

Sub-Saharan Africa fact sheet – 2020 GEM Report.

[Bit.ly/2020gemreport](https://bit.ly/2020gemreport)

Embargo : 23 June



Persistence of exclusion:

- Half of the world's out-of-school-children are in sub-Saharan Africa, totalling ninety-seven million children and youth and growing, with poverty the main constraint to access.
- Without improvement more than one in ten adults in the region will not have completed primary school by 2050.
- Despite a target for universal upper secondary completion by 2030, it shows that there are at least 16 countries in the region with hardly any poor rural young women completing secondary school.
- In the United Republic of Tanzania, about 1 in 2,650 people have albinism. Only half of children with albinism complete primary school. In Zimbabwe and parts of Zambia, children with albinism attend mainstream schools, where inclusion can be challenging. Teachers may fear teaching these children.
- In Uganda, less than half of eligible children in refugee-hosting districts have access to preschool
- Exclusion can happen even when in school: 78% of grade 4 students reported having been bullied at least once a month in South Africa
- Grade repetition, practiced worldwide, is an inclusion challenge. In 2017, respective repetition rates for primary and secondary education were 9% and 12% in South Africa, and 13% and 5% in Rwanda. The inclusion challenge is that disadvantaged students have a higher probability of repeating. In Rwanda, the probability of repeating a grade more than once was 15 percentage points higher for children with difficulties speaking and being understood and 9 points higher for those with behavioural issues. In Cameroon, a ministerial order established automatic promotion in primary education in 2006 in response to repetition rates reaching 30% in the 1990s. Repetition rates have halved since 2005 but remain around 12%.
- See Box 2.11: Poverty, disability and gender equality concerns threaten inclusion in technical and vocational education and training in Malawi

Inequitable foundations: Alongside today's new Report, the GEM Report has launched a new website, [PEER](#), with descriptions of laws and policies on inclusion in education for every country in the world. PEER shows that many countries still practice segregation in education, which can feed stereotyping, discrimination and alienation.

- 23% of countries in the region have laws calling for children with disabilities to be educated in separate settings.
- Most countries combine mainstreaming with separate setting arrangements, usually for learners with severe disabilities. But lack of definition of severe disabilities can lead to arbitrary decisions. South Africa's 1996 schools law stated that the right to education of children with special needs was to be fulfilled in mainstream public schools through support services and measures 'where reasonably practicable'
- Among the countries whose laws emphasize inclusion, Ghana's 2008 education law defined inclusive education as a 'value system' that 'holds that all persons ... are entitled to equal

access to learning’ and that ‘transcends the idea of physical location, but incorporates the basic values that promote participation, friendship and interaction’ (Article 5.4).

- In 34% of countries, disability law also regulates inclusion in education.
 - In Burkina Faso, a 2010 law on protection and promotion of the rights of people with disabilities noted that inclusive education was guaranteed at all education levels and that ‘[a]ny institution of initial and in-service training of teachers/literacy educators ... shall take into account inclusive education in its training programmes’ (Article 12).
 - Senegal’s 2010 law on people with disabilities guaranteed children and adolescents with disabilities free education in mainstream schools as close as possible to their homes
- As of December 2019, only six countries out of 55 in the region had signed Article 16 of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with a Disability, which allows for segregation to continue for persons with disabilities, but none had ratified it.
- Despite commitments to achieving inclusive education by 2030, only 2% of countries in sub-Saharan Africa have an education law that is inclusive of all learners, no matter their background, identity or ability.
 - Ghana’s 2015 policy defines it as an approach that accommodates all children in schools ‘regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions’.
 - Nigeria’s 2017 policy endorses the UNESCO definition, calling it the ‘process of addressing all barriers and providing access to quality education to meet the diverse needs of all learners in the same learning environment’
- In the region, 83% of countries have laws referring to people with disabilities, 23% referring to gender, 42% to ethnicity and indigeneity and 65% on language.
 - Kenya’s 2015 Policy Framework for Nomadic Education paid special attention to inclusion and vulnerability within nomadic communities, especially for girls and children with special needs. To facilitate access to and participation in education, the policy called for establishing more mobile schools, introducing open and distance learning and introducing innovative and flexible community-based education interventions

Exclusion can be very blatant:

- Equatorial Guinea and the United Republic of Tanzania enforce a total ban on pregnant girls and young mothers in public schools.
- Four countries do not specify a minimum age for marriage (South Sudan, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Somalia. Tanzania raised its minimum age to 18 years in October 2019.
- Two (Somalia and Liberia) countries have not yet ratified the Convention 138 on minimum age to prevent child labour.
- Refugees are often taught in parallel education systems.
- Legislation can reinforce discriminatory behaviour or make it impossible to address issues related to gender identity and sexual orientation in education. In May 2019, the Kenyan High Court upheld a colonial-era law that criminalized same-sex intercourse. Nigeria outlawed discussion of sexual orientation or gender identity and expression in positive or neutral terms, either in public or in the presence of minors.

Curriculum and textbooks can exclude too:

- A 2011 review of curricula in 10 eastern and southern African countries found that none addressed sexual diversity appropriately. Namibia life skills curriculum in grades 8 and 12 at least refers to the issue of diversity in sexual orientation.
- In South Africa, a government review found that people with physical disabilities accounted for 2% of visuals and 1% of text mentions in secondary school social science books, and that intellectual disabilities were not represented.

More human and material resources are needed for inclusion

- Human and material resources are critical for implementing inclusive education laws and policies in mainstream schools. Yet they were found lacking in a review carried out in 13 sub-Saharan African countries. For instance, itinerant teachers face heavy workloads that impede their fulfilment of their role. Sign language is not being used in the classroom, and teachers lack skills in Braille.
 - An analysis in Accra, Ghana, argues that, despite steady progress and a comprehensive legislation and policy framework, students with disabilities must perform the same tasks within the same time frame as their peers without disabilities, occupy desks placed far from teachers and are often physically punished by teachers for behavioural challenges; moreover, teaching is not differentiated
 - Malawi increasingly encourages learners with special needs to enrol in mainstream schools, yet lack of facilities forces many to transfer to special schools, e.g. learners with visual impairment moved to schools for the blind.
 - In evaluating the national inclusive education policy, the Namibian government noted a shortage of resource schools in rural areas, lack of accessible infrastructure, inadequate awareness and unfavourable attitudes towards disability

Teachers need training to teach all students

- Fewer than 1 in 10 primary school teachers in 10 Francophone countries in sub-Saharan Africa had any training in inclusive education. In Niger, for instance, only 10 of the 162 teachers working in special needs and inclusive schools were trained to work with children with disabilities
- In South Africa, the Ministry of Education aimed to ensure each school had at least one teacher trained to screen and support students, although this target was not met
- South Africa has anti-discrimination legislation and racial desegregation in schools, but head teachers have autonomy to determine catchment boundaries. In Johannesburg, this is a factor in increased exclusion of poor suburban children from better-performing schools
- The pupil/desk ratio in the United Republic of Tanzania in 2016 was 5:1 vs the recommended 3:1. Moreover, averages tend to hide wide discrepancies at the expense of disadvantaged areas: The ratio was 7:1 in the Geita, Rukwa and Simiyu regions. In Uganda, among the Karamoja subregion's four districts with data, the ratio ranged from 5:1 to 124:1
- There is a clear case for school-based screening to enable some straightforward interventions. Short-sightedness is not generally considered a disabling impairment because it is easy and cheap to treat with glasses. Yet school-based screening is not yet common. An analysis of 10 countries in francophone African countries, showed that, in 4 countries, less than 3% of grade 2 teachers reported that eye tests took place. [see b-roll on Malawi]

Education systems often assume that all children are the same.

- Only four countries in the region (Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, Zimbabwe) recognize sign language as an official language and schools are more likely to have internet access than to be adapted for learners with disabilities. The Kenyan Constitution promotes development and use of Kenyan Sign Language, Braille and other communication formats and technology accessible to people with disabilities. Since most deaf children in low-resource settings start primary school with little or no language, the role of local sign languages as mother tongues is essential in introducing them to basic expression and communication skills and opening the pathway for progression in formal education
- Students with disabilities often need adapted infrastructure and materials, but Burundi and Niger reported not having any in primary or secondary schools.
- In many countries, including Mali, Mauritania and Senegal, most primary schools lack separate toilets for girls. This is recognized as an important factor in attendance of girls who have begun menstruating, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where a high percentage of students are overage.

There is a chronic lack of quality data on those left behind.

- Four countries (Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritania and Togo) do not collect education data on children with disabilities in their Education Management Systems.
- In a survey of education ministries in 11 sub-Saharan African countries on children with visual impairments conducted for this report, Cameroon and Nigeria could not provide enrolment data, while Ghana, Kenya and Zambia could provide data for children in special and integrated schools but not mainstream ones. Moreover, some ministries stressed the potential lack of data reliability.
- Household surveys are key for breaking education data down by individual characteristics. But 29% of countries in the region - representing 11% of the population- did not have surveys with publicly available data. Figures on learning are also mostly taken from school even if many are not participating.

Signs of moves towards inclusion: The Report and its [PEER](#) website note many countries using positive, innovative approaches to transition to inclusion. *[see box: Box 2.5: Sub-Saharan African countries deploy a range of tools to include students with disabilities] [and Box 2.8: In Kenya, learning through sport is a route to inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities]*

- Sub-Saharan African countries have taken steps towards policies that support full inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream schools. Some, including Cameroon and Comoros, are just beginning, mentioning inclusive education as a distant objective in education sector plans. Others are further along, exploring possibilities of using special schools, resource centres, itinerant teachers and satellite classes. In all, 54% of countries in the region are considered to be pursuing inclusive policies, although a coherent approach towards inclusion remains a challenge.
- Angola's 2017 National Policy of Special Education has a target of including 30,000 children with special education needs in mainstream schools by 2022. The policy will be implemented in 6,000 primary schools. It aims to transform special schools into support centres providing guidance for inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools, along with capacity building and training for teachers (Section VI).
- In Ethiopia, inclusive schools are mainstream schools where learners with and without disabilities learn in the same classrooms. Teaching assistants, such as sign language interpreters, may be available. Schools are grouped into 7,532 clusters to facilitate resource sharing. Among these, 213 schools, or 2.8%, have established inclusive education resource centres.

- Ghana's 2015 inclusive education policy framework envisaged transforming special schools into resource centres to assist mainstream education while maintaining special units, schools and other institutions for students with severe and profound disabilities. Special schools were expected to cooperate with mainstream schools accommodating children with special education needs, work closely with assessment centres for periodic screening and diagnosis and ensure that their staff were trained in the centres. The policy went beyond physical accessibility and incorporated basic values promoting participation, friendship and interaction.
- Kenyan students with disabilities attend special schools, integrated schools and special units within mainstream schools targeted at those with hearing and visual impairments, intellectual disabilities and physical disabilities. The 2018 sector policy for learners and trainees with disabilities extends education provision in mainstream schools. It recognizes special schools' pivotal role in the transition towards inclusive education and relies on education services provided by existing arrangements, as well as home-based education, especially for those with severe disabilities and in vulnerable circumstances. Currently, 1,882 primary and secondary mainstream schools provide education for students with special needs.
- Malawi has taken a twin-track approach. Children and youth with severe disabilities are educated in special schools or special needs centres, while those with mild disabilities are mainstreamed. The Education Sector Implementation Plan II aims to strengthen inclusive education in all schools to avoid segregation. Special schools at each education level are being transformed into resource centres, as specified in the 2007 National Policy on Special Needs Education.
- In Nigeria, missionaries began segregation in the 1970s and governments later followed suit. The 2004 education policy formalized public special schools. While inclusion was affirmed for various learner groups, separate interventions led to segregated education provision. The 2017 National Policy on Inclusive Education tries to harmonize modalities to provide a unified system. It plans to realize inclusive education by rehabilitating and upgrading special schools to serve as resource centres catering for the needs of people with disabilities and training teachers on inclusion. Most state government-run special schools target one or two impairments. Enugu state supports three schools as special education centres integrating children with and without disabilities. Lagos state set up a few inclusive primary schools, providing trained teachers and materials for children with disabilities in same or separate classes. Poorer states have only one or two special schools, which provide both boarding and day services.
- South Africa has introduced inclusive schools to develop 'cultures, policies and practices that celebrate diversity, respect difference and value innovation and problem-solving'. Known as 'full-service' schools, in the sense that they cater for the full range of learning needs, they are also expected to support neighbouring ordinary schools. A National Education Excellence Award for the Most Improved Full-Service School uses criteria such as school-based support teams; institutionalized screening, identification, assessment and support; curriculum differentiation; direct learner support; and collaboration with the community. Goal 26 of the 2015/16–2019/20 Five Year Strategic Plan seeks to increase the number of schools that effectively implement the inclusive education policy and have access to centres offering specialist services. The most recent annual report does not provide an update on this goal but mentions the appointment of Transversal Itinerant Outreach Team Members in provinces
- Itinerant teachers also work in some regions of the United Republic of Tanzania, providing teacher and student support, with a focus on adaptation and material preparation for visually impaired learners. They are trained, managed and overseen by Tanzania Society for the Blind and employed by the government through district education offices. They are provided with a motorbike and associated recurrent costs. Itinerant teachers also perform vision screening, refer children to medical facilities and organize community sensitization and counselling.

Many are going out of their way to accommodate different learners' needs:

- A few countries in the region are starting to provide free secondary education, including Uganda, Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania and Ghana.
- Kenya adjusts its curriculum to the nomadic calendar.
- Kenya added 'intersex' as a specific third gender option in its 2019 census. The Kenyan census also added new ethnic group categories, some of which were previously subsumed under larger categories.
- Uganda mandated the use of local languages in grades 1 to 3 in its 2007 curriculum
- South Africa has committed to 11 official languages in the constitution and in education.

- ENDS –

For more information, b-roll, photos, for interviews, videos or animations please contact Kate Redman k.redman@unesco.org 0033 6 71 78 62 34

Notes to editors

Visit the Report's [electronic press kit](#) containing Report and multimedia materials. [password: AllmeansAll]

The Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM Report) is developed by an independent team and published by UNESCO. It has the official mandate of monitoring progress in meeting the fourth Sustainable Development Goal on education, SDG 4.

The PEER Website will be publicly available from 23 June. Until that point, journalists can access the site using the following passwords:

- <https://www.education-profiles.org/>
- Username: team
- Password: gemprofiles246!

A youth Report is also available, containing case studies, and online campaigns around the 2020 Gem Report's recommendations.

Two regional reports will be released on the theme of inclusion and education later in the year: A Report on Latin America and the Caribbean in October, and a Report on Eurasia in December