

Inclusive Education



With an estimated 15 percent of the world’s population having a disability, persons with disabilities are a minority that cannot be ignored. In order to ensure that inclusive education is truly achieved, education systems, educators, communities, and family members must prioritize the right of all children to have full access to high-quality instruction and learning environments.

Expertise

- Teacher training and professional development
- Specialized skill training
- Assistive and information technologies
- Curriculum adaption and development
- Student-centric support and activities
- Transcription of materials into Braille and rendering in sign language
- Identification research and assessments
- Capacity building
- Policy reform

Project Experience

RTI takes seriously the imperative to address the needs of vulnerable children and to give all children the best possible education. RTI’s commitment extends across all of its early-grade education projects—in Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia—as well as programming in early childhood development and education.

Ethiopia READ-TA (2012–2017)

Launched in October 2012, and funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Reading for Ethiopia’s Achievement Developed Technical Assistance (READ-TA) project seeks to improve the reading and writing performance of millions of primary

grade students in seven Ethiopian languages and English as a second language. The program focuses on vulnerable populations, including individuals with disabilities. All materials are developed with attention to gender and disabilities inclusion. READ-TA is engaging with the Ministry of Education (MOE) in a review of these materials through a National Adaptation Consultation Workshop to determine how they can be made accessible for children with cognitive, intellectual, physical, and other severe disabilities—including ultimately transcribing all student materials into Braille. READ-TA also uses assistive technology options to support children struggling to learn and is piloting the use of smart phone-based vision and hearing screening tools in classrooms.

Jordan RAMP (2015–2019)

The Early Grade Reading and Math Project (RAMP), funded by USAID, is developing and distributing improved learning materials to every K–3 classroom in Jordan, and is addressing issues of gender, students

“I used not to bother about those children with [special education needs]... . My negative attitudes have gone. It has made me develop that interest. I used to send them back to other classes or leave them there. This term I have realised a lot of change. It is very well changed. I am proud of it.”

–Deputy head teacher, Kole District, Uganda

with disabilities, and refugees as they relate to learning reading and mathematics. RAMP is working with the MOE to conduct a comprehensive, in-depth assessment of the education of children with disabilities, which will include a comprehensive situational analysis of MOE-provided services for students with disabilities. The program is also formulating recommendations for the use of assistive technologies in classrooms; rigorously revising all teaching and learning materials to ensure they incorporate characters with disabilities; working with teachers to make general education classrooms inclusive; helping the MOE develop inclusive education policies; and developing a disabilities resource guide to support parents, teachers, school administrators, and community members.

Kenya Tusome (2014–2018)

The national Tusome early grade reading program in Kenya is directly supporting students with disabilities through adaptation of teaching and student materials into Braille for students who are blind or have low vision, and adapting teacher guides to address the specific needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. All grade 1–3 teachers across the country have received targeted training on how to provide quality instruction for students with disabilities, and instructional coaches have also been trained in how to support teachers. In addition, all Tusome materials are developed to be inclusive of disabilities and to portray characters with disabilities in positive ways.

Malawi MERIT (2015–2020)

Following the lead of the Malawi Early Grade Reading Activity (EGRA) program, the Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity (MERIT) continues to support the needs of students with disabilities. Under MERIT, the government of Malawi is taking over updates to the Disability Education Resource Guide, which is proving effective in empowering parent educators. The program is working with District Education Managers to enhance their sensitivity regarding disabilities, strengthening collaboration between them and the special needs education teachers in their districts, and continuing to explore the use of assistive technologies to support the learning of students with disabilities.

“In the past I had negative attitudes to children with hearing impairment/visual impairment. I used to think it was hard to handle them. I realise it is my duty to support them and not just send them to Special School.”

– Primary 1 teacher, Kole District, Uganda SHRP

Malawi EGRA (2013–2016)

The USAID-supported Malawi Early Grade Reading Activity (EGRA) was designed to improve the reading performance of Standard (grade) 1–3 students, including those with disabilities. EGRA developed a Disability Education Resource Guide, which served as a centralized data collection and dissemination resource, and enhanced awareness of specialized services available to children with disabilities in Malawi. During workshops, special needs education teachers trained and provided actionable guidance to mainstream teachers. Malawi EGRA also held two national Braille literacy competitions—the Braille Cups—helping increase sensitivity regarding disabilities among parents, teachers, and MOE staff, and improving the education of students with disabilities.

Uganda SHRP (2012–2019)

To improve the reading ability of more than 2 million children, the USAID-funded Uganda School Health and Reading Program (SHRP) is identifying and implementing strategies to improve reading skills of children with disabilities. The program helps the MOE’s Special Needs Education Department develop strategies for these learners. To date, approximately 43,000 learners have benefited from this intervention. In January 2016, nearly 9,000 teachers and practitioners were shown how to identify and support learners with special education needs. Early grade reading “teacher guides” focus on literacy skills of learners with special learning needs.

More Information

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