Policy brief: Policy and Secondary data analyses on disability and development in the Ugandan’s education sector

Key policy messages

- While disability and education are often discussed in broad terms, a growing body of data clearly shows that different types of impairments affect access to education very differently. This has significant implications about the modes of interventions in this sector for a wide range of children and adults with disabilities.
- At almost all levels of education, access is unfavourable for the persons with disabilities compared to their non-disabled peers. This is of significant concern when considering disability and education in Uganda.
- The policy making process related to access to education, as well as the implementation of education programmes that are intended to be disability-inclusive, appears to rarely have had meaningful involvement of people with disabilities and disability people’s organisations (DPOs). This lack of inclusion in the policy making process as well as the implementation process represents a lost opportunity for design and implementation of effective educational programmes for learners with disabilities.
- Inclusion has furthermore been hampered by inconsistency in the definition of disability across the policies analysed as well in national surveys.
- Lack of political commitment and inadequate budget allocation appears to be significantly affecting the implementation and management of education-related disability policies.

Overview

Disability in Uganda can no longer be ignored. The results from the Census 2014 show that 14% of the population (5+ years) live with a disability significant enough to affect their daily lives. The same source shows that more females (15%) have a disability than males (10%). Disability was also found to be higher in urban areas (15%) compared to the rural areas (12%). Further analysis of the Census 2014 data show that the Northern region (15%) had the highest proportion of people with disabilities; followed by the Eastern region (14%). Significantly, these two regions also exhibit higher levels of poverty compared to other regions of the country as illustrated by results from the Uganda National Household Survey of 2012.

This research focused on the analysis of what were defined as ‘major,’ ‘minor’ and ‘cross-cutting or general’ polices in the education sector. Major policies are key national policies aimed to address the whole population, or those which directly or to a greater extent address issues of disability. Minor policies included those that were more specific to certain sectors or policies that had been superseded by current national education policies. Cross-cutting or ‘general’ polices are those not specific to a sector but intended to address cut across broad development issues and agendas. Major policies analysed were: Special Needs and Inclusive Education Policy, 2011; Uganda Education

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1 Defined as organisations run by and on behalf of people with disabilities
Act, 2008; Business, Technical, and Vocational Educational Training (BTVET); and the Strategic Plan, 2011. Minor policies were: Early Childhood Policy, 2013; Guidelines to Implementing Universal Primary Education (UPE), 1998; and Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act, 2001. The cross-cutting policies considered were: The Constitution, 1995 (Amended 2005); Uganda Vision 2040; the National Development Plan; the Equal Opportunities Policy, 2006; and the Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) Policy, 2012.

Content analysis was employed on these policies by using a scale with different criteria and scores. Policies were scored against six criteria in terms of content related to persons with disabilities: rights, accessibility, inclusivity, national implementation plan, enforcement mechanisms, budgetary concerns, and information management. Each of these criteria was scored on a scale of 1-4 depending on how disability is addressed: 1 (weak); 2 (questionable); 3 (medium); and 4 (high). In the case of people with disability, a ‘high’ score in an education-related policy would mean the policy explicitly acknowledges that all learners have a right to inclusive education at every level of education and specifically cites learners with disabilities; ‘medium’ means that the policy explicitly acknowledges that all learners have a right to inclusive education and specifically mentions learners with disabilities, but does not do so consistently throughout the policy; ‘questionable’ would mean that the policy states there is a right to education for all learners but does not mention disabled learners explicitly nor mentions inclusive education (for example, such a policy make mention of disabled learners but only in the context of special education such as special schools); and a ‘weak’ score would mean that there is no mention of inclusive education or of the right of learners with disabilities to education.

Context was also considered, and the major policies were analysed with consideration of three major elements: context, actors involved and the policy development process. In this regard the context constituted a description of the national and international political, economic and cultural factors that could have had an impact on the development of the policy. The process also included analysis of whether DPOs were included in the writing or implementation of the policy. All these pillars are considered important in determining a policy’s subsequent robustness and acceptability.

The policy analysis was supplemented by secondary data analysis of key existing national surveys and censuses, focusing primarily on the Uganda Demographic Health Survey, 2011; the Uganda National Housing Survey, 2013; and the Census 2014. The Washington Group Short Set of Questions on disability statistics was used in these surveys, which identifies impairments in respondents in six functional domains: difficulty seeing, difficulty hearing, difficulty walking or climbing steps, difficulty remembering or concentrating, difficulty with self-care such as dressing and eating, and difficulty communicating.

The results presented here form part of a larger research project: Bridging the Gap: examining disability and development in four African countries. The research programme is based at the

2 www.washingtongroup–disability.com
Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre, UCL, UK, and is funded by the UK Economic and Social Science Research Council and the UK Department for International Development.

Results

Based on the policy analysis and secondary data analysis, four critical issues emerge that are of importance to policy makers, practitioners and advocates:

**Key message 1**

While disability and education are discussed in broad terms, the type of an individual’s disability has a profound effect on their ability to access education and potentially to move forward within the educational system. In the Uganda National Household Survey 2009/10, the effects of disability type on ability of children between 6-24 years to attend school was analysed. The proportion of children and young people whose ability to attend school was affected ‘all the time’ because of their impairment was strikingly different depending on their impairment: difficulty seeing, 7.1%; difficulty hearing, 19.2%; mobility difficulties, 6.0%; difficulty remembering and concentrating, 24.8%; difficulty with self-care, 11.8%; and difficulty communicating, 21.4%. As can be observed, children with remembering/concentration difficulties were affected most significantly and this was followed by those with communication barriers.

**Key message 2**

Using 2011 Uganda Demographic Health Survey data, results show significantly lower access to education among children with disabilities compared to their non-disabled peers. A higher percentage of persons with disabilities (14%) had no education compared to only 7% among the non-disabled persons. The same data set shows that 63.4% or persons with disability compared to 52.2% of non-disabled had not completed primary education level. Surprisingly, this situation was reversed at secondary level, with 22.5% of disabled people having not completed secondary school, compared with 40.5% of non-disabled people. This finding warrants further exploration. Although data do not allow comparative discussion of tertiary level education, projection of the trends from primary and secondary suggests that tertiary level education for persons with disabilities is very rare. In the same data set, self-care, communication and hearing-impaired persons were associated with higher proportions of persons with no education compared to other forms of impairments.

**Key message 3**

The process of the policy enactment of the major educational policies do not systematically include DPOs. This has led to the enactment of policies where disability is not explicitly acknowledged and where DPOs are not part of oversight mechanisms to ensure effective ongoing inclusion. For example, disability issues are not explicitly acknowledged in the Education Act (2008) or the BTVET Strategic Plan (2011). This lack of inclusivity of DPOs has led to the application of definitions of disability that are not consistent across these education-related policy documents. This is also true
of the Special Needs and Inclusive Education Act (2011) where the definition of disability is different from that contained in other national documents, as well as differing from the definition in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

**Key message 4**

The level of political commitment in respect to systematic inclusion of disability in all education policies seem is unclear, despite ratification of the CRPD by the national government in Uganda, and a strong national disability policy. However, despite strong policies, implementation remains weak, and this lack of commitment can also be found in the failure to enact the Special Needs and Inclusive Education Policy, which remains in draft form. Moreover, this same policy includes neither an implementation plan nor a management information systems plan. Additionally, many of the cross-cutting polices, such as the ICT policy (2012) and Equal Opportunities Policy (2006), are not part of those sectors that receive high priority in the national annual budgets, thanks partly to limited political commitment.

**Recommendations**

In view of the results presented above in respect of disability and education, we can recommend:

- Given the evidence that different types of disability affect access to education differently, efforts should be made by all stakeholders to better implement existing education policies but also to develop targeted interventions that are disability-specific and prioritise interventions focused on those types of disabilities which most affect access to education.

- Inclusivity of DPOs and other disability advocacy experts in both policy-making process and policy implementation and oversight should be mandatory. Input from such stakeholders would both help enact meaningful policy but also could ensure that they are robust, acceptable, technically sound and with lasting positive ramifications for the people with disabilities.

- Government needs to show commitment in formulating and implementing inclusion of disability in all educational policy. Adequate funding allocation in national budgets is vital to ensuring that policies have the capacity for effective implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation.

- The draft Inclusive Education Policy should be finalised and enacted as a matter of priority in order to put the measures in place to ensure that children and learners with disabilities are able to access mainstream education on an equal basis with non-disabled young people.

**Further reading**

For more information on this research, visit the project website: [gap.leonardcheshire.org](http://gap.leonardcheshire.org)
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