



2025 Disability-20 Inclusive Education Engagements



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- This presentation synthesises lived experiences gathered via Disability-20 Inclusive Education workstream sessions since April 2025.
- Grounded in contributions from 307 workstream members and participants.
- Insights are informing the Disability-20 policy declaration now in development.

Lived Experiences

Policy vs Reality

- *“We’ve got a beautiful policy document, but it’s not being enacted.”*
- *“Most children with disabilities only begin accessing learning at 6 or 7... beyond the developmental window.”*

Schools & Support

- *“They have 60 learners per class; they cannot attend to special needs learners effectively.”*
- *“You don’t know who hasn’t eaten, who comes from a child-headed home. That’s inclusion too.”*

Lived Experiences

Responsibility & System Change

- *“We cannot place the full responsibility for inclusion on teachers without transforming the system around them.”*
- *“Some educators still believe learners with disabilities should go straight to special schools.”*

Transitions & Workforce

- *“We go to special schools, then university... no one there is trained to support us.”*
- *“There are many qualified persons with disabilities, but they’re excluded from teaching roles.”*

Inclusive Education Implementation Gap

- Despite strong international and national commitments (e.g., White Paper 6, 2001), delivery lags behind policy vision.
- Key barriers: underprepared educators; limited assistive devices; inaccessible curricula; overcrowded classes; weak disability-disaggregated data.
- Inclusive pedagogy is not consistently embedded in teacher training → educators feel unprepared in mainstream classrooms.
- Attitudinal barriers and deficit-oriented practices reinforce exclusion.

Theme/Issue	Recommendation	Evidence/Context
Educator Training & Support	Mandate compulsory inclusive pedagogy in teacher training; incentivise inclusive teaching; fund support staff (therapists, interpreters); national mentorship programme; fund advanced training & assistive tech; upgrade resource centres; strengthen DBSTs.	Teachers lack preparation; class sizes too large; assistive devices underused; peer support & systemic investment needed.
Disability-Disaggregated Data	Legally mandate collection/reporting; standardise data protocols; create National Inclusive Education Data Registry; train policymakers in data use; partner with OPDs; publish public reports.	Many learners remain “invisible” in stats; weak accountability undermines inclusion.
Accessible Infrastructure & Digital Tools	Enforce Universal Design in all new/upgraded school infrastructure; create accessibility benchmarks for digital tools (WCAG); subsidise assistive technologies; co-design ed-tech with learners with disabilities; certify accessible products; mandate accessible procurement.	Digital platforms & physical environments remain inaccessible; assistive tech seen as “add-on.”

Theme/Issue	Recommendation	Evidence/Context
Financial Investment Models	Ring-fence inclusive education budget; create National Inclusive Education Fund; incentivise public-private partnerships; conduct fiscal audit; prioritise early intervention funding.	Inclusive education is long-term economic investment; current spending inefficient and inadequate.
Accountability & Collaboration	Mandate cross-sectoral collaboration (Education, Health, Social Development); create public accountability dashboard with inclusive education metrics.	System-wide transformation needed; siloed approaches undermine inclusion.

Recommendations: A Clear Pathway

- Make inclusive education compulsory across initial teacher education and in-service programmes.
- Adopt UDL standards for curricula, assessment, and digital platforms (access by default).
- Fund and integrate assistive technology within mainstream systems; avoid 'add-on' models.

Recommendations: A Clear Pathway

- Build robust disability-disaggregated EMIS and accountability frameworks (with intersectional markers).
- Reduce structural barriers: class sizes, infrastructure accessibility, transport, nutrition, psychosocial support.
- Create inclusive pathways into the teaching profession for persons with disabilities.

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