

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. 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, including those with identified or unidentified disabilities.

Project Experience

In all projects, RTI promotes equitable, quality, inclusive education, helping governments to put policies and mechanisms in place to meet the long-term objective of an equitable and quality primary and secondary education for all children as outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Ethiopia READ TA (2012–2018). Funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed Technical Assistance

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 sign language
- Identification research and assessments
- Capacity building
- Sector analysis
- Policy reform

(READ TA) project supported primary grade students in seven Ethiopian languages and English. READ TA developed guidelines for developing materials for students with severe vision impairment and, as an exemplar, adapted all grade 2 student textbooks in mother tongue languages into braille. The project also rolled out a mother tongue resource package based on universal design for learning principles to all teacher colleges of education, and, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MOE), designed and implemented a groundbreaking assistive technology initiative. This initiative included a smartphone with screening tools for vision and hearing impairment and explicitly accommodated lesson plans for reading and writing instruction in mother tongue languages. After three months of implementation, teacher attitudes towards and self-efficacy in inclusive education improved significantly, as did teacher adoption of foundational inclusive practices in the classroom.

"Before the training, I considered those hearing-impaired students as lazy and mentally retarded students, but now after they [were] identified I have changed their seating and my methodology in the classroom. I have started to believe they can achieve and learn as other students, and I have also observed changes in them in the classroom. They started to participate, they improved their result."

—Teacher, Ethiopia READ TA

Jordan RAMP (2015–2019). The Early Grade Reading and Mathematics Initiative (RAMP), funded by USAID, developed and distributed improved learning materials to every K–3 classroom in Jordan, and is addressing issues related to gender, disabilities, and refugees. RAMP worked with the MOE to conduct an in-depth assessment of the education of children with disabilities, which included a comprehensive situational analysis of MOE-provided services. The program is also recommending the use of assistive technologies in classrooms, rigorously revising all teaching and learning materials to ensure they incorporate illustrations of 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 (2014–2019). The USAID-funded 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 in how to provide quality instruction for students with disabilities; instructional coaches have been trained in how to support teachers; and all materials have been developed to be inclusive of disabilities. The program recently conducted a national assessment of proficiency in braille and sign language for students who are blind or deaf.

Malawi MERIT (2015–2020). Based on recommendations from RTI's implementation of the predecessor Malawi Early Grade Reading Activity program, under the USAID-funded Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity (MERIT), the government of Malawi is taking over updates to the Disability Education Resource Guide, which serves as a centralized data collection and dissemination resource that empowers 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

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 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. Since 2015, over 20,000 grades 1–4 teachers have attended trainings in how to support learners with special education needs. Early grade reading “teacher guides” focus on literacy skills of learners with special learning needs.

All Children Reading-Cambodia Activity (ACR-Cambodia) (2017–2021). The USAID-funded All Children Reading-Cambodia Activity is working with the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) and numerous NGO partners to develop inclusive approaches to teaching reading. Activities have included a nationwide analysis of the state of education for children with disabilities, reviewing legislative and policy documents, visiting special and inclusive schools, interviewing stakeholders in the government and among the disabled persons organizations (DPOs) and NGO communities, and surveying DPO members and parents of children with disabilities. In addition, the project has worked with NGOs and the MoEYS to develop a set of sensory stories that are being made available to schools, organizations, and individuals to use with students with disabilities. The stories are designed to stimulate different senses through movement, touch, smell, sight, and sound, and are engaging for all children.

More Information

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