

#CostingEquity

How education financing falls short for learners with disabilities



The IDDC research into equitable education financing for children with disabilities will be launched in September 2016

For a more detailed introduction visit:

www.iddcconsortium.net/resources-tools/costing-equity



International commitments to inclusive education specifically mention supporting children with disabilities (Sustainable Development Goal, SDG 4).

However, aid to basic education has declined, donors are deprioritising education in aid budgets ([GEM, May 2016](#)) and States are failing to finance their commitments to children with disabilities.

The most marginalised children are paying the price

Boys and girls with disabilities are more likely to be out of school

Children with disabilities have a fundamental right to free, inclusive, good quality primary and secondary education in their own communities ([UNCRPD Article 24](#)). Inclusive education systems have a duty to adapt to all boys and girls and ensure that resources support equal participation and achievement for all. However, children with disabilities remain the largest group excluded from schooling. Up to one-third of the 59 million out-of-school children have disabilities ([UNESCO, 2007](#)), even in countries close to achieving universal primary education ([Sæbønes et al., 2015](#)). Disability more than doubles a child's chances of being out of school. Intersecting disadvantages mean that girls with disabilities are the most likely to be excluded ([WHO/World Bank, 2011](#)).

Excluding children with disabilities from schooling locks them and their families in a cycle of poverty, ill health and vulnerability.

Children with disabilities receive inadequate support in school and are most likely to drop out

Only 5-15% of children with disabilities in low-income countries have access to necessary assistive technologies. This obstructs their access to and participation in school, impacts on learning, and compromises their independence and social inclusion ([UNICEF, 2013](#)). The risk of exclusion within the classroom and subsequent drop-out is higher for girls with disabilities than other marginalised groups ([WHO/World Bank, 2011](#)).

Costing exclusion and segregation

The economic cost of exclusion is high. The cost of out-of-school children is estimated to be 'greater than the value of an entire year of GDP growth' in 9 low income countries (e.g. Burkina Faso and Yemen), and higher than the additional public spending needed to enrol them, in large middle-income countries like Brazil ([Thomas & Burnett, 2013](#)).

Segregated education is inefficient and costs 7-9 times more per pupil than placement in a mainstream classroom ([Peters, 2004](#)). Inclusion is considered a cost-effective educational strategy, leading to increased performance and achievement for all learners ([Peters, 2004](#)).

Financing approaches don't support inclusive education

Signatories to the UNCRPD are required to provide 'reasonable accommodation' for children with disabilities within existing education systems (Article 24.c). However, domestic and donor financing for inclusive education is totally inadequate. Preliminary research by IDDC reveals that education budget lines to support children with disabilities are extremely scarce, despite legislative and policy commitments to inclusion (IDDC, forthcoming; [Lei & Myers, 2011](#)). Key factors affect the lack of financing: inclusive education is seen as too expensive; there are low expectations of returns on schooling; a lack of reliable data on the incidence, educational participation and achievement of children with disabilities hampers resource targeting; there is poor



understanding of how to support inclusive education for children with disabilities in low-income contexts ([Sæbønes et al., 2015](#); [Howgego et al., 2014](#)).

Few countries commit enough resources to inclusive education

Education budgets in many countries do not include the costs associated with inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schooling ([Sæbønes et al., 2015](#)). School buildings remain inaccessible, teachers are not trained in inclusive pedagogies and discriminatory attitudes prevail. Finances, where available, are not spent cost-effectively, with a focus on resource

intensive special schools rather than quality, inclusive education for all ([GCE Global, 2014](#)).

Donors are not actively supporting inclusive education

The long-term predictable financing needed for investment in systemic reform is lacking and aid is not allocated to the poorest countries where exclusion is most acute ([GEM, May 2016](#)). Donor programmes are often piecemeal and not mainstreamed through education and development policies. Exceptions are rare and large gaps remain between policy and practice ([GCE Global, 2014](#)).

The New Agenda for Change 2015-2030

[SDG 4](#): 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.' Children with disabilities are now specifically referred to in the global goals to ensure they are not 'left behind.' Target 4.5 ensures equal access to education and vocational training for persons with disabilities. Target 4.a. commits to building and upgrading inclusive educational facilities, to ensure disability, gender and child sensitivity.

The [Addis Ababa Action Agreement](#) (2015) provides a global framework for financing the SDGs. It recognises the importance of providing quality education for children with disabilities in 'inclusive and effective learning environments for all' (para.78). The Agreement commits to upscale investments and international cooperation, to strengthen the Global Partnership for Education, increase qualified teacher numbers and upgrade inclusive educational facilities.

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What needs to change?

Domestic efforts, international cooperation and public-private partnerships should ensure the costs associated with inclusion of learners with disabilities are represented in education budgets. Better coordination is needed at national and global levels, along with stronger cooperation on implementation, monitoring and accountability.

At country level

States Parties need to close persistent gaps between inclusive education policy and practice and provide adequate domestic financing to do so. Twin-track approaches to systemic reform would enable governments to progress towards the full inclusion of all children while harnessing existing expertise from special services. Mechanisms need to support the implementation of

national inclusive education policy and strategy. Designated focal points are needed within government, tasked with ensuring coordination and cooperation between ministries and agencies, civil society and other stakeholders. Adequately resourced action plans are key to following up policy implementation, as is reporting on gender and disability disaggregated education indicators.

At global level

Multilateral and bilateral donors

- Take a twin track approach to strengthen inclusion; directly fund disability specific education initiatives and mainstreaming inclusion for children with disabilities across portfolios and aligned with national education sector plans.
- Actively encourage inclusive approaches to education via education policy dialogue at country and international levels, prioritise results-based financing, promote the use of disability and gender disaggregated data in reporting formats.
- Fund research to strengthen evidence on practices and approaches in resource-poor settings.

- Appoint disability focal points within technical teams and champions at senior management level.

Philanthropic foundations and private sector

- Fund innovative approaches to inclusive education that align with national sector plans and have the specific goal of being scaled up.
- Support civil society to strengthen capacity to hold governments to account on inclusive education agendas, and to share knowledge and advocacy strategies, including inter-sectoral approaches to engagement with gender and minorities movements.

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