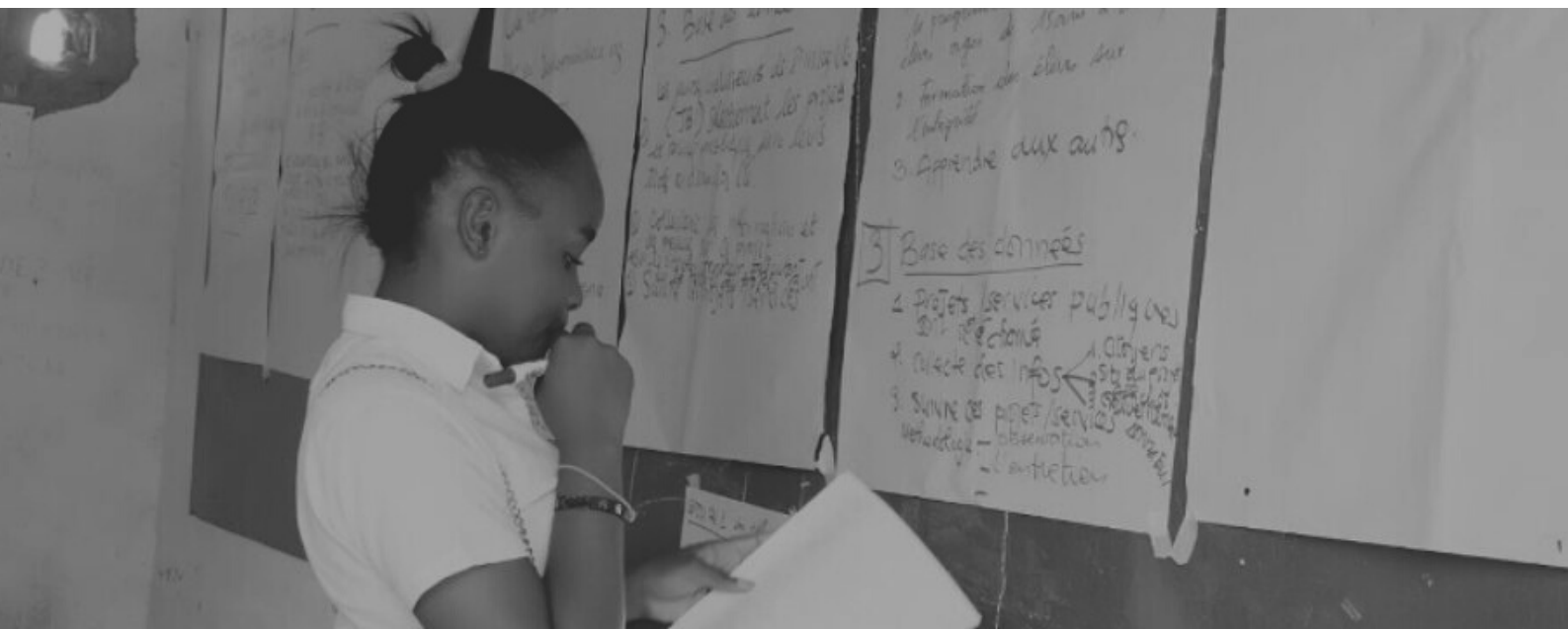
- Ethiopia has policies emphasising equity in education, the primary challenge lies in the implementation. The mindset, attitudes, and commitment to inclusivity, and planning and resource allocation in terms of infrastructure and skills all mitigate against effective policy implementation.
- Lesotho identifies financial constraints; persistence of cultural practices, particularly the patrilineal and patriarchal nature of Basotho, which historically limited the education of girls in some regions are the major challenges impacting the promotion of diversity and inclusion in education policy.
- The introduction of inclusive education in Malawi has widened access but presents challenges in ensuring that all teachers possess the necessary skills are major constraints. The country specialised teachers to effectively implement inclusive education calling for continuous professional development in managing inclusive classrooms
- Somaliland lacks both human (trained teachers) and material (infrastructure) resources, to support special needs education. Collaboration with stakeholders and seeking external support are deemed essential to bridge resource gaps and enhance inclusive practices.
- Likewise, Tanzania faces challenges related to identifying and placing learners with disabilities. Infrastructure inadequacies, including the distance of schools from disabled individuals, impact their access to education.
- In Rwanda insufficient infrastructure, poverty, shortage of qualified teachers, and inadequate education programs to cater for marginalised populations are key challenges to inclusive education. Budget constraints hinder the effective implementation of policies promoting diversity and inclusion.
- Like Ethiopia, Uganda identifies a need for attitude change to make inclusive education work. Advocacy efforts are impeded by a lack of awareness and understanding among the population.

Cross-cutting Recommendations to address the challenges

The following strategies need to be adapted to the specific cultural, social, and economic contexts of each country, emphasising flexibility and responsiveness to local needs. Cross cutting recommendations across most countries include:

1. Employ strategic approaches, including targeted communication, data-driven advocacy, and coalition-building with other organisations.
2. Advocate for policy changes, ensuring alignment with principles of diversity and inclusion. Engage in constructive dialogue with policymakers.
3. Collaborate with local communities, religious leaders, and policymakers to challenge harmful norms, provide sensitization on the benefits of inclusivity, and create support structures.
4. Build the capacity of educators, parents, and community leaders. Continuous training and resources are essential to support inclusive education.
5. Conduct awareness campaigns to promote understanding and support for inclusive education. Build public awareness to contribute to a more inclusive education environment.

Beyond the above cross-cutting recommendations to address challenges in inclusion the following country specific recommendations should be considered:



- In Egypt to address the challenges, advocacy networks will need to employ strategic approaches including targeted communication, data-driven advocacy, coalition-building with other organisations, and engaging in constructive dialogue with policymakers. Additionally, building public awareness and support will contribute to a more inclusive education environment for vulnerable individuals.

- For Eswatini, addressing these challenges calls for a culturally sensitive approach that includes CSOs and advocacy networks to collaborate with local communities, religious leaders, and policymakers to challenge harmful norms, provide sensitization on the benefits of inclusivity, and create support structures for pregnant girls to continue their education. Efforts to address poverty, empower girls, and involve families in the process are also crucial components of a successful strategy.

- In Ethiopia, to address these challenges, CSOs and advocacy networks need to engage in constructive dialogue with the government, collaborate on shared goals, and advocate for policies that promote inclusivity in education. Strengthening internal capacities, seeking diverse funding sources, and building strategic partnerships will enhance the resilience and impact of their initiatives. Additionally, addressing the specific needs of vulnerable groups and adapting approaches to local contexts are essential components of a successful advocacy strategy.

- Kenya CSOs and advocacy networks will benefit from sustained engagement with communities, flexible and adaptable interventions, effective resource mobilisation strategies, and a commitment to continuous improvement based on monitoring and evaluation findings. Ongoing collaboration with governmental bodies and policymakers is key towards contributing to the development of supportive policies for inclusive education.

- In Liberia, Adequate training and resources are necessary to empower professionals to address the diverse needs of students and foster an inclusive learning environment. Continuous collaboration with stakeholders, including the government and local communities, is essential to overcome these barriers to diversity and inclusion in education in Liberia.

Language and refugee diversity and inclusion

One Egyptian coalition member focuses on refugees. Refugees in Egypt live like citizens, renting homes and apartments, and thus affecting resources. They attend regular schools, but there's a lack of attention to their social and emotional well-being. They face bullying and struggle with education beyond high school due to a lack of scholarships.

Most of the HESA Region and the three West African countries of Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone have language issues facing whole populations or minority groups within their borders. Others have experienced armed conflicts or natural calamities that have forced sections of their population to migrate adversely affecting the education access to the learners. In the Highland Kingdom of Eswatini, there is a discrepancy between the language of instruction, Siswati, and the language of educational materials, English. A similar challenge is noted in Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda, and Zambia where use of local languages in teaching and learning in lower primary schooling is faced with the challenge of lack of teaching and learning materials for some linguistic minority groups. Adaptation of materials to align with the preferred language of refugee participants is a challenge for refugee population settlement areas in Kenya, Rwanda, Nigeria. In Rwanda, the shift from French to English in the education system, has challenges for linguistic minorities.

Conflict in Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda disrupts the education system, impacting schools, students, and the learning environment. According to the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia, ethnic problems and political issues contribute to population displacement and affect education. Conflicts in regions like Tigray, exacerbated by war and COVID-19, have led to a doubling of students in refugee areas, causing a backlog and accelerated learning programs are being implemented to address the education backlog. Regional and federal governments have agreed to complete two years of grades annually to eliminate the backlog within four years.

In Uganda according to the Ministry of Education and Sports, conflict, both internal and external, results in prolonged periods of children being out of school. To address arising challenges accelerated learning programs, supported by partners, aim to reintegrate out-of-school children; vocational training and skill development programs, and alternative education programmes especially accelerated learning, are used with reported positive results.

Recent displacement of refugees, floods, and conflict have negatively affected education access and quality in Rwanda and Malawi.

Recommended solutions to the challenges include recognizing and including local languages in education policies; developing common curricula and syllabuses based on recognized local languages; developing and promoting educational materials in local languages; providing training and support for teachers to use local languages effectively; collaboration among stakeholders, including educators, parents, and community leaders and coalition coordination of efforts to create a supportive environment for addressing language barriers.

For addressing the challenges of conflict and environmental displacement effects on learning, implementing targeted recovery plans to address learning gaps caused by disrupted education; strengthening quality assurance measures, monitoring, and evaluation systems.

In several countries measures will call for actively engaging parents, school development committees, communities and involving them in policymaking and monitoring policy implementation.

In **Eswatini**, there is a need to continue advocating for the use of Siswati in educational materials to bridge the gap between the language of instruction and the language of materials. This calls for developing and promoting educational materials in Siswati to enhance understanding and accessibility for learners. In addition, training and support for teachers to effectively use both Siswati and English in teaching, ensuring a balanced and inclusive language approach will be needed. Collaboration among stakeholders (including educators, parents, and community leaders) will be required and coordination of the same is necessary, to create a supportive environment for addressing language barriers and educational disruptions.

The government and partners should support the implementation of targeted recovery plans to address the learning gaps caused by the compressed curriculum and disrupted learning environment.


Quality assurance measures including robust monitoring and evaluation systems to assess the impact of mitigation measures and adjust strategies will need strengthening to ensure that learners acquire the necessary knowledge and skills before progressing to higher levels.

The Education policy of **Ethiopia** and the Regional states has given recognition to the local languages that serve all learners at primary level without any discrimination/segregation OR without any superimposition (domination) upon individuals or groups of students coming from different backgrounds. The curriculum as well as each subject's syllabuses is developed common to all students based on local realities/ languages recognized and accepted by the communities. Even if there are ethnic and cultural differences between minority groups, they all speak and listen to the language used in their localities.

Armed conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region began in November 2020. It involves the Ethiopian government, its allied forces, and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and has resulted in a complex and challenging humanitarian situation, including reports of human rights abuses, food and medical shortages, and a large number of internally displaced people. Schools, students and the education system across the regions were all negatively affected.


While in **Kenya**, there is no specific targeting of marginalised communities, their out-of-school programs aim to support youth who have dropped out of school, considering them as part of the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Educate approaches refugee inclusion through thorough needs assessments, ensuring that interventions are tailored to address their specific needs. This includes considerations for program timing, making it accessible to participants from different settings. Educate adapts materials to simplify language or align with the preferred language of participants, fostering inclusivity and ensuring that refugees can fully benefit from programs.

Liberia, a linguistically diverse nation with 16 ethnic groups, values cultural inclusivity. While English is the official language, the government allows individuals to freely speak their local dialects, fostering linguistic diversity. The country embraces a mix of Islam and Christianity, promoting religious freedom. Despite past challenges integrating displaced populations into the education system, the focus has shifted to local challenges, particularly related to disabilities, as the displaced population has reduced. Currently, Liberia emphasises addressing diverse aspects in education, and challenges with displaced populations are not as significant. The nation prioritises inclusivity in language, religion, and education, reflecting its commitment to diversity.

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COUNTRY DETAILS ON LANGUAGE AND CONFLICT INDUCED BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

Malawi's linguistic diversity is a central consideration in education projects, using inclusive language and materials reflecting various linguistic backgrounds. This ensures cultural relevance and accessibility for the diverse population. Language barriers are minimal, primarily using Chichewa, the national language widely understood in schools and communities. However, in remote areas, local dialects are used for effective communication. English instruction begins in upper primary schools, posing challenges for learners, yet graduates generally acquire English communication skills. Despite occasional difficulties, competitions and activities, spelling competitions, quiz competitions, panel discussions, reading, creative writing, poems, wall magazines where learners display various activities/art crafts that they are doing, contribute to enhanced learning outcomes. While English may be challenging in the primary stages, the encouragement of diverse linguistic activities fosters a holistic educational experience for Malawian learners.

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COUNTRY DETAILS ON LANGUAGE AND CONFLICT INDUCED BARRIERS TO EDUCATION


The government and partners should support the implementation of targeted recovery plans to address the learning gaps caused by the compressed curriculum and disrupted learning environment. Quality assurance measures including robust monitoring and evaluation systems to assess the impact of mitigation measures and adjust strategies will need strengthening to ensure that learners acquire the necessary knowledge and skills before progressing to higher levels.

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In **Nigeria** the national policy stipulates that early learners should be taught in their immediate environment's language. However, a challenge arises as non-natives may eventually switch to English if they don't comprehend the local language. In such cases, learners' resort to the language they understand, whether it's English or the immigration destination language.

In the context of Nigeria, conflicts pose a substantial challenge to education, impacting both the demand and supply aspects of basic education. The sudden influx of learners in conflict-affected areas strains limited resources and spaces, hindering traditional learning environments. Government interventions, like displaced people's camps, aim to provide basic education, but they fall short of meeting the full learning needs.

In 2020, the federal government launched the alternative learning program to address educational gaps in refugee and internally displaced people's camps. This initiative establishes learning structures, leveraging community resources and federal funding. The migration from conflict areas to peaceful regions, such as Lagos, results in a significant increase in out-of-school children. Although efforts are underway, exemplified by the enrollment of 5,000 children in Lagos state, the scale of the issue, with an estimated three million out-of-school children in Lagos, challenges existing infrastructure and impedes educational access, necessitating ongoing infrastructure upgrades at the local government level. Despite these challenges, there is a collective hope for improvements in the educational landscape.

Sierra Leone faces minimal language-related challenges as it utilizes a lingua franca, a blend of English and local languages known as Creole, spoken by approximately 90% of the population. This facilitates communication in communities, aiding educational efforts and interventions. Since the Sierra Leone Civil War's conclusion in 2002, the nation has experienced relative stability, with only minor disruptions like protests during elections, such as in 2018 and 2023. The recent elections in 2023 raised concerns about disturbances, but major conflicts have not hindered educational progress. marginalised communities actively participate in education decision-making through structures like school monitoring committees, district education officers, and education monitoring officers. The country's commitment to free education has expanded access, with interventions facilitated by these structures. The collaborative effort between government and organisations ensures that marginalised groups, despite potential geographical challenges, have opportunities for quality education in conducive learning environments.

Rwanda faced a language challenge when shifting from French to English in its education system. To overcome this, the country enlisted teachers from Zimbabwe to train Rwandan educators in English. Despite initial difficulties, this transition is progressing. The curriculum implementation, primarily competence-based, involves collaboration with educators from Uganda and Kenya. Language barriers also hinder quality education for linguistic minorities, impacting their understanding of official languages like English and French. Additionally, communication challenges between students with speech impairments and teachers exist. Students face language barriers in written tests and employment interviews. Some CSOs work on complementary training for students and teachers in official languages to address these issues and enhance linguistic proficiency.

The recent displacement of refugees from the insecurity in the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo adversely affected children's schooling, especially those with disabilities and indigenous children. In addition, floods in Rwanda's Western province in 2022 caused extensive damage to schools, roads, and houses, disproportionately affecting marginalised groups. The Eastern Province, particularly Bugesera District, faces food insecurity and malnutrition due to prolonged drought, impacting marginalised populations. Efforts involving capacity building and material support aim to address these challenges.

Language poses a significant challenge for the minority group in **Somalia**, where Somalia is the mother tongue, and English proficiency is limited. Representation in meetings is hindered as few can speak English fluently for presentations. To address this, meetings in English are often translated into Somali for broader participation.


Conflict in Somalia also impacts education, with schools closing during periods of unrest, as seen in the East region. Ongoing closures force reliance on online education, contingent on internet connectivity. Notably, final exams in affected regions, such as the transition from form two to form three, face disruptions due to the conflict's enduring impact on the education system.

For **South Sudan** the curriculum prioritises English, although at lower levels (primary one to three), teaching is in local languages. However, challenges arise as some communities lack written materials in their languages, limiting the implementation of this policy. Workshops addressing local languages have revealed a deficiency, with only six languages represented and insufficient teaching materials even for those developed. The emphasis on local languages, if not inclusive, could lead some communities to rely on English.


Language barriers in education, particularly for linguistic minority groups, pose challenges due to the unavailability of educational materials in their languages. To address this, promoting multilingual education is suggested, emphasising the use of native languages alongside official ones, especially in early education. Limited access to language support services for linguistic minority students necessitates the development of curricula reflecting linguistic and cultural diversity, providing materials in multiple languages.

The coalition organisation addresses language barriers through peer support programs, where students with stronger language skills mentor those facing challenges, creating a supportive learning environment.

Regarding the situation of refugees from South Sudan, they face challenges due to unprepared host countries, resulting in the civil society stepping in to provide necessary services. Additionally, forced displacement from floods, affecting over 5.1 million people, disrupts regular school attendance, leading to gaps in education and curriculum challenges. Conflict exacerbates these issues by destroying schools and infrastructure, making formal education inaccessible for marginalised groups like refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Various international efforts aim to enhance the quality of education in conflict-affected areas for both host communities and displaced populations, involving collaboration among governments, NGOs, and stakeholders.

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Furthermore, in conflict-ridden South Sudan, education often receives minimal budgetary allocation compared to security, contributing to a persistently low education budget. The education coalition actively participates in addressing these challenges through member organisations, acknowledging the collective effort in mitigating educational shortcomings in the region.

Language is a problem, with efforts to localise instruction underway. Private schools contribute to language challenges, and indigenous languages are losing ground. South Africa receives refugees, but language policies and identification requirements pose challenges, particularly for undocumented children.

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The language challenge in **Tanzanian** schools, where students shift from Swahili to English, recently prompted advocacy for change. The new policy integrates Kiswahili as a subject in English medium schools and introduces English from grade one in public schools, aiming to enhance language competence for better job market competitiveness. In teacher training, the previous incongruence is addressed by the new curriculum, emphasising competency-based training. However, continuous professional development is crucial for effective curriculum delivery.

In addressing education in conflict or refugee areas, the Tanzanian National Education Coalition advocates for popularising the national-level education in emergencies strategy. Challenges in refugee camps, such as food, health, and gender-based violence, hinder access to education. The multifaceted problem involves resource limitations and facility constraints, necessitating a comprehensive approach to improve education access in these areas.


Uganda's lower primary curriculum is implemented in local languages. However, not all country's 56 ethnic groups have curriculums translated by the National Curriculum Development Center in their local languages. Minority languages like the Batwa are not recognized. In Uganda, Education Advocacy and intervention CSOs work in refugee settings, conducting needs assessments to tailor interventions to address the specific education challenges and needs of the refugee population in all refugee settings especially in the camps in the north and West of the country.

In **Zambia**, where 72 ethnic groups coexist, English is the official language, and a new curriculum introduced in 2014 emphasises familiar language education from grades one to four, transitioning to English from grade five. The challenge arises as provincial languages may differ from the language of instruction, leading to conflicts, particularly in areas like the Copper Belt. Chiefs in various provinces raise concerns about children learning in languages other than their familiar ones, fearing loss of cultural identity.

Despite no major conflict, Zambia receives refugees, and while access to education for refugees exists, detailed information on their experiences is limited. Zambia National Education Coalition (ZANEC) focuses on advocating for the provision of materials by the Ministry of Education and holistic education policies.

The language transition from familiar languages to English poses challenges for learners and graduates, impacting employment opportunities. ZANEC advocates for the decolonization of education, challenging the dominance of English to maximise workforce efficiency. Natural disasters like floods and droughts affect marginalised groups, particularly girls in rural areas who face challenges attending school due to increased responsibilities caused by these disasters.

ZANEC engages in curriculum advocacy amid ongoing curriculum reviews, striving to address conflicts arising from the language transition. Advocacy efforts include suggestions to either introduce English at an earlier age or have English and familiar languages run concurrently. The resolution of conflicts related to learners navigating different languages in home and school environments remains an ongoing challenge.

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COUNTRY DETAILS ON LANGUAGE AND CONFLICT INDUCED BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

In **Zimbabwe**, challenges arise in child-headed households where there's no support to encourage learners to attend school. This situation leads to difficulties as children end up taking care of other children, hindering proper parental support. Despite the challenges, some provinces in Zimbabwe stand out as brave, asserting their commitment to their country amidst migration trends.

Education policy making faces challenges in Zimbabwe, where community participation is insufficient, especially in rural areas. Marginalised and non-marginalised groups alike struggle to be involved, with policymaking often perceived as elitist. Consultations are sometimes superficial, merely to fulfil requirements rather than fostering genuine community engagement. The speaker has played a notable role in advocating for community involvement during consultations, aiming to make policymaking more inclusive.

The overarching issue is the delivery of learning content predominantly in English, which poses comprehension challenges for many learners. The coalition actively engages parents and school development committees, striving to involve them in policymaking and monitor policy implementation. While there are persisting challenges, efforts are being made to democratise the policymaking process and address language-related barriers in education.

Country Positions on Inclusion of the Marginalised in Decision Making



An analysis of the information availed through interviews with Education Policy Advocacy coalitions and network leadership indicates In Egypt and Eswatini, the level of detail regarding the involvement of marginalised groups in decision-making is limited. In Ethiopia, Kenya, and Malawi, there are indications of efforts to include marginalised groups in decision-making, particularly in education policy and advocacy. Ethiopia, with its diverse staff and extensive training. Malawi stands out for its structured approach, actively engaging marginalised groups and ensuring representation at the organisational level. Like Malawi and Ethiopia, Rwanda and Uganda actively involve marginalised communities in decision-making processes, enhancing the representation of diverse perspectives.

A forthcoming initiative in **Egypt**, A Safe and Inclusive School for All, with a focus on creating safe and inclusive schools, is expected to involve people with disabilities in efforts to provide support and quality education.

Eswatini emphasises capacity building in the education sector and training government partners. Training programs indicate efforts to address educational disparities. Specific mention of addressing gender disparities in STEM education shows a targeted approach to inclusivity. To the government, care and support for teaching and learning programs addresses barriers to education; there is stakeholder consultation, where including marginalised communities is emphasised, and this program is being extended to secondary schools, with a focus on inclusivity.

In **Ethiopia**, The New Vision Development Agency (NVDA) actively engages in advocacy and inclusive education, recognizing diversity in the country. The inclusion of staff with diverse backgrounds, including those with physical impairments, demonstrates a commitment to diversity. Extensive training and advocacy efforts, including the implementation of inclusive education projects, highlight practical applications and boost confidence. The Ministry of Education notes that historical factors led to past marginalisation, but current efforts focus on decentralisation and local language education; use of regional languages in education reflects a commitment to inclusivity, and internally displaced people (IDPs) and regions affected by conflicts receive attention in planning, including accelerated learning programs.

The focus in **Kenya** is on empowering communities to articulate concerns independently and fostering self-reliance through skills development, ensuring that community members can engage with policies and bills. Liberia's organisation conducts research and focuses on grassroots education policy implementation. While diversity and inclusion are not standalone indicators, the organisation collects data on various aspects, indicating a comprehensive approach. However, specific details about the involvement of marginalised groups in decision-making are not explicitly provided.

The Government in **Lesotho** notes advocacy for inclusion through laws and policies developed by the Ministry of Education and Training promote diversity and inclusion.

In **Liberia**, marginalised groups are invited to participate in joint education sector reviews at both national and county levels. Emphasis is placed on decentralised actions for data collection and resource allocation processes to involve more people in planning and budgeting.

Malawi's organisations' multifaceted approach demonstrates a comprehensive and structured strategy for involving marginalised groups in decision-making. The use of mother groups, government adoption, consultations at various levels, gender balance, deliberate inclusion, and institutionalised representation in the constitution collectively contribute to a robust and inclusive decision-making process. In Mother's groups one Coalition is on girls' education, indicating a targeted effort to address gender disparities. The organisation employs the mother groups structure to reach out to girls who have dropped out of school. Mother groups are established for each school, ensuring a decentralised and community-based approach. Volunteer women in mother groups, residing near schools, actively participate with a passion for promoting education. The concept of mother groups has been scaled up with government adoption, emphasising a broader reach. The Minister of Education mandates that all schools have a mother group, institutionalising their role in the education system. Another Malawi network ensures gender balance in leadership. Female representation in leadership roles ensures diverse voices in decision-making.

Yet another deliberately includes other marginalised groups in programming through consultations and supporting community groups ensures a holistic approach. Member organisations dealing with disabilities are also part of one of the coalitions not only as members but also represented on the board. This representation is institutionalised in the constitution, emphasising the importance of the involvement of marginalised stakeholders.

Another Malawi network organisation adapts consultations with different stakeholders at the local, district, and national levels. Consultations involving stakeholders in policy-related processes input from various levels, making decision-making more inclusive and reflective of community needs. Further, the constitution mandates designated seats for marginalised stakeholders and the Teachers' Union on the board. This mandatory representation ensures that the voices of marginalised groups, including those dealing with disabilities, are consistently part of decision-making processes at the highest level.

For the government the position is that (a) there is a shift from special needs to inclusive education, extending focus beyond disabilities; (b) collaboration with stakeholders, such as school management committees and mother groups, and a comprehensive approach targeting vulnerable groups to ensure no one is left behind.

The involvement of marginalised groups in **Nigeria** is multifaceted and involves both community-level initiatives and engagement with various levels of government. The active participation in public awareness and media campaigns, establishment of school-based management committees, and recognition of diverse governance structures are all part of the approach to ensure voices of marginalised groups are heard at both local level and considered in educational policy formulation and implementation at higher government levels.

The country's marginalised groups play an active part in global and quarterly campaigns supported under the World Bank's Agile program. Marginalised groups are also mobilised to take part in radio and TV campaigns covering a range of issues, including urging the public to hold the government accountable for education-related budget issues.

In addition, every school is required to have a School-Based Management Committee (SBMC) including community leaders, chiefs, artisans, and mothers, ensuring representation from various community segments. The committee is engaged in school improvement plans and the implementation of programs, reflecting a participatory approach.

In Nigeria, the three levels of government (federal, state, and local) are recognized as governance entities. Community structures, parent associations, districts, and zones act as channels for providing feedback to government authorities. This multi-tiered approach ensures that concerns, desires, and decisions are relayed from the community level to the local, state, and federal government levels. The involvement of marginalised groups within Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps is recognized, with channels established through community and opinion leaders. Educational policy issues are channeled through multiple platforms at the state and federal levels. Representatives in zones, districts, and state levels serve as intermediaries between the school and the government. This structured approach ensures that decisions and policies are communicated bi-directionally, from the grassroots to the federal level and vice versa.

Rwanda aligns with the Continental Education Program (SESA) to ensure inclusive education, reflecting commitment to international goals. Further, focus on SDG number four, showcases Rwanda's commitment to international development goals, influencing national education policies. Presenting a spotlight report in New York demonstrates proactive engagement in global conversations on inclusive education. Locally, marginalised groups in Rwanda, particularly parents, actively participate in school committees, decision-making bodies at the village level, and planning education policies.

Marginalised groups, including indigenous people and individuals with physical disabilities, are integral to project planning, monitoring, and evaluation, and involving marginalised communities in advocacy strategy formulation ensures policies are tailored to their needs. For the government challenges include insufficient budget and inadequate policy application and reference during community dialogues. Moreover marginalised group members of education committees at the school level contribute to decision-making.

In **Sierra Leone** the involvement of marginalised groups in decision-making is contingent on project budgets and this has not been possible yet. Likewise, in Uganda there is limited participation of marginalised groups, especially the disabled, in education policy decision-making and the little there is happens only in urban settings, potentially excluding rural perspectives.

In **Somaliland** the decision-making process involves engaging with communities through focus group discussions to understand their needs and priorities; marginalised groups are given consideration, and their issues and concerns are taken into account during policy development; community heads, MPs, and village leaders are actively involved in policy development, ensuring diverse perspectives are considered. This is acknowledged by the government which acknowledges CSOs play a vital role in supporting education efforts including an image management system implemented by CSOs to monitor progress and the existence of positive relations between the government and local CSOs.

In **Somalia**, civil societies and international organisations like Oxfam and UNHCR play a significant role in ensuring education for all, including refugees and displaced children; key stakeholders from each community, including leaders and consultants, are invited to provide input into education sector plans; Civil society, particularly the NEC, acts as a bridge between decision-makers and communities, ensuring that community voices are reflected in planning.

Somalia's Disability Advocacy Foundation and South Sudan's civil societies actively engage in advocacy to promote inclusive education and address structural challenges. Community empowerment initiatives, including vocational training and awareness programs, aim to uplift marginalised groups and integrate them into the education system.

The NEC in **Tanzania** has established clear Human Rights policies and laws emphasising gender diversity and inclusion of people with disabilities on the board. Prioritising diversity in leadership, considering factors such as gender, social background, and expertise. In Lesotho the Coalition values inclusivity in governance, with representation from various backgrounds and disabilities. The work of the NEC is acknowledged by the Government noting decision-making structures exist at various levels in the education system. Governments also note there are forums for parents, students, and local communities to facilitate discussions. Moreover, there is reported cooperation with decision-making bodies at all levels.

For the **Uganda** Ministry of Education and Sports (a) the slogan "nothing for us without us" is used to ensure marginalised groups are involved in decision making (b) Consultation processes involving NGOs ensure the participation of vulnerable groups, and (c) Government has ensured each government department has a focal point officer overseeing vulnerable groups.

In **Zambia** networks and coalitions are actively engaging with the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders on policy gaps, participating in consultations, and providing input during drafting processes. They are also continuously advocating for comprehensive and inclusive education frameworks, emphasising teacher accountability and reentry policies. They are also running Community Impact Programs to empower marginalised communities, especially youths, and incorporating community views into policymaking.

In **Zimbabwe**, the marginalised groups are actively included in decision-making processes and policy advocacy, collaborating with them for policy briefs. However, policymaking consultations tend to be elitist, with decisions primarily made in city halls, excluding rural perspectives. The NGOs play a focal role, conducting research-based advocacy, ensuring community views are considered before policy submissions.

Recommendations

(1) Countries facing challenges in rural inclusion, such as Zimbabwe and Sierra Leone, should focus on strengthening efforts to involve rural communities in policymaking.

(2) Encourage collaboration between NGOs, civil society, and government bodies to foster inclusive decision-making processes. NGOs play a pivotal role in bridging gaps and ensuring community voices are heard.

(3) Consider adopting structured approaches, as seen in Malawi, where mother groups and constitutional mandates contribute to a robust and inclusive decision-making process.

(4) Align national efforts with global initiatives, as seen in Rwanda's alignment with the Continental Education Program (SESA) and commitment to international development goals.

(5) prioritise diversity in leadership roles to ensure representation from various backgrounds, genders, and disabilities, fostering a more inclusive decision-making environment.

In conclusion, while there are positive efforts in involving marginalised groups in decision-making across African countries, ongoing initiatives should focus on strengthening rural inclusion, promoting collaboration between NGOs and government bodies, adopting structured approaches, aligning national efforts with global initiatives, and prioritising diversity in leadership roles.

Capacity to handle diversity and inclusion in education advocacy (CSO's & Government)

There are diverse approaches and capacities of different countries and organisations in handling diversity and inclusion in education advocacy work. The unique capacities, challenges, and approaches to handling diversity and inclusion in education advocacy work are summarised below. National governments and their partners on the other hand have varying strengths in advocating for diversity and inclusion in education. While some have clear policies, training programs, and collaboration with stakeholders, challenges such as human resource constraints, financial limitations, and ongoing implementation issues persist across different contexts. Ongoing efforts are seen in building capacity at the ministry level, improving teacher training, and involving communities in the advocacy process (Table 3.1).

Egypt

- Having a good team working on education projects, including direct and adult education.
- Engaging in awareness programs for parents and women's empowerment.
- Actively supporting education rights

Eswatini

- Providing training to team and government partners in the education sector.
- Focusing on addressing gender disparities in STEM fields.
- Collaborating with UNESCO and other stakeholders to ensure inclusive education.
- Care and support programs involve partners empowering communities.
- NGOs play a role in demanding policy implementation in schools.
- The main challenge is uncertainty about curriculum specifics.

Ethiopia

- Recognizing diversity and unity in the country.
- Staffing with members that have education backgrounds, and inclusive education training.
- Implementing inclusive education projects, advocating for the rights of children for over 2 decades (NVDA).
- Clear strategies and policies at the ministry level.
- School leadership training with a focus on gender issues.
- Decentralization up to the district level for better planning.
- Challenges include (a) Politicization affecting merit-based decision-making, and (b) Need for better implementation of policies.

Kenya

- Promoting empowerment and self-reliance in communities.
- Identifying training and capacity building as areas for improvement in delivering impactful programs.

Lesotho

- Acknowledging the need for improvement in internal diversity and inclusion.
- Actively working on gender balance within the board.
- Collaborating with government departments for inclusive education and acknowledging the need for further training.
- Stated commitment to diversity and inclusion in vision and mission.
- Specialized training programs for teachers.
- There is a challenge of limited information on specific initiatives.

Liberia

- Focusing on grass-roots education and policy advocacy.
- Collecting data on enrollment, retention, and completion in the education sector.
- Emphasising the need for gender balance within the coalition board and ongoing internal improvements.

Malawi

- Shift towards inclusive education beyond disabilities.
- Collaboration with various stakeholders, including NGOs.
- The challenges include (a)human resource constraints and financial limitations, and (b)obstacles in ensuring all school environments are accessible.

Nigeria

- Having a diverse team with extensive experience in development work and academia.
- Active involvement in various government committees related to education.
- Continuous training and collaboration with partners for effective advocacy.

Rwanda

- Medium capacity, focusing on engagement at the national level actively involved in developing education sector plans and strategies, and acknowledging the need for capacity development at the community level.
- Another organisation (USADEC) Rwanda (USADEC) has four experienced staff addressing diversity and exclusion; conducts participatory research action and advocacy brief note development, and prioritises training on gender, inclusion, and human rights in development projects.
- Active government initiatives to address challenges.
- Specialized training programs for teachers and adapted curricula.
- The main challenge is limited information on specific initiatives.

South Sudan

- Engages in capacity-building through awareness-raising, training, and advocacy planning.
- Empowers local advocacy platforms for effective community-level advocacy.
- Recognizes the need for continuous training to improve advocacy tactics.

Somaliland

- Conducts awareness-raising training and capacity building.
- Faces challenges due to funding gaps.
- Implements online capacity-building programs.
- Governments Collaboration with international organisations for displaced communities.
- Government Image management system for decision-making and resource allocation.

Somalia

- Focusing on formulating inclusive education policies aligned with international standards.
- Developing a communication and media strategy for advocacy.
- Recognizing the importance of effective communication in driving positive change.
- Staff training on advocacy techniques and research dissemination.

Sierra Leone

- Training and capacitating members for effective advocacy;
- Capacity-building through awareness-raising, training, and advocacy planning.
- Collaborating with partners to provide training in various areas.
- Implementing projects like the EOL project for adaptive management.
- Empowering local advocacy platforms for effective community-level advocacy.
- Recognizing the need for continuous training to improve advocacy tactics.

Tanzania

- Identification and training teams for learners with disabilities.
- Special programs for girls, including building special schools.
- However, this is an ongoing process, and challenges persist.

Uganda

- Conducting capacity-building for members in gender in education and other educational frontiers.
- Ensuring marginalised communities take the lead in project activities.
- Emphasising clear messaging on education access for all children.
- Teachers trained to manage diverse learning needs.
- Teacher policy emphasising diversity training in institutions.
- This is a gradual implementation rather than a massive approach.

Zambia

- Leveraging the strength of its 91 member organisations for advocacy.
- Partnership with organisations outside its mandate for specific advocacy issues.
- Engaging in capacity-building through training on diverse educational challenges.
- Individuals organisation has a skilled team well-versed in education governance and project implementation; exposes the team to various training and capacity-building opportunities, and utilises acquired capacity to advocate for inclusive education policies.

Zimbabwe

- Conducting policy analysis training for affiliates to enhance advocacy efforts.
- Deploying a diverse group with expertise in different areas within the education sector.
- Highlighting the capacity of staff and affiliates in advocacy skills.
- ZAFOD focuses on building the capacity of organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs); provides training on influencing, lobbying, and inclusion, and shares skills with affiliates and civil society organisations through an inclusion training manual.

Policy Gaps and Supports for Diversity and Inclusion



National governments recognize various policy gaps related to resources, attitudes, and fair treatment. Efforts are being made to bridge these gaps by emphasising sensitization, capacity building, adjustments to curricula, and the development of inclusive education policies. The focus is on ensuring that policies are implemented effectively at all levels, from the national to the district level, with an emphasis on monitoring and support.

In Ethiopia, the Ministry of Education recognizes that policies need to be unpacked and implemented down to the district level. There is however a gap in expert availability and resources to do this. Government advocates for capacity building, mindset change, and inclusive regulations. It also emphasises the importance of systematic and third-party verified monitoring.

Eswatini government reports implementation gaps due to attitudes, cultural beliefs, and norms. It calls for sensitising communities, schools, and key implementers about existing policies.

The Lesotho government blames the inadequacy of resources (financial, human, and material) for the gaps in Special Needs Education. There are therefore notable unfair treatment of people with severe and profound disabilities. The Ministry calls for improved resource allocation and fair treatment.

In Malawi the government acknowledges the importance of incorporating inclusive education practices in preservice curricula. reports a need to revise pre-service curricula for teacher education. It calls for strong collaboration and guidance from partners and a focus on effective early identification through multidisciplinary teams and infrastructure development. Gaps remain, especially in rural areas, where specialized training resources are limited. Efforts to bridge gaps are still limited and there is recognition of the need for more trained personnel.

The Ministry of Education in Rwanda notes there is limited information on specific policy gaps. It supports programs in school materials and education program elaboration.

Tanzania Government deems the policies are sufficient. However there is a need to address demand and ensure sufficient resources for inclusive education. Government acknowledges the role of parents and guardians in fulfilling responsibilities.

Uganda has identified gaps for inclusive education in framing of the teacher policy and the ongoing development of a national inclusive education policy. In addition the inclusive education course addresses different learning needs among learners. Plans for adjusting other policies in the future to involve all categories of learners.

Research, Monitoring and Evaluation of Diversity and Inclusion in Advocacy

Education advocacy network organisations and coalitions in different countries employ a variety of strategies for research, monitoring, and evaluation of educational policies depending on their skills and capacities, and the specific contexts and challenges in their respective countries. The most common approaches include community engagement, legal frameworks, collaboration, and data-driven advocacy. These countries employ various tools and mechanisms to research, monitor, and evaluate diversity and inclusion efforts. They emphasise the importance of data collection, real-time monitoring, and the use of specific metrics or indicators. Additionally, efforts are made to engage stakeholders, sensitize communities, and address cultural and social challenges. Regular reporting and discussions at different levels ensure that the progress is tracked, and challenges are addressed promptly (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Research, Monitoring and Evaluation of Diversity and Inclusion approaches by CSOs and Governments

<i>Country</i>	<i>Diversity and Inclusion CSO approaches</i>	<i>Approaches by Government Ministries</i>
Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creation of policy papers, engaging in dialogues, and participating in round table discussions to express opinions and advocate for improvements in education.	There is data on inclusive education but lack of initiative in implementation, and a dedicated department responsible for monitoring inclusive education.
Eswatini	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developed a framework to assess the impact of programs and identify gaps in the education sector.• Challenges include limited indicators in the existing education management and information systems.	There is data on inclusive education but lack of initiative in implementation, and a dedicated department responsible for monitoring inclusive education.

Table 3.2: Research, Monitoring and Evaluation of Diversity and Inclusion approaches by CSOs and Governments

<i>Country</i>	<i>Diversity and Inclusion CSO approaches</i>	<i>Approaches by Government Ministries</i>
Ethiopia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging local government bureaus, community-based organisations (CBOs), faith-based organisations (FBOs), parent-teacher associations (PTAs), and other stakeholders to obtain feedback and understanding challenges in policy implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government emphasises the importance of data collection through intentional efforts. Advocates for a system that ensures valid, reliable, and real-time data. It utilises an education management information system but emphasises the need for real-time data. Recommends the use of trajectories, monthly, and quarterly monitoring.
Kenya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring and evaluating initiatives at the project level, engaging in bill tracking and policy evaluations, submitting reports to working groups, and emphasising advocacy activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is data on inclusive education but lack of initiative in implementation, and a dedicated department responsible for monitoring inclusive education.
Lesotho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting studies on specific areas of interest, such as learners with disabilities and teachers' perceptions of comprehensive sexuality education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilizes indicators including Continuous Multiple Surveys (2010), Education Statistical Bulletin (2015), and Learners Enrollment Ratio (2015).
Nigeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government conducts personal audits to understand school populations, gender parity, provision issues, and social dynamics affecting segments of the population. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitors from the highest to the lower levels. Monitoring and evaluation at government, ministry, regional, district, ward, and school levels. Indicators: Enrolment, succession, and performance are key indicators.

Table 3.2: Research, Monitoring and Evaluation of Diversity and Inclusion approaches by CSOs and Governments

<i>Country</i>	<i>Diversity and Inclusion CSO approaches</i>	<i>Approaches by Government Ministries</i>
Sierra Leone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring government policies and engaging communities to ensure promises made during elections are implemented. 	
Tanzania		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitors from the highest to the lower levels. Monitoring and evaluation at government, ministry, regional, district, ward, and school levels. Enrolment, succession, and performance are key indicators.
Malawi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration with like-minded organisations locally and internationally; Engaging government officials, and conducting specific research studies; Capacity building and learning from others' experiences; Conducting policy reviews, translating collected data into policy recommendations, and engaging in periodic dialogues with the government to track progress on commitments; Emphasising constitutional provisions that guarantee education as a right for every person, including marginalised communities, and promoting affirmative action to address socioeconomic and gender gaps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on early identification and intervention. Aims to establish model resource centres within schools. Emphasises the need for domestic financing and revising preservice curricula.

Table 3.2: Research, Monitoring and Evaluation of Diversity and Inclusion approaches by CSOs and Governments

<i>Country</i>	<i>Diversity and Inclusion CSO approaches</i>	<i>Approaches by Government Ministries</i>
Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting research, lobbying, and engaging with relevant policymakers and education stakeholders for quality education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full-fledged department of monitoring and evaluation. Quarterly monitoring of activities in schools. Reports discussed in senior management meetings and presented to the parliament's education committee.
Rwanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using social media, websites, radio, television, newspapers, and community open days to communicate, disseminate data, and evaluate diversity and inclusion success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures success through the number of marginalised groups educated and schools with inclusion infrastructures.
Somaliland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging communities through a participatory approach, implementing activities, and sending a mini-team to the field to check data related to marginalised groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducts surveys to assess the impact of strategies. Engages in awareness campaigns for teachers, communities, and stakeholders. Invests in creating accessible and inclusive environments. Addresses cultural restrictions.
Somalia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting research studies to identify disparities and challenges in disability-inclusive education, establishing indicators for monitoring, and using different channels for data dissemination. Evaluation indicators include interviews, community involvement, and level of change. 	

Table 3.2: Research, Monitoring and Evaluation of Diversity and Inclusion approaches by CSOs and Governments

<i>Country</i>	<i>Diversity and Inclusion CSO approaches</i>	<i>Approaches by Government Ministries</i>
Zambia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using platforms like the Projects Coordinating Committee (PCC) and Parliamentary submissions to advocate for inclusive education. • Participating in social accountability at the school level to understand budget utilisation and holding the government accountable. • Acknowledging challenges in national-level data collection due to funding constraints and expressing the hope to establish mechanisms for it in the future. 	
Zimbabwe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting research studies to inform policy recommendations and monitoring the implementation of disability frameworks. 	



FUTURE PLANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CSO-led education policy advocacy initiatives in the Horn, Eastern, Southern Africa region, and West African states demonstrate a shared commitment to fostering inclusive and equitable education systems. National governments in the Ministries of education of some of these countries reported plans for inclusivity in education, focusing on early intervention, resource mobilisation, policy alignment, and collaboration among stakeholders. They recognize ongoing challenges and emphasise the importance of continuous improvement, awareness creation, and collaboration at various levels to achieve inclusive and equitable education.

Addressing issues of diversity to ensure inclusion of marginalised groups, equity and quality of education requires a multi-faceted, and holistic approach involving improvements in infrastructure, teacher recruitment and retention strategies. It calls for targeted investment in educational resources, and policies that promote equal access to quality education across geographical locations. It's crucial for policymakers to consider the unique challenges faced by rural communities to create sustainable solutions for improving education quality.

1

Several countries, including Egypt and Lesotho, prioritise integrating education policies into organisational strategies for a more comprehensive and effective approach. Advocacy for the development of diversity policies, specifically addressing issues related to immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees, are planned by Sport-Aid Development Trust in Zambia.

2

Emphasis on civil society organisations working collectively, collaborating with government boards, and networking with other organisations for a more substantial and collective impact on education reforms.

3

Recommendations for inclusive committee structures, transparency through Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) sections, and a shift towards systems approaches, is recommended in Lesotho and Eswatini.

4

Collective action is emphasised in Kenya for promoting inclusivity, advocating for disability-inclusive skills training for teachers in Zambia, and engaging in collaborative advocacy for diversity and inclusion in Liberia. Shared future plans envisioning the minimization or eradication of diversity and discrimination by 2026, as seen in Sierra Leone.

5

Advocacy for the implementation of national policies on girls' education in Liberia and prioritising diversity and inclusion tied to foundational learning.

6

A call for more research on the effectiveness of education policies, prioritising evidence creation, and developing clear indicators for informed decision-making, as evident in Uganda and Kenya.

7

Collaborative efforts with members of parliament, engaging with parliamentary committees, and leveraging positive political atmospheres to influence education access, as observed in Sierra Leone, Zambia, and Egypt.

8

Addressing digital literacy challenges, especially highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic, and advocating for disability-inclusive skills training for teachers, as seen in Eswatini and Zambia.

9

Collaboration with like-minded organisations, engagement with stakeholders, and advocacy for increased budget allocation, as demonstrated in Rwanda and Zimbabwe. Collaboration with various stakeholders, including government entities, community-based organisations, and faith-based organisations, is crucial. This multi-stakeholder approach ensures a well-rounded and inclusive strategy.

10

Initiatives aiming for sustainable change and breaking the cycle of poverty through equitable and inclusive education systems, as expressed by Comfort in Egypt.

11

Organisations should tailor their approaches to the local context, considering cultural nuances and perceptions. Addressing accusations of cultural dilution requires a nuanced communication strategy.

12

While engaging in diverse activities is essential, organisations should ensure that primary focuses, such as education advocacy, receive adequate attention and resources. Clear communication about organisational priorities can help manage expectations.

13

Recognizing the dynamic nature of political landscapes, organisations should build resilience and adaptability into their strategies. Establishing relationships beyond specific political terms can mitigate disruptions due to regime changes.

14

Aligning efforts with global frameworks, as seen in Eswatini's commitment to SDGs, provides a broader context for advocacy. Understanding international studies and addressing global issues like gender disparities contributes to a more comprehensive approach.

Country Specific Recommendations

Education Policy Advocacy in **Egypt** has an existing strategic plan addressing education policies and (a) aims to focus on integrating education policies into the organisational strategy; (b) network with other organisations for collective impact. The organisation recommends civil society organisations should work together in supporting and improving the education system; (c) collaborate with government boards to enhance support for education reforms and establishment of policies that ensure education equality for all citizens and make education policies more effective.

Eswatini network recommends (a) concentrating on specific areas such as HIV prevention, violence in schools, and life skills education and (b) due to limitations of a project-based approach and there should therefore be a shift towards a systems approach.

The main Coalition plan is to undertake consultations at the country level to address the impact of COVID-19 on education and the future of education. The Ministry of Education recognises knowledge and collaboration gaps that need improvement and has assigned experts, including special needs and social workers. In addition, the government is continuously updating strategies and guidelines based on feedback from stakeholders.

Ethiopia Networks and Coalition (a) recommends emphasis on advocacy for the rights to basic education for disadvantaged and excluded children; (b) Invites funding agencies, consortiums, philanthropic institutions, and government bodies to join efforts for children with disabilities.

For the government initiating an education transformation program to address the crisis in learning outcomes has been a priority and it has five outcomes namely:

- Making schools learning centres for all.
- Transforming teaching methods.
- Emphasising monitoring, evaluation, and quality assurance.
- Decentralising planning to the school and community levels.
- Focusing on marginalised and out-of-school children.

Kenya networks recommend (a) collective action from communities, governments, and stakeholders for promoting inclusivity; (b) prioritising evidence creation and collection for informed decision-making, and (c) Advocacy for clear and adequate budgets for education to promote diversity and inclusion. They plan developing clear indicators and consistently monitoring them.

In **Liberia**, while pointing out challenges in collaborating with local education groups, the network (a) stresses the need for improved collaboration with the government, and (b) advocates for the implementation of the national policy on girls' education to address diversity issues.

For **Lesotho** the network (a) recommends for a more inclusive committee structure through the co-opting of politically elected individuals and those with expertise; (b) proper financing and implementation of the current curriculum to address inclusion and diversity, and (c) setting up a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) section for transparency in progress reporting.

Efforts to improve the quality of education in Liberia should address these geographical and structural differences. This includes targeted investment in rural education infrastructure, teacher training and recruitment strategies, community engagement programs, and policies that promote gender equality and access to education for all. Collaboration between government entities, NGOs, and local communities is essential to create sustainable solutions.

Malawi Networks recommend (a) Increased advocacy for sustained efforts in inclusive education; (b) collaboration with like-minded organisations; creation of a directorate for inclusive education, and (e) government to be proactive in policy implementation and resource allocation for inclusive education and diversity. The government on their part emphasises early identification and classification of learners; establishing model resource centres for additional support; resources mobilisation, especially through domestic financing, and collaborative approach across ministries and organisations.

Nigeria Networks recommends (a) understanding differences in location, social norms, and values for effective education solutions; (b) Increased donor support with donor partners to support locally based organisations addressing inclusion issues, and one coalition plans to champion the cause of second chance education for all, especially in Kano State.

Uganda Network (a) Calls for more research on the effectiveness of education policies and infrastructure development; (b) Stresses the need for open communication between different education organs and bridging gaps in curriculum development and testing. The Network's key plan is to continue lobbying for the development and implementation of the inclusive education policy. The Ministry of Education and sports reports its working towards finalising inclusive education policies; emphasises the importance of awareness creation and understanding of inclusive education, and recommends continuous awareness creation and policy reviews to accommodate different diversities.

The **Sierra Leone** Coalition has realised over two million enrollments since 2018 and the education budget increased to 22%. Advocacy Strategies include (a) engaging with the Education Committee in Parliament (b) Oversight and supervision by parliamentary committees. Future Plans and Recommendations are (a) envisioning the minimization or eradication of diversity and discrimination by 2026, and (b) Collaboration for continuous improvement of the education system.

Rwanda coalitions recommend (a) Collaborative monitoring with the Ministry of Education (b) Verification surveys on grant implementation and ICT-based programs; (c) Revisit and rethink program implementation and ensure the involvement of education stakeholders at the grassroots, and (d) CSO involvement in the development of policies like school feeding and dropout strategies. They are planning advocacy for increased budget allocation. The Government recommends the elaboration of adequate and updated policies for inclusion and diversity in education.

Somaliland's advocacy strategy (a) is the use of social media, website, radio, and TV for communication (b) Developing evaluation indicators include interviews, community involvement, and level of change. (c) Staff training on advocacy techniques and research dissemination. Future Plans and Recommendations include (i) Collaboration among national NGOs for evidence on diversity challenges, and (ii) mobilisation of funds allocated for advocacy. The government in Somaliland has a vision to expand inclusivity in education, especially in remote areas; focusing on increasing enrollment rates in special needs education and will emphasise the importance of continued support from local and international communities.

Somalia (DAF - Disability Advocacy Forum) targeted campaigns for disability-inclusive education and collaboration with international organisations for knowledge exchange. Future plans and recommendations include (i) Collaboration among national NGOs for evidence on diversity challenges; (ii) mobilisation of funds allocated for advocacy (iii) Engaging in constructive policy dialogues and consultations and (iv) Proposing alternative or improved policies on disability-inclusive education.

In **Liberia** HOPE (a) emphasises completing primary education and improving learning outcomes; (b) Undertakes advocacy for (i) diversity and inclusion tied to foundational learning; (ii) retaining and recruiting female teachers, and (iii) ensuring fair recruitment processes.

Tanzania the National Education Coalition (NEC) and Action on Disability and Development (ADD) future plans are for (a) massive awareness of amended education training policy (b) Discussions for teacher training and curriculum advocacy (c) Building good relations with education ministries and (d) Coordination with partners for resource allocation.

South Sudan's WOJE, future plans include (a) Diversity advocacy for elimination of discrimination and bias in education (b) Equitable resource allocation for diverse populations (c) Community Involvement through encouraging active involvement of parents and communities, and (d) advocacy for inclusive governance structures.

The **Lesotho** National Federation of organisations of the Disabled future plans are for (a) Advocacy for the formalisation of the Peaceful School Model (b) Coordination among organisations, and (c) ensuring resource availability. The government seeks to align interventions with SDGs 4, 5, 8, and 10 for inclusive and equitable quality education, gender equality, economic growth, and reduced inequality and is focusing on developing inclusive curricula and sensitising communities.

In **Zimbabwe** network organisations share a commitment to effective policy implementation and financial resource mobilisation, recognizing the critical role of inclusive policies and adequate funding in achieving their advocacy objectives. Both Southern Africa Federation of the Disabled (SAFOD) and Kuyenda Collective emphasise the importance of policy implementation for achieving their advocacy goals. SAFOD recommends (a) the utilisation of SADC Disability Protocol as a framework for advocacy efforts and need for a disability protocol tailored to the specific context of the SADC region, addressing regional differences; (b) Inclusive Policies with changes starting with the development of inclusive policies catering to all members of society; (c) closing the wide gap experienced between Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) and those without disabilities through inclusive policies; (d) holding governments accountable for ensuring the implementation of inclusive education policies; (e) inclusive education systems in upholding human rights, amplifying the voices of children with disabilities, and (f) inclusive education systems in amplifying the voices of children with disabilities and building capabilities, and building capacities for meaningful participation in various aspects of life, and ensuring that children with disabilities enjoy their full spectrum of rights through inclusive education. Kuyenda Collective recommends for (a) implementation of existing policies; (b) revamping joint monitoring with the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education for effective policy implementation (c) addressing the financing challenge through working with the government to formulate an Act of Parliament to ensure sufficient financial resources are allocated to education.

All three **Zambia** organisations emphasise the importance of inclusive education and address the unique needs of marginalised groups. Initiatives include addressing digital literacy, advocating for disability-inclusive skills training for teachers, and influencing policies at various levels. They also have political engagement, collaboration with stakeholders, and advocacy for policy development as common strategies. The organisations collectively aim to bring about sustainable change, leverage positive political atmospheres, and advocate for inclusive policies to ensure an equitable and accessible educational system in Zambia. They focus on collaboration, accountability, and policy influence reflects a comprehensive approach to education policy advocacy.

Comfort observes a growing interest in inclusion and diversity within the organisation and aims to create sustainable change in the educational landscape. Comfort (a) utilises programs like the Leonard Guide to empower students with skills and support for overcoming academic obstacles, fostering a positive school environment and addressing the unique needs of marginalised and vulnerable groups; (b) Working on collaboration with the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders to influence policies and practices; (c) prioritises access and quality of education, and the overall well-being of students;

(d) Aims to contribute to breaking the cycle of poverty through an inclusive and equitable educational system; (g) Has developed an advocacy plan for disability-inclusive skills training for teachers at all education levels; (h) Plans to engage the Parliamentary Caucus for disability issues, especially regarding budgeting and holding policymakers accountable.

Vision of Leverage aims to leverage the positive political atmosphere towards disability inclusion to translate political goodwill to the district and community levels; Plans to engage with stakeholders at every level, including members of parliament, to influence education access through regular joint advocacy meetings and updates for fostering awareness and collaboration.

Sport-Aid Development Trust aims to advocate for the development of a diversity policy to address issues related to children from immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees. Plans to collaborate with the Zambia National Education Coalition to advocate for the development of a diversity policy.

