



# Promoting inclusive early childhood education in Kenya

**Project timeline:** February 2020 – December 2023

**Project budget:** £1.1 million

**Capturing the power of collaboration:** Kenya Ministry of Education, Kenya Ministry of Health, Teachers Service Commission, United Disabled Persons of Kenya, Homa Bay County Disability Forum, Homa Bay County, Suba EDCE Teacher Training, Sightsavers, Sightsavers Research Centre, Humanity & Inclusion, Leonard Cheshire, Sense International, Institute for Development Studies

**Every child has the right to education.** However, children with disabilities in low and lower middle-income countries – including 50 million children younger than 5 years with developmental disabilities<sup>1</sup> - are more likely to be left out of school or to receive a sub-standard education, compared to children without disabilities. In fact, people with disabilities are 30% less likely to complete primary education, compared to persons without disabilities<sup>2</sup>. **That is why Disability Inclusive Development - Inclusive Futures is part of the global movement to transform inclusive education for children with disabilities in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). We are working with partners to open up education systems - and children's future opportunities.**



## The situation in Kenya

**In Kenya, there is a lack of quality early childhood education provision for children with disabilities aged 3 – 5.** Educational and Assessment Resource Centres operated by the Ministry of Education are tasked with identification, assessment, intervention and school placement of children with disabilities. However,

with only 73 such centres<sup>3</sup> serving Kenya's population of 20 million children<sup>4</sup> – and staffed with just four officers specialising in early childhood education<sup>5</sup> – the need is significant. With little service provision, there is limited evidence of what works in early childhood education for children with disabilities in Kenya.

## How we have helped

We brought together a consortium of experts to improve early childhood education for children with disabilities in Kenya, including Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), local and national government, education practitioners, non-governmental organisations and research institutes.

Working with school management teams, teachers, children with disabilities and parents, in varied settings from rural homes to a refugee camp, we tested and identified low-cost system strengthening strategies to improve the quality of early education for children with disabilities. We also created new guidance on disability inclusive early childhood education in Kenya. **The project reached marginalised communities and tested approaches in Homa Bay County and Kakuma Refugee Camp through four pillars of action:**

- **At community level** we supported parents and guardians to better understand the value of inclusive early childhood education and to understand that children with disabilities have a right to education which proved crucial to increasing enrolment. Newly formed parent support groups and a Positive Parenting manual empowered parents with the skills and confidence to support their children to learn through play and seek services.
- **At system strengthening level** we worked closely with teachers and school management to make early learning inclusive of disability and gender. Through a new resource pack developed in line with Kenya's early childhood education curriculum and delivery of teacher training, we saw the growth of sustainable and effective classroom management. Accessibility assessments and action plans guided schools on infrastructure modifications to improve inclusion for the long term.
- **At governance and policy level** we wanted local and national government commitments to scale up inclusive early childhood education in Kenya. Partner OPDs led the development of effective advocacy plans, which focused on mechanisms to improve collaboration between health and social service providers. Through advocacy, partner OPDs were also able directly input into County Integrated Development Plans which regulate financing of early childhood education in Kenya.
- **Participatory learning and evidence generation** informed the adaptation of project implementation to ensure outcomes for children with disabilities. We measured the impact of inclusive early education on school progress and monitored a cohort of children with disabilities to assess participation and outcomes using the International Development and Early Learning Assessment tool.



“Society now sees her as a different person. I’m now certain that she can learn”

Absalom, parent, on his daughter Irene.

[Read more impact stories on our project webpage.](#)

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# Project impact to date



**Locally led community engagement achieved increased enrolment at our nine partner pre-primary schools - with almost 600 children with disabilities under five years old accessing inclusive early education.**

Seventy teachers, school managers and education officials were trained in disability inclusion and how to support learners with different needs. These professionals subsequently formed school-based inclusion teams, raising the profile of inclusive early education at all partner schools. As a result, over 1,500 children with disabilities aged over five years also indirectly benefitted from project activities.



**Alongside this, thanks to effective advocacy led by OPDs, we were excited to see active involvement of government officials at Educational and Assessment Resource Centres resulting in increased government ownership of the project.**

## Discovering what works

The project delivered extensive learning resources through focus groups, peer researchers, situational analysis and impact evaluations. Find out more in [our blog on experiences using the IDELA tool](#), our report [Experiences and expectations of inclusive pre-primary education in Kenya](#) and our [Impact Evaluation Baseline Report](#).

## Delivering change for children with disabilities

Disability inclusion is critical for reaching the Global Goals and we have produced the evidence on what works in a range of different areas. We now need the allocation of resources for disability inclusion in education to turn evidence into action.

**To find out more visit**

[inclusivefutures.org/inclusive-education](https://inclusivefutures.org/inclusive-education) or contact Claire Walsh at [cwalsh@sightsavers.org](mailto:cwalsh@sightsavers.org).

### Endnotes

- 1 Sightsavers, Inclusive Education Strategy. Available online at: <https://www.sightsavers.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Sightsavers-Inclusive-Education-Strategy.pdf>
- 2 International Disability Alliance (2020), What an Inclusive, Equitable, Quality Education Means to us, p.16. Available online at: [https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/ida\\_ie\\_flagship\\_report\\_english\\_29.06.2020.pdf](https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/ida_ie_flagship_report_english_29.06.2020.pdf)
- 3 Inclusive Futures / Institute of Development Studies (2020), Disability Inclusive Development Kenya Situational Analysis June 2020 update, p.27
- 4 World Bank (2023), Population ages 0-14, total – Kenya 2021. Available online at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.0014.TO?locations=KE>
- 5 Kenya Ministry of Education (2018), National Survey on Children with Disabilities and Special Needs in Education, 2018, p.15. Available online at: <https://www.kise.ac.ke/system/files/2020-07/Official%20Research%20Report%20on%20Disability%20Published%20by%20KISE%20%282018%29.pdf>

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