



Southern Africa Inclusive Early Childhood Development and Education Strategy

For Young Children with Disabilities

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FOREWORD

SADC Secretariat to prepare the foreword and sign off on this page.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AfECN:	African Early Childhood Network
CRC:	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD:	Convention on the Rights of people with Disabilities
EC:	Early Childhood
ECD:	Early Childhood Development
ECDE:	Early Childhood Development and Education
LD:	Learning Disability
SADC:	Southern African Development Community
SAFOD:	Southern African Federation of the Disabled

Explanation note on Early Childhood Terminologies

Early Childhood (EC) has several terminologies that countries worldwide use to refer to the growth and development, processes, requirements, interventions, programmes, and services for young children from conception to age eight. Examples of these terminologies are Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED), Early Childhood Development (ECD), Early Childhood Education (ECE), Early Childhood Care (ECC), Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD), Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE), Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE) and also simply Early Years. In this document the terms ECDE, ECD and EC will be used interchangeably in the appropriate contexts of the discussions in the document.

INTRODUCTION

Regionally, Inclusion in the Early Childhood Development and Education Sector has not received the concerted effort and attention required to support and meet the needs of young children with disabilities and marginalised young children. The neglect of disabilities in young children has resulted in adverse consequences on individuals with disabilities as well as their families' communities and society. However, the growing interest in the early childhood sector over the past four decades due to various evidence-based factors is creating opportunities and interest in young children with disabilities as well. This strategy, therefore, is very timely as it fits into the international movement on recognition of early childhood development as the most important stage for creating the foundation of the human development trajectory.

The Strategy, which has been developed by the Southern African Federation of the Disabled (SAFOD) in partnership with the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN), provides an understanding of disabilities in the context of Early Childhood. Inclusion in EC is explained in the context of the rights-based approach and the comprehensive provisioning perspective. Inclusion in ECDE is focused on provision of some guidelines on how it should happen and the important principles to take into account.

The strategy discusses the legal frameworks that underpin the rights and needs of all young children including those with disabilities. It emphasises the ECD context of the strategy and provides an overview of the understanding of ECD generally and in Southern Africa. It demonstrates the situation of Inclusivity in ECD in Southern Africa in terms of policies, strategies or statements that are available and in which country. Some recommendations are made for the region to consider in order to provide quality inclusion in ECDE for all vulnerable children especially children with disabilities. It aims to provide guidance for supporting inclusive quality education and development within other child care contexts serving children below the age of eight (8) years. This document is strategy on enhancing access to quality education for young children (children under 8 years) with disabilities.

The strategy recognises the significant efforts by the SADC members to develop and launch the Southern Africa Inclusive Education Strategy for Learners with Disabilities 2016-2020 whose main focus is to contribute to the reduction of human poverty and to improve availability of education for learners with disabilities. This current strategy aims to build upon this effort by highlighting the learning needs of young children with disabilities in Early Childhood.

This strategy was developed through consultation with a range of stakeholders from the disability, early childhood education and development and inclusion focal areas. Stakeholders convened on two occasions to identify and explore the key issues in inclusive education for young children with disabilities.

This inclusive ECDE strategy aims to guide member states in the provision of inclusive and equitable learning environments for young children with disabilities.

Outline of the Strategy

This strategy includes the following:

- Vision, mission, purpose, and principles of the strategy
- Management and coordination of the strategy
- Resource mobilization
- Outline of the Strategy
- Monitoring and evaluation plan

BACKGROUND

The development of this strategy was informed by the lack of recognition of Early Childhood identified in the regional Southern African Inclusive Education Strategy for Learners with Disabilities. This gap in the regional strategy raised a lot of concerns among several role players in the Disabilities and Education sectors. The Southern African Federation of the Disabled (SAFOD) together with other role players, having acknowledged this huge gap embarked on a process to develop a separate regional inclusive strategy that would specifically focus on early childhood. SAFOD has been given the mandate as a regional disabilities structure to manage the development of this strategy in partnership with several other key role players in Early Childhood such as the African Early Childhood Network (AfECN).

The strategy is a much-needed instrument in the region as early childhood is crucial for early detection and intervention of disabilities as well as in dealing with other forms of exclusions and marginalisations. The earlier they are identified and mitigated the better for the children concerned as well as their families and society as a whole. This strategy is critical as it will provide the basis for assisting the region in fulfilling the various international commitments made for young children with disabilities.

Inclusion in Early Childhood is a right.

There are several Conventions and declarations that have clearly stipulated that education and inclusion is a human right not only for adults but for the very young as well. Many countries in the world including those in Southern Africa have ratified and therefore committed to these conventions and declarations to ensure that the rights of all people with disabilities including young children are upheld in all spheres of services and programme provision. The following are the conventions, declarations and frameworks that have recognised the importance of Early Childhood and disabilities:

Convention on the Rights of the Children:

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989, was the first international treaty to state the full range of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights belonging to children. The realities confronting children can be assessed against the commitments to which it holds States parties¹. These rights apply to all children including young children who have disabilities and those who do not.

Article 2 requires States parties to ensure that all children within their jurisdiction enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Convention without discrimination of any kind. This obligation requires States parties to take appropriate measures to prevent all forms of discrimination, including on the ground of disability.²

¹ Convention on the rights of the Child, <https://www.unicef.org/sowc2012/pdfs/SOWC-2012-The-Convention-on-the-Rights-of-the-Child.pdf>

² CRC General Comment 9 https://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/CRC_General_Comment_9_en.pdf

Paragraph 1 of Article 23 should be considered as the leading principle for the implementation of the Convention with respect to children with disabilities: the enjoyment of a full and decent life in conditions that ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate active participation in the community. The measures taken by States parties regarding the realization of the rights of children with disabilities should be directed towards this goal. The core message of this paragraph is that children with disabilities should be included in the society. Measures taken for the implementation of the rights contained in the Convention regarding children with disabilities, for example in the areas of education and health, should explicitly aim at the maximum inclusion of those children in society³.

According to paragraph 2 of article 23 States parties to the Convention recognize the right of the child with disability to special care and shall encourage and ensure the extension of assistance to the eligible child and those responsible for his or her care. The assistance has to be appropriate to the child's condition and the circumstances of the parents or others caring for the child. Paragraph 3 of article 23 gives further rules regarding the costs of specific measures and precisions as to what the assistance should try to achieve.⁴

Article 23 requires States parties to ensure that all children within their jurisdiction enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Convention without discrimination of any kind. This obligation requires States parties to take appropriate measures to prevent all forms of discrimination, including on the ground of disability.⁵

Article 24 – Education – creates the obligation for governments to provide education to children with disabilities on an equal basis with other children through an inclusive system.

General Comment 7 of the CRC

The UN explicitly recognises optimal early development as a universal, fundamental right of every child, regardless of their race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, health, disabilities, or any factor.⁶

The comment highlights the importance of focussing on vulnerable children in ECDE provisioning amongst whom are young children with disabilities:

The Committee calls on States parties to ensure that all young children (and those with primary responsibility for their well-being) are guaranteed access to appropriate and effective services,

³ CRC General Comment 9 https://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/CRC_General_Comment_9_en.pdf

⁴ CRC General Comment 9 https://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/CRC_General_Comment_9_en.pdf

⁵ CRC General Comment 9 pg4 https://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/CRC_General_Comment_9_en.pdf

⁶ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. 2006. General Comment No. 7. Implementing Child Rights in Early Childhood. 20 September 2006. https://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/CRC_General_Comment_9_en.pdf

including programmes of health, care and education specifically designed to promote their well-being. Particular attention should be paid to the most vulnerable groups of young children and to those who are at risk of discrimination (art. 2). This includes girls, children living in poverty, children with disabilities, children belonging to indigenous or minority groups, children from migrant families, children who are orphaned or lack parental care for other reasons, children living in institutions, children living with mothers in prison, refugee and asylum-seeking children, children infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS, and children of alcohol- or drug-addicted parents (see also section VI)⁷.

General Comment 9 of the CRC

When adopted in November 1989 the Convention on the Rights of the Child CRC/C/GC/9 Page 2 (hereafter “the Convention”) was the first human rights treaty that contained a specific reference to disability (article 2 on non-discrimination) and a separate article 23 exclusively dedicated to the rights and needs of children with disabilities.⁸

The General Comment 9 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child interprets the Convention on the Rights of the Child as regards the rights of children with disabilities, including their right to education

The General Comment highlights key aspects of articles 2 and 23. For article 2, these include for States Parties to include explicit language of disability as a forbidden ground for discrimination; increased attention to girls with disabilities; and to ensure special care and assistance to children with disabilities is a high priority for investment in the elimination of discrimination against children with disabilities and towards their maximum inclusion in society.

The General Comments goes further to note the importance of supporting the families and carers of children with disabilities and ensuring they have access to educational, psychosocial, material and rehabilitative support. Key areas raised within the General Comment refer to provision of early identification and early intervention services as part of health services; effective access to education (including modification to school practices and training of teachers) and inclusion of children with disabilities. The CRC General Comment 9 also makes specific mention to early childhood education noting that ECE is important “to help children develop their full potential”.

CRC on early identification

Very often, disabilities are detected quite late in the child’s life, which deprives him or her of effective treatment and rehabilitation. Early identification requires high awareness among health professionals, parents, teachers as well as other professionals working with children.

⁷UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. 2006. General Comment No. 7. Implementing Child Rights in Early Childhood. 20 September 2006. https://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/CRC_General_Comment_9_en.pdf

⁸ CRC General Comment 9 pg2 https://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/CRC_General_Comment_9_en.pdf

They should be able to identify the earliest signs of disability and make the appropriate referrals for diagnosis and management. Therefore, the comment recommends that States parties establish systems of early identification and early intervention as part of their health services, together with birth registration and procedures for following the progress of children identified with disabilities at an early age. Services should be both community and home-based, and easy to access. Furthermore, links should be established between early intervention services, pre-schools and schools to facilitate the smooth transition of the child. Following identification, the systems in place must be capable of early intervention including treatment and rehabilitation providing all necessary devices that enable children with disabilities to achieve their full functional capacity in terms of mobility, hearing aids, visual aids, and prosthetics, among others. It should also be emphasized that these provisions should be offered free of cost, whenever possible, and the process of acquiring such services should be efficient and simple avoiding long waits and bureaucracies.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

This convention is designed to provide and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities and to promote respect of their inherent dignity.

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others⁹. Beyond the CRC the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities further sets out actions for States Parties to ensure the fulfilment of the rights of people with disabilities.

Article 24 - Education

States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and based on equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning directed to:

- a. The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, and human diversity.
- b. The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents, and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential.
- c. Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.¹⁰

The World Conference for All, Jomtien, Thailand, 1990

“The World Conference on Education for All EFA, held in 1990 Jomtien, Thailand, was attended by 155 countries and 150 Organisations that agreed to universalise primary education and massively reduce illiteracy by the end of the decade”¹¹. The EFA goals introduced into the world Education system the need to provide access to education and emphasis on the reduction of illiteracy from

⁹ UNCRPD <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

¹⁰ UNCRPD <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

¹¹ Kaneneka.P 2013, Assessment of the benefits of ECCDE provided by NGOs in Rural Zambia

early childhood to adulthood. This contributed to the growing movement towards recognition and interest in the early years of the human development.” At this world summit, the international community came together and agreed on the framework for provision of education for all placing early childhood education as objective number one. Countries were urged to expand early childhood care and development activities including family and community interventions; especially for the poor, disadvantaged and disabled children”¹².

Sustainable Development Goals

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The sustainable development Goals which are a follow up to the Education for all goals provide clear guidelines on the goals that countries should attain to reach sustainable development expectations. Goal 4 states that “quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all are central to ensuring a full and productive life to all individuals and to the realization of sustainable development. Despite considerable progress in school enrolment, millions of children remain out of school, especially where educational systems struggle to keep up with population growth. Even when more children are enrolled, many do not acquire the basic skills. Quality education is hampered by the lack of trained teachers and adequate school facilities. Achieving this Goal will require intensified efforts, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, targeted to vulnerable populations, specifically persons with disabilities, indigenous people, refugees and the rural poor.”¹³

The Sustainable Development Goals have highlighted the importance of early childhood for eliminating socioeconomic inequalities was particularly highlighted in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2015 to 2030. SDG Target 4.2 articulates a clear objective that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education by 2030. The SDG commitments to ECED go beyond the education related goal 4; they are reflected in Goals 2; 3.2, 16.2 on hunger, health and well-being and peace and justice. Early childhood development also underpins the SDGs on poverty; gender equality; work and economic growth; reduction in inequalities; sustainable cities and communities; responsible consumption and production; and global partnerships.

The Nurturing Care Framework for Early Childhood Development.

One of the most critical resource to be produced recently is The Nurturing Care Framework (NCF) for early childhood development, developed and produced by WHO, in 2018. This Framework has critical guidance to government and society at large on approaches to protecting children from adversity and promoting physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. It emphasises a comprehensive and multisectoral approaches to caring for and supporting the developmental needs of young children.

¹² Kanenka,P 2013 Assessment of the Benefits of ECCDE provided by NGOs in Zambia

¹³ Sustainable Development Goals: Overview. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2017/goal-04/>

The NCF recognises that optimal early development is depended, on all children with and without disabilities receiving nurturing care in their first five years, with the first three-years being particularly important. It emphasises this by stating that “We now understand that the period from pregnancy to age 3 is the most critical, when the brain grows faster than at any other time; 80% of a baby’s brain is formed by this age. For healthy brain development in these years, children need a safe, secure, and loving environment, with the right nutrition and stimulation from their parents or caregivers. This is a window of opportunity to lay a foundation of health and wellbeing whose benefits last a lifetime – and carry into the next generation”¹⁴It is during these early years that a lot of disabilities can be identified and intervention provided.

The NCF indicates that the primary provider of nurturing care is the child’s parents, families, and complementary caregivers. These are at the first point of disability awareness and intervention in young children. Unfortunately, a significant proportion face challenges and stresses – such as poverty, home and community-based violence, food insecurity, unemployment, and others – that disempower them as caregivers. As a result, many vulnerable young children, mostly children with disabilities, do not receive the nurturing care they need and experience significant, and often irrevocable developmental delays and difficulties. This transgresses their rights as well as undermines national and regional development prospects.

It is government’s duty to create the conditions necessary for parents and caregivers to overcome their challenges and enable and empower them to provide the nurturing care their children need to develop to their full potential. This is crucial for children with disabilities. It requires the provision of multi-sectoral support and services cutting across all five domains by a range of government departments, community structures, development partners, NGOs, the private sector, and donors.

There are five main components to the NCF¹⁵ all of which apply to children with disabilities.



¹⁴ Nurturing Care Framework, 2018 WHO

¹⁵ <https://nurturing-care.org/about/components/>

Good Health

This requires that all children including children with disabilities receive the following from care givers:

- Monitoring of physical and emotional well being
- Meeting of children's needs responsively and affectionately
- Protecting children from all forms of danger
- Practising good hygiene practices
- Using all the relevant health services
- Caring for and seeking appropriate treatment for children with disabilities.

Adequate Nutrition

The aspects to be considered regarding adequate nutrition involves the following critical considerations:

- Pregnant mothers need good nutrition for themselves and the babies that they are carrying in their wombs.
- Exclusive breast feeding for 6 months is encouraged with nutritious food solids introduced slowly from six months. This may be different for some children with disabilities that may require medical guidance.
- Often children may require supplements
- especially the most vulnerable
- Food safety and hygiene is critical to adequate nutrition
- Provision of learning experiences wherever the children are
- Building of trust and relationships

Responsive Caring

Responsive caring involves interacting with children by responding to their movement's gestures noises, sounds and verbal gestures that they make. Children with disabilities need a lot of responsive caring that is appropriate to their disability. Specific responsive caring actions include:

- Protecting children from injuries and any eminent danger or adverse situations.
- Playing and talking with children.
- Recognition, identification of illness and disabilities

Security, and safety

- Young Children need protection from eminent danger, harm and emotional stress. By nature, children are susceptible to risk situations especially the vulnerable such as the poor and disabled.
- Pregnant women and young children are also high-risk groups to environmental and chemical dangers and threats.
- Yong children including those with disabilities are the most physically punished and abused using belts, sticks, other objects and even bare hands. This causes social

maladjustment in their development. This child abuse is an area that requires attention to ensure child protection and safety in all their care environments.

Early Learning

The process of learning starts way before formal preschool age, three or four years. Learning starts during conception. Learning is innate all human beings are born to learn.

- All children including some children with disabilities learn social interactions skills through, eye contact, smiling, talking, singing and imitation.
- Children learn through playing. They should be encouraged to play all the time using items in their environments.
- All learning activities should be facilitated by an adult.

The NCF calls for a whole society, multisectoral approach and systematic approach to be adopted to unlock the transformative potential of ECED. Such systematic approaches serve to ensure the required package of services at scale in appropriate combinations for every pregnant women and young child from conception until they reach the age of eight years.

To secure this, the NCF urges governments to lead a collective and unified response to “facilitate a seamless continuum of care across sectors.” It recommends that this be done through well-coordinated global, regional and national ECED systems that bring the different role players together to plan, implement and monitor the continuum of care required by every child to develop to their full potential.

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

At the Continental level, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) 1990, was the first regional legal instrument proclaiming the human rights of children. The Charter promotes and protects the human rights and basic freedoms of African children recognising that children require specific safeguards and care. Central to this charter are children’s rights to life, expression, protection, education, and physical, cognitive and social emotional development. Article 11 states that: every child has the right to an education, to develop his or her personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to the fullest potential. The Charter also recognises all the Rights and General Comments of the CRC including CRC General Comment seven, *implementing child rights in early childhood*. It must be emphasised that all the rights expressed in this convention, as in all others mentioned in this document, apply to children with disabilities and all other vulnerable children however Article 13 of ACRWC needs to be specifically highlighted as it puts the spotlight on children with disabilities. It states:

1. Every child who is mentally or physically disabled shall have the right to special measures of protection in keeping with his physical and moral needs and under conditions which ensure his dignity, promote his self-reliance and active participation in the community.

2. State Parties to the present Charter shall ensure, subject to available resources, to a disabled child and to those condition and in particular shall ensure that the disabled child has effective access to training, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child achieving the fullest possible social integration, individual development and his/her cultural and moral development.
3. The State Parties to the present Charter shall use their available resources with a view to achieving progressively the full convenience of the mentally and physically disabled person to movement and access to public highway buildings and other places to which the disabled may legitimately want to have access to¹⁶

African Unions Agenda 2063

Building on the above Conventions, Declarations and Frameworks on children's rights, the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 *The Africa We Want*, is a 50-year strategy for an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful continent with high quality growth and dynamic people. Adopted in 2015, Agenda 2063 sets out a strategic framework for the socioeconomic transformation of the continent through seven aspirations. The aspirations outlined in agenda 2063 include a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development and an Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth and caring for its children. Agenda 2063 recognizes the importance of investing in early childhood development and basic education as a prerequisite for the development of Africa's human capital as its most precious resource. It further calls for the expansion of access to universal quality early childhood education along with primary and secondary education, ensuring that no child is left behind, and that the potential of every child in the continent is nurtured. This emphasis on ECED is further captured across various guiding documents of the AU¹⁷.

In recognition of the important role the early years play in human capacity development, the AU Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) describes early childhood care and education as the next frontier for the realisation of sustained quality education and training. In 2018, the AU established chairs the Continental Education Strategy Early Childhood Education and Development (CESA ECED) Cluster aimed at enhancing ECD policy, advocacy, governance accountability, research and access to quality and equitable ECED programmes and services. It is such platforms that should use to advocate and lobby for quality provisioning of Inclusive programming in ECDE. The CESA ECED Cluster is coordinated by the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN) and the Ministry of Education, Republic of Mauritius serves as vice-chair. The CESA ECED cluster is playing a critical role in high level engagement.

AU and Disabilities

¹⁶ African Charter for Rights and Welfare of the Child

https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/afr_charter_rights_welfare_child_africa_1990.pdf

¹⁷ African Union Agenda 2063

As part of its inclusive agenda at all levels and all avenues of society the AU has explicitly expressed its commitment to including and supporting people with disabilities. “The African Union recognition of issues of disability as a priority in the continent can be cited through the decision declaring the period 2010 – 2019 as the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities. The Decade created opportunity to promote awareness raising, full participation, equality, and empowerment of persons with disabilities, and putting disability on the social, economic and political agenda of African governments¹⁸. The AU furthermore adopted a new framework the African Union Disability Architecture [AUDA]) to fulfil the realization and enjoyment of disability rights. AUDA has various instruments and mechanisms for guiding the implementation of disabilities issues and interests on the continent including the above-mentioned declaration of the decade of persons with disabilities.

The AU's commitment to both Early Childhood Development and the Disabilities sector is an assurance that Inclusion in ECDE is critical and has a role and place on the continent and will be recognised and supported to its full development. This will have a positive impact on the lives of young children with disabilities in the region and their families, communities, and societies that they live in.

Southern Africa Regional Disabilities Frameworks

The Southern Africa Inclusive Strategy for Learners

There are 16 countries that are categorised as belonging to the Southern Africa Region. They are, Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Eswatini (Swaziland), Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. As a geographically connected region these countries collaborate on various aspects of Human development such as in Education and issues relating to persons with disabilities. The region has developed various instruments and Strategies to guide and support the Inclusion of persons with disabilities. It is from this premise that the region worked together to develop the Southern Africa Inclusive Strategy for Learners with Disabilities (2016 to 2020). The strategy is a strong guidance resource for ensuring that all children with disabilities obtain their right to education and all other needs for a better life. However, it does not address the Inclusion of young children from birth to eight years of age who are mainly in creches, at home, preschools, and primary education systems. This is a critical gap in the Strategy which is being addressed by the current Southern Africa Inclusive Early Childhood Development and Education Strategy (SAIECDE). Despite this gap the Southern Africa Inclusive Strategy for Learners with Disabilities is a great foundation and reference tool for the development of the SAIECDE as it provides the disabilities situation, context and insights of the region some of which apply to all children no matter their ages.

¹⁸ Concept Note, Forum on Visual Impairment 2019, African Union.
https://au.int/sites/default/files/newsevents/conceptnotes/37468-cn-concept_note-7th_africa_forum_on_visual_impairment.pdf

All the above-mentioned conventions, declarations and frameworks have a direct impact and bearing on all young children as the expressed rights unfold and are implemented. One area in which inclusion can best be achieved in young children is in the early education sector.

Understanding Early Childhood Development.

Early childhood Development (ECD) refers to the various forms of support that all children from conception to eight years require to grow, thrive and survive in all aspects of their development including physical, social, emotional, spiritual and cognitive development. The ECD support comes in form of programmes and services that ensure that all young children receive, care, protection, safety, and early learning experiences. In recent years a comprehensive approach has been advocated to ensure young children's holistic development and growth. All the above basically entail ensuring that all the rights and needs of young children are met without leaving any of them behind.

Countries all over the world who are committed to ECD have put in place policies strategies, guidelines, norms and standards and other legal frameworks to ensure that all young children have access to achieve their highest potential towards successful lives as children and later on as adults. ECD services and programmes in many countries cuts across several Ministries or Departments but the most critical ones especially for this strategy are the Ministry responsible for disabilities, Ministries of Education, Health and Social Welfare. It is important that these Ministries work in an integrated and collaborative manner to ensure that all children receive all the support required due to them to reach their highest potential in their growth and development.

One of the greatest achievement in ECD in the last three decades is the research and scientific evidence that early brain development begins before birth and the early years particularly the first 1000 days is the most active period for building brain connections that lays the foundation for all future learning, behaviour and health¹⁹.

This evidence has critical implications in understanding some forms of disabilities. Brain development is also influenced by the environment, the physical and environmental experiences of young children play a significant role in brain development. As such, development can be compromised sometimes leading to disabilities or enhanced depending upon the child's social and economic environment. Exposure to significant stress in the early years can impact child development. This type of toxic stress is defined as "strong, frequent and prolonged adversity—such as physical or emotional abuse, chronic neglect, caregiver substance abuse or mental illness, exposure to violence, and/or the accumulated burdens of family economic hardship—without adequate adult support"²⁰.

¹⁹ Center on the Developing Child <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/brain-architecture/>

²⁰ Center on the Developing Child Toxic Stress <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/toxic-stress/>

The early childhood period is also recognised as one of the most important periods in the life span in terms of unlocking human potential – and as such – for securing sustainable development. It is for this reason that access to comprehensive, quality ECD services is recognised as both a fundamental right and a critical sustainable development goal.

From a human capital perspective, evidence has found that when children are able to reach their full developmental potential, through quality ECD experiences they attain improved health, learning, productivity, and income. More so, evidence has found lasting effects through adulthood and into the second generation, breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty²¹. For example, improved health and nutrition help to reduce societies medical care costs and mortality rates. Similarly, increased school enrolment with reduced dropouts helps to reduce society's costs needed to address poor results²². Studies from the United States have found that when societies invest in quality ECD programmes, the rate of return on that investment is up to 13%.²³

Early childhood education is not limited to preschools and other childcare facilities – the home environment plays a fundamental role in stimulating and facilitating the development of the child. Studies globally have shown that enhanced interaction between mother and child and increased developmental activities benefit cognitive development in young children across a variety of settings, from home to health centres.

Supporting the early experiences of young children and their families strengthens individuals, families and communities resulting in an overall improvement to societies. Evidence has found quality experiences in the early years to increase survival, reduce malnutrition, enhance cognitive, social and physical development, prepares children to enrol and succeed in school, and reduce gender and educational inequalities.

Vulnerability in Early Childhood Development

As demonstrated above, early childhood is an important period of the human being's lifespan that lays the foundation for future learning, participation in society, for surviving and thriving. All human beings experience early childhood in different ways due to different backgrounds and contexts. However, there is a group of young children whose early childhood experiences entails suffering, poverty, lack, deprivation, stigmatisation, ill health, often abuse, isolation loneliness pain and different forms of dehumanisation. These are vulnerable children in all forms of different settings across the globe. The few words that characterise vulnerable children are poor and needy (Economically and socially deprived) as well as the disabled. These children all have as much claim to their rights and needs being met as those who are not vulnerable. In early childhood vulnerable children are categorised as children:

- Affected or infected by pandemics such as HIV/Aids
- Affected by armed conflict

²¹ Heckman Equation <https://heckmanequation.org/resource/perry-intergenerational-effects-summary/>

²² A World Ready to Learn

²³ Heckman ROI <https://heckmanequation.org/>

- Street Children
- Children involved in child labour
- Children with disabilities.
- Orphaned children

There are different strategies that nations and organisations use to deal with specific needs and rights of the different categories of vulnerable children. In the current strategy the focus is on the education needs of children with disabilities.

Children with disabilities experience various forms of discrimination and stigmatisations that lead to various forms of suffering and deprivation.

Children with developmental delays and disabilities are at greater risk of suboptimal health, educational attainment, and wellbeing than are children without such disabilities²⁴.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) states that persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.²⁵

Children experience disabilities because of health conditions, impairment, illness, injury or poor nutrition. For young children under five, developmental disabilities are a group of conditions resulting from impairments that affect a child's physical, learning or behavioural functioning, affected children typically have sensory impairments (hearing and vision loss), epilepsy or seizures, cerebral palsy, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability, or other learning disorders²⁶.

Unfortunately, data on children with disabilities is scarce especially in Africa. There is wide variability in estimates of childhood disability because of differences in methodologies and limitations of census and household surveys, clinical registries to capture disability. As a result, many children with disabilities remain unidentified and unable to access services²⁷.

Recent estimates suggest that 100 million children aged five and under have disabilities, and that 80% of these children live in developing countries²⁸. A systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study in 2016 found that the global burden of six developmental disabilities (namely, ADHD, ASD, epilepsy, intellectual disability, hearing loss and vision loss) decreased from 53 million children under 5 in 1990 to 52.9 million children in 2016. Despite this overall decrease in prevalence worldwide during this period, the study found that the number of affected children increased by 71.3% in sub-Saharan Africa during this period²⁹. This data

²⁴ Lancet global health, 2018

²⁵ CRPD

²⁶ Lancet, global health, 2018, developmental disabilities among children younger than 5 years in 195 countries

²⁷ UNICEF discussion paper ECD and disability

²⁸ UN World Ready to Learn, 2019

²⁹ Lancet global health

highlights the need for enhanced global attention and collaborative efforts to support the developmental potential of young children with disabilities. Children with disabilities are subject to a variety of practices that completely or partially compromise this right. In addition to being more vulnerable to infanticide, some cultures view a child with any form of disability as a bad omen that may “tarnish the family pedigree” and, accordingly, a certain designated individual from the community systematically kills children with disabilities. These crimes often go unpunished or perpetrators receive reduced sentences. States parties are urged to undertake all the necessary measures required to put an end to these practices, including raising public awareness, setting up appropriate legislation and enforcing laws that ensure appropriate punishment to all those who directly or indirectly violate the right to life, survival and development of children with disabilities.

Children with disabilities are disproportionately vulnerable to non-registration at birth. Without birth registration they are not recognized by law and become invisible in government statistics. Non-registration has profound consequences for the enjoyment of their human rights, including the lack of citizenship and access to social and health services and to education. Children with disabilities who are not registered at birth are at greater risk of neglect, institutionalization, and even death.

The physical inaccessibility of public transportation and other facilities, including governmental buildings, shopping areas, recreational facilities among others, is a major factor in the marginalization and exclusion of children with disabilities and markedly compromises their access to services, including health and education. Although this provision may be mostly realized in developed countries, it remains largely un-addressed in the developing world. All States parties are urged to set out appropriate policies and procedures to make public transportation safe, easily accessible to children with disabilities, and free of charge, whenever possible, taking into account the financial resources of the parents or others caring for the child.

Children with disabilities are more vulnerable to all forms of abuse be it mental, physical, or sexual in all settings, including the family, schools, private and public institutions, inter alia alternative care, work environment and community at large. It is often quoted that children with disabilities are five times more likely to be victims of abuse. In the home and in institutions, children with disabilities are often subjected to mental and physical violence and sexual abuse, and they are also particularly vulnerable to neglect and negligent treatment since they often present an extra physical and financial burden on the family. In addition, the lack of access to a functional complaint receiving and monitoring mechanism is conducive to systematic and continuing abuse. Data from primary school reveals that children with disabilities have 30% less access to primary school and are more likely to be out of school than their non-disabled peers³⁰

³⁰ A world Ready to Learn, 2019

Impact of disability on child development (individual, family and community) Children with disabilities often require special services in health and education to allow them to achieve their fullest potential and these are further discussed in the relevant paragraphs below. However, it should be noted that spiritual, emotional, and cultural development and well-being of children with disabilities are very often overlooked. Their participation in events and activities catering to these essential aspects of any child's life is either totally lacking or minimal. Furthermore, when their participation is invited, it is often limited to activities specifically designed for and targeted at children with disabilities. This practice only leads to further marginalization of children with disabilities and increases their feelings of isolation. Programmes and activities designed for the child's cultural development and spiritual well-being should involve and cater to both children with and without disabilities in an integrated and participatory fashion.

Exclusion Factors in ECDE

Research has provided several reasons as to why children with disabilities are excluded in ECDE. These factors include:

- Stigmatisation and dehumanisation of young children with disabilities. They are often seen as misfits in the ECDE environment.
- Children with disabilities are not understood so ignorance and fear play a big part of exclusion.
- Lack of knowledge and understanding of these children's needs, rights and requirements for them to be part of the ECDE settings.
- Lack of policies, guidelines, standard and other legal frameworks on inclusion in ECDE and implementation systems.

Inclusion in Early Childhood Development and Education

All vulnerable young children have the right to Education as demonstrated by the conventions declarations and Frameworks mentioned earlier in this document. The provision of access to vulnerable children in education, health care, protection, safety and all other needs and rights is often referred to as inclusion. "Inclusion in education involves embracing human diversity and valuing and supporting the belonging and full participation of all people together. This includes upholding the rights of all children and providing education free from discriminating beliefs and attitudes to do this requires developing and putting into action values policies and practices".³¹ IECD services and supports foster the physical, cognitive, language, and social-emotional development of children with delays and disabilities as well as their typically developing peers in early childhood programs that are accessible, equitable, and enable participation from, and support for, all children.³²

The first steps towards inclusion are taken at home during the early years. If children with disabilities do not receive the love, sensory stimulation, health care and social inclusion to which they are entitled, they can miss important developmental milestones and their potential

³¹ Kathy Cologan Better Together. in *Inclusive Education in the Early Years*.2014, Oxford University Press.

³² Baron,V.E , Small,J, Wertlieb,D, Small,H. 2019 *Global Survey of ECD and IECD Programmes* RISE Institute

may be unfairly limited, with significant social and economic implications for themselves, their families and the communities in which they live.

Ample evidence is now in place to state that inclusion in ECDE programmes and services plays a critical role to ensuring that young children with disabilities are provided their full rights to care development and education. Early Childhood inclusion embodies the values policies and practices that support the right of every infant, young child and his or her family regard less of ability to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of the family's communities and society³³.

Inclusion should not ever be viewed as a charitable act for poor children with disabilities. It is an important part of the whole conceptualisation process of an ECDE system. Inclusion is a long and complex process that takes the time and commitment of all parties involved but the benefits are worth all the investments and effort.

Benefits of Inclusive ECDE

Inclusive ECDE has many benefits for children with and without disabilities, their families, communities, and societies below are some specific benefits:

- Assists in early detection of disabilities, a child whose disability or developmental delay is identified at an early stage will have a much better chance of reaching her or his full capacity.
- Earlier identification enables early interventions and provision of support to both children and their families and even communities.
- Can enable children with disabilities to have individualised response to the child's individual needs therefore children who are at greatest disadvantage stand to benefit the most
- Both children with disabilities and those without develop different social skills as they play and learn together.
- The strengths of children with disabilities can be activated and nurtured through a child centred approach.
- They help mitigate the effect of disabilities and allow children to better integrate into the education system and society, and to become productive individuals.
- Inclusion benefits everyone in society.

Early Identification and Intervention in Early Childhood Development.

In this document Early Identification and Intervention in the context of learning is viewed as an integral part of the planning and implementation process of Inclusion in ECDE. This is because there are certain developmental conditions which if identified early in young children and appropriate intervention taken to enable a successful early learning experience and where possible avoidance of disability later in life. Therefore, Early Identification and Intervention in ECDE involves the detection of developmental delays in young children which may later result in learning disabilities (LD). These developmental delays include atypical patterns of development in cognition, communication, emergent literacy, social emotional adjustment that

³³ Guide to promoting Inclusive Early Childhood Programmes 2019

maybe adversely affect later education performance.³⁴ A child needs to develop adequately and appropriately in all domains in order to be successful later in life and that is why it's crucial to have Inclusion in ECDE with a very strong and explicit Early Identification and Intervention component. This will ensure early mitigation against disabilities or quality early learning experiences for young children with disabilities.

Factors to consider for an Inclusive ECDE System:

Inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood development and education is critical however, the reality is that these children are not considered regarding their education needs or their rights. "Children with disabilities and their families are confronted by barriers including inadequate legislation and policies, negative attitudes, inadequate services, and lack of accessible environments. If children with disabilities and their families are not provided with timely and appropriate early education and support, their difficulties can become more severe and resulting into negative lifetime consequences, increased poverty and profound exclusion"³⁵. It is therefore imperative that Inclusion in ECDE happens in a deliberately manner, thought through, planned, and delivered with the authority and backing of state governments. This entails having policies and programmes that provides guidelines on inclusion processes including Early Identification and intervention procedures. National or regional protocols were available should be used to guide IECDE planning and implementation processes. There are several factors that need to be considered when planning for Inclusion in ECDE they include the following:

- Inclusion in ECED is the responsibility of the state, it needs to lead the planning and implementation of a legally based Inclusive system.
- Provide and improve financial support
- Develop or improve targeted advocacy for Inclusion in ECDE
- Legal frameworks on IECDE should have a clear focus on Early Identification and Intervention
- A collaborative approached should be put in place to include all relevant role players in the disabilities field.
- Prioritisation of the rights-based approach
- Children with disabilities should not fit into the ECDE system the system should change to facilitate inclusion.
- Inclusion should take home and community settings into account
- Inclusion must be a partnership with caregivers and other role players
- Inclusion must not be a side issue or a burden it should be one of the essential and important components of how ECDE is planned and implemented.
- Inclusion does not take resources or time away from ECED instead it adds to the fulfilment of meeting the rights and goals of young children and improves society.

³⁴ Learning disabilities and Young Children: Identification and Intervention
Idonline.org/article/11511/

³⁵ Ndhlovu,D, Mtonga, T Chipindi S Muzata,K 2016Early childhood education in Zambia: inclusion of children with disabilities.

- Inclusion should be deliberately planned as part of ECED and funded inclusively in all programmes and services for young children.
- ECED Policies, guidelines and standards should integrate the needs of young children with disabilities.
- All ECDE qualifications and training programmes should integrate knowledge and skill relating to vulnerable children, especially disabilities.
- All teachers and practitioners in ECDE should undergo pre-service or in-service training on disabilities to assist them on how to deal with young children with disabilities and their families.
- Professional ECDE development should have a Special focus on Early Identification and Intervention
- ECDE facilities and environments should be designed to incorporate the needs of children with disabilities.
- Employment of evidence based Inclusive ECDE policies and programmes.
- Across Southern Africa sharing and utilisation of Inclusive ECDE Programme models, information and resources should be the norm, such as SAFODS Manual on ECDE for Children with Disabilities and Swaziland’s Care Givers Training Manual on ECDE for Children with special needs and disabilities.
- Development of an information and resources data base for easy access by all role players in IECDE.

Situation of young children with disabilities in Southern Africa

It is a matter of great concern that despite a broad adoption of the above mentioned conventions and some development of various ECDE and Disabilities policies and programmes, there is little known about the extent to which Inclusive Early Childhood Development (IECD) and Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) programs and support services are being developed and implemented globally³⁶. This is made even more challenging by the inadequate or in the case of Southern Africa the lack of information, adequate research, and reliable data on IECDE. There is some evidence that some Southern African countries are making efforts with regards to recognising the importance of Inclusion in ECDE and in some cases some form of provision is happening.³⁷ However, it is not easy to gather comprehensive information on the exact situation of this inclusion. As indicated in Lesotho Integrated Policy on Early Childhood Care and Education Policy,” no data have been provided for children from birth to 5 years of age and no measure of developmental delays has been used. It is known that many children with developmental delays and disabilities are “kept hidden from view,” and some are only identified when they enter primary school. Others are simply kept at home without any developmental or schooling services”³⁸. This situation is true in almost all the Southern African region and it cannot be allowed to continue. The current Strategy should be a tool to assist in alleviating some of the difficult challenges that young children with disabilities and their families are facing.

³⁶ Baron,V.E , Small,J, Wertlieb,D, Small,H. 2019 Global Survey of ECD and IECD Programmes RISE Institute

³⁷ Baron,V.E , Small,J, Wertlieb,D, Small,H. 2019 Global Survey of ECD and IECD Programmes RISE Institute

³⁸ Lesotho National Policy on Integrated Early Childhood Care and Education.2013 Ministry of Education and Training

Once all countries in the region make available their policies and various other information on ECDE and Inclusion through the current strategy development process, it will be tenable to assess and review them in order to ascertain the extent to which young children with disabilities are included in the thinking and planning of ECDE provisioning systems in Southern Africa. Below is a self-explanatory table showcasing examples of countries that have some form of Inclusive ECDE commitments.

ECDE AND INCLUSIVE ECDE POLICIES AND OTHER LEGAL FRAMEWORKS	INCLUSIVE ECDE COMMITMENTS AND STATEMENTS	IMPLEMENTATION INDICATIONS
BOTSWANA		
Early Child Education and Care Policy (2001)	Centres with special needs children shall make provision for them to access the building. The centre shall work with the Division for Special Needs for guidance and support.	Not clear the extent to which implementation is happening
LESOTHO		
National Policy on Integrated Early Childhood Care and Education (2013)	The policy clearly defines vulnerable and marginalized children. A specific section is provided to discuss young children with disabilities. It highlights the lack of data on young children with disabilities as a huge challenge for planning. It also states that these children have no access to education and that often they are hidden. It mentions the need for parent support for these children and encourages screening and early detection to happen in ECD centres.	
Lesotho National Disability Mainstreaming Plan	This plan is seen as Lesotho's implementation instrument of the UNCRPD. There is no mention of mainstreaming or inclusion of young children with disabilities in ECDE.	
MALAWI		
National Policy on Early Childhood (2006)	This policy provides the guidance for ECD services and system in Malawi. However, it does not provide commitment to Inclusive early learning to children with disabilities.	
National strategy on Inclusive education (2017-2021)	This is Malawi instrument for implementing a rights-based inclusive education system for all persons with disabilities including young children. Therefore, Inclusion in ECDE is included as part of nations inclusive system.	It is not clear the extent to which implementation of this strategy has been affected in Early Childhood.
National Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Development (2009-2014)	This plan was developed to assist with the implementation of the ECD Policy. The strategy which takes on a multisectoral approach has committed to ensure provision of ECDE provisioning to marginalized children and those with disabilities. This is stipulated under Strategic Issue 2. Increase Access and Equity.	
MAURITIUS		
Special Education Needs and Inclusive Education in Mauritius: Policy and Strategy Document. (2006)	The document makes provision for Inclusion in Early childhood it states: "Access to education and recognition of our children with special educational needs having the same right and enjoying equality of education opportunities as their counterparts,"	There is some evidence of ECDE teacher training programmes focusing on Inclusion.

ECDE AND INCLUSIVE ECDE POLICIES AND OTHER LEGAL FRAMEWORKS	INCLUSIVE ECDE COMMITMENTS AND STATEMENTS	IMPLEMENTATION INDICATIONS
	<p>“Relevance and Quality through the setting up of structured systems aimed at meeting each child’s needs”, and</p> <p>“Achievement in terms of teaching and learning as well as provision of support services within the classroom and the school through the collaboration of all school personnel and the multi-disciplinary team: educational, social, psychological, therapeutic and medical...”</p> <p>The Institutional Framework in the same document emphasizes on the facilitation of provision of services, starting with the early years of development and beyond³⁹.</p>	
SOUTH AFRICA		
<p>Education White Paper 6 for Special Needs Education (2001)</p>	<p>This document was designed to ensure the inclusion of children with disabilities into the education system. The focus is on children from Reception year to Grade 12 therefor ECD children from 5 to 8 are included.</p>	<p>This paper has been implemented fairly effectively. There is evidence of its implementation in ECDE. It has resulted in rise in the admission of children with disabilities into the Grade R classes in ECD centres</p>
<p>White Paper Five Early Childhood Development Policy (2001)</p>	<p>2001</p> <p>This paper acknowledges the lack of access to ECD services for children with disabilities, no provision in the mainstream or in the special schools for children with disabilities. It also gives a broad outline of other legal frameworks in other government Departments which focuses on the provision of services to young children under 7 years, for example the Welfare Amendment Act of 1996 which stipulates the payment of grants to young children. Despite acknowledging gaps of ECD provision to children with disabilities the paper does not explicitly advocate for an inclusive system for ECD, even though it makes reference to inclusive provisioning for birth to four years it does not elaborate on it.</p>	<p>This policy has been implemented to a large extent however on the matter of its influence on Inclusion in ECDE it is not conclusive.</p>
<p>Policy on Screening Identification Assessment and Support (2014)</p>	<p>2014</p> <p>This is one of the offshoots of White Paper 6. Its purpose is to better help provide a mechanism to support children in their inclusion into the Education system.</p>	<p>There is evidence of implementation for children 5 to 8-year-old. (Reception year which is Grade R to Grade 3)</p>
<p>National Integrated Early Childhood Development Plan (2015)</p>	<p>The NIECD was designed to help government in partnership with other role players to provide a comprehensive package of service to all children from conception to their school going age (About 6 years old, children with disabilities could be older that is why it does not specify the exact age range) The policy has taken on an inclusive approach acknowledging what has been done for children with disabilities thus</p>	<p>Not sure how this policy has impacted children with disabilities in terms of education provision however training agencies and institutions have acknowledged the need to prepare ECD teachers to understand inclusivity issues such as identification early detection and</p>

³⁹ S,Rajiah & S, Aliraja, Early Identification and Intervention in the Early Years: Preschool Teachers in Mauritius, 2016 Mauritius Institute of Education.

ECDE AND INCLUSIVE ECDE POLICIES AND OTHER LEGAL FRAMEWORKS	INCLUSIVE ECDE COMMITMENTS AND STATEMENTS	IMPLEMENTATION INDICATIONS
	far and what should be done especially in the area of Early Education to ensure their inclusion.	intervention relating to the Learning environment and training resources have been developed for different levels of ECDE qualifications in the country.
ZIMBABWE		
Policy on Inclusion ECDE Developed in 2003 Amended in 2007	The policy emphasises that children with mild disabilities and other vulnerabilities be included in main- stream education. The policy directs schools to make effort s to modify curriculum so that it does not discriminate children with special education needs. Furthermore, the policy calls for inclusive classes that have small enrolments of learners manned by well qualified teachers who are passionate about ways of handling children with special education needs ⁴⁰ .	Research seems to indicate the implementation of training of ECDE teachers

SADC Commitments

SADC commitment to enhancing experiences of young children and creation of inclusive education systems:

- a. Acknowledgement of the right to education for ALL learners including learners with disabilities
- b. Adoption of international and continental conventions that promote equal access to quality education for all learners
- c. Development of SADC regional frameworks on enhancing education for ALL learners
- d. Development of SADC protocol on Education and Training
- e. Development of SADC framework and programme of action for comprehensive care and support for OVC and youth

The state of inclusive education for young children in Southern African countries

- f. Data on which countries in Southern Africa have:
 - i. inclusive primary and secondary education policies and which countries have
 - ii. inclusive ECED policies
 - iii. legislation for inclusion
 - iv. ECED programmes/pre-primary education

⁴⁰ Chinhara Henry, Sotuku Namhla, Continuous professional development for inclusive ECD teachers in Chiredzi Zimbabwe: Challenges and opportunities Scientific African 8 (2020) e002A0

2. Gaps and challenges in inclusive ECDE

- Access (Inaccessibility of classrooms/toilets; Inaccessible curricular; Lack of individualised assistance)
 - Quality (Inadequate conditions of special needs schools; Limited funds to manage schools/childcare centres; Good practices that area not scaled)
 - Learning materials (Limited teaching aids, guidance materials)
 - Identification (Limited early identification – challenges remain undetected longer than necessary)
 - Workforce (Limited teachers trained in ECD; Limited in-service training in inclusive education; Limited human capacity to support development of inclusive education systems; Limited human capacity to support development inclusive education systems)
 - Data (Unreliable/unavailable data)
 - Resource constraints
 - Stigma (Lack of awareness and negative attitudes/stigma)
- ECDE Regional analysis results
 - Strengths in inclusive ECDE programming and service delivery in Southern Africa
 - Existing policies on ECDE, and other policies
 - The existence of the SADC inclusive strategy on education
 - The existence of civil society movements
 - Existence of legislation that ensures good governance
 - Existence of infrastructures, human resources (including volunteers) and systems
 - A lot of key partners and stakeholders
 - Access to ECD programmes and services, including pre-primary has increased in the region
 - Existence of ECD systems in both government and CSOs
 - Existence of political will/sector specific commitment
 - Many schools have specialised personnel workforce in schools and childcare centres
 - Availability of learning materials in some schools from partners and government.
 - Capacity to leverage the media to create awareness and advocate for enhanced programmes/services
 - Weaknesses in inclusive ECDE programming and service delivery in Southern Africa
 - Limited skills of available human resources (lack knowledge and skills/inadequate training)
 - Inadequate implementation of existing policies and strategies in ECD and/or disabilities

- Limited legislation to support implementation of existing policies
 - Weak enforcement of legislations
 - Weak governance structures and systems (inconsistent or frequent replacement of members of legislature)
 - Access to programmes and services constrained to urban areas
 - Limited access to programmes and services by populations in rural areas and marginalised groups
 - Stigma and cultural barriers
 - Inadequate resources for planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation
 - Limited generation and dissemination of data related to inclusive ECDE programmes/services
 - Limited knowledge and awareness
- Opportunities in inclusive ECDE programming and service delivery in Southern Africa
 - Inclusivity can be built into existing ECDE structures
 - Media can reach a broader audience and leveraged to raise awareness on key issues related to early learning opportunities for young children with disabilities
 - Continued financing from the development partners
 - The use of the media to raise awareness on policies, governance issues
 - Regional bodies can be leveraged for partnerships
 - Availability of satellite schools
 - Increased awareness and buy in at global, continental, regional, national and locally
 - Funding interest
 - Legislation availability on ECD,
 - Collaboration with govts, private and non-state actors
 - Growing global, continental, and regional interest in inclusive early childhood settings
- Threats to inclusive ECED programming and service delivery in Southern Africa
 - Mismanagement of government/Development Partners resources
 - Competing government priorities as budgeting is concerned
 - Natural phenomenon like drought, flooding
 - Dependency and decrease in donor funding for ECDE
 - Civil unrest
 - Limited prioritization of inclusive ECD at national level
 - Stigma and Cultural attitudes towards disabilities
 - Limited understanding/knowledge of the Science of ECDE
 - Inadequate data/research

- Limited implementation of M&E frameworks
- Limited resources for planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation
- Limited media content focused on inclusive ECDE
- Lack of Sustainability plans impacts the scale up of good practices

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Vision

An inclusive society where the rights of all young children with disabilities are enforced allowing access to quality inclusive education, care and development; and all ministries and communities recognize, value and protect young children with disabilities to achieve their developmental potential.

Purpose

This strategy is intended to make issues of access to quality education for young children (below the age of eight years) with disabilities an integral part of all SADC member States' laws, policies, and programmes.

Guiding Principles

Key to the implementation of this strategy are guiding principles outlined in the United Nations convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006); Education for All goals; the SADC Strategic Framework and Programme of Action (2008-2015) for Comprehensive Care and Support for Orphans, Vulnerable Children and Youth; and the Nurturing Care Framework.

These principles should be at the core of the implementation of the strategy. They include:

1. Human rights and social justice – affirm that people with disabilities are entitled to the constitutional and human rights, social justice, and equity. Governments and society are obligated to guarantee and protect children with disabilities' rights to survive and thrive.
2. Participation – will ensure young children with disabilities and their parents/caregivers actively participate in quality inclusive education. Governments must ensure interventions cover population groups equitably, particularly groups that are excluded or marginalised.
3. Accessibility – shall improve access and equity for children with disabilities in the early childhood development sub sector.
4. Holistic Mainstreaming – policies, strategies and programmes will promote holistic, equitable and comprehensive service provision for young children with disabilities.
5. Gender Sensitivity – policies, strategies and programmes on early education shall promote gender sensitivity.
6. Organizational culture and ethos that promotes inclusion – will ensure that all educational and religious environments adopt an organizational culture and ethos based upon positive attitudes towards welcoming, celebrating, and positive utilization of diversity.

7. Sustainability- shall strive to promote and engage in sustainable and quality educational interventions that will enable access to quality learning opportunities for young children with disabilities.
8. Family-centred care – families are at the centre of nurturing care for young children with disabilities. Parents and caregivers are the people most consistently present in children’s lives and they are the providers of nurturing care.
9. A whole of society approach – the holistic nature and shared importance of early childhood development calls for a comprehensive multisectoral approach involving a range of actors – governments, civil society, academic institutions, private sector, families and others involved in providing care for young children with disabilities.
10. Monitoring policies and services – strategies and systems to monitor policies and strategies to support inclusive early education for children with disabilities. This includes early identification and early intervention for the optimal development of young children with disabilities.

Regional Strategic Priorities

1. **Strategic priority 1: *Strengthening member states’ capacity to implement a comprehensive inclusive ECDE system that will benefit young children with disabilities through enhanced advocacy and partnership building***
 - Objective 1.1: To guide member states in advocacy, awareness, and partnerships to improve the prioritisation, allocation, and distribution of resources for inclusive programmes and services for young children with disabilities.
 - Objective 1.2: To facilitate the review, development, and implementation of inclusive early learning curricula for early learning/childcare programmes
 - Objective 1.3: To facilitate review, development and implementation of training/capacity building and continuous empowerment for early learning/childcare practitioners, parents/caregivers, and other stakeholders
2. **Strategic priority 2: *Strengthening policies and legislative environment for enhanced access to quality early learning programmes and services for young children with disabilities.***
 - Objective 2.1: To provide guidance in the formulation of clear policies, legislation and good governance that enables the establishment of an inclusive early childhood education system that supports young children with disabilities.
 - Objective 2.2: To facilitate, the review, development and implementation of guidance and standards for planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of inclusive early learning programmes and services for young children with disabilities.
3. **Strategic priority 3: *Promote knowledge generation and dissemination of inclusive ECDE practices***

- Objective 3.1: To strengthen partnerships and collaboration between research, policy, and practice in inclusive ECDE and facilitate the creation of networks and the sharing of inclusive ECDE practices that promote access to quality early childhood education for young children with disabilities
- Objective 3.2: to build capacity of leaders in inclusive, accessible, and equitable quality ECDE

4. Strategic priority 4: *Member states have adequate resources to implement, monitor and evaluate programmes*

- Objective 4.1: To Guide member states in allocating resources that provide funding for the implementation of equitable inclusive programs and services for young children with disabilities
- Objective 4.2: Support member states with innovative strategies for mobilising local resources and other sustainable alternative sources of financing for inclusive ECDE programmes
- Objective 4.3: To mobilise funding for the implementation of the strategy
- Objective 4.4: To coordinate and support the development of national and regional country monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

Management

The successful implementation of this Strategy is dependent on the capacity that exists at both national and regional levels.

- Capacity relates to human resources, financial resources, appropriate institutional framework, physical infrastructures, learning and teaching support materials (LTSM) and related assistive technologies and devices.
- The strategy will be coordinated through existing sectoral programmes and structures at the SADC Secretariat
- Activities will be coordinated through:
 - SADC Secretariat directly facilitating regional activities
 - Implementation through sub-contracting technical organisations with the SADC Secretariat playing a monitoring and supervisory role
 - Joint activities with regional partners

Efforts will be made to ensure that activities are linked to regional and national plans of Government Ministries / Departments; UN agencies and regional Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) partners, DPOs and other relevant institutions for complementarities, effectiveness and to achieve optimal early childhood development outcomes for vulnerable young children including those with disabilities.

The success of implementing the strategy depends on the entire system of regional and national partnerships functioning effectively in complementarities. Weaknesses at one level

and in one organisation can affect the entire response process, compromising outcomes for young children with disabilities.

Partnerships & Roles

Governments/SADC Member States will:

- Provide policy consensus at regional and national levels consistent with global commitments
- Take ownership and sustain initiatives
- Implement the regional inclusive ECDE strategy
- Monitor and evaluate with support from development agencies and civil society
- Mobilize resources locally and internationally and accountable
- Generate and manage information with technical support from development partners, civil society, and private sector
- Build local implementation capacity.
- Facilitate sharing lessons and experiences at regional and national levels.

SADC Secretariat in collaboration with relevant developmental agencies will facilitate:

- Conceptual and technical support at regional and national levels.
- Coordination and logistical support to partnerships.
- Interface with Governments and civil society for advocacy, technical support, and implementation at national and community levels – through country offices.
- Monitoring and getting Governments to account /report on their commitments at national level to SADC.
- Resource mobilisation.
- Advocacy and convening donors.
- Harmonisation of other existing SADC development frameworks with this strategy, where necessary.

African Union will provide:

- Conceptual leadership.
- Continental policy formulation and ownership by Member States.
- Convening continental stakeholders.
- Monitoring and getting Member States to account / report at continental level on their commitments.
- Resource mobilisation.

Civil society, DPOs, private sector, Institutions of higher learning and research institutions, UN Agencies and development partners will facilitate:

- Conceptual and technical support at regional, national and community levels.
- Interface with communities including advocacy, technical support, and community mobilisation at national and community levels.
- Implementation (direct service delivery) at regional, national and community levels.

- Resource mobilisation for regional, national and community implementation.
- Facilitate monitoring and evaluating outcomes for the children at household level – supporting Government capacity to report nationally, regionally, and globally.
- Information generation on specific technical issues in partnership with SADC secretariat and UN agencies.
- Sharing lessons and experiences at regional, national and community levels

Resource Mobilisation

Successful implementation of this strategy will require funding. The SADC secretariat will explore different strategies for resource mobilisation to ensure successful implementation of the Strategy. This will include contribution from member States through their national budgets and to the Secretariat, Bi-lateral agreements both at regional and national levels and the establishment of a regional education development fund.

Member States Contribution

- Allocate sufficient and sustainable financial and other resources to the implementation of the Strategy.
- Raise the proportion of GDP expenditure in relation to education to cater for learners with disabilities within the mainstream early learning system to ensure inclusivity.
- Support non-governmental organizations, disabled-persons’ organizations and parents of children with disabilities to deliver essential services in providing support to inclusive early learning systems.
- Contribute to the establishment of the Regional Inclusive Early Childhood Development & Education Fund which will fund mainly regional related activities.

Bi-lateral, multi-lateral agreements both at regional and national levels

- The SADC Secretariat will enter into bi-lateral agreements with development partners for purposes of technical and financial support towards the implementation of the strategy. Member States will also engage Development Partners at national level.

Establishment of a Regional Inclusive Early Childhood Development & Education Fund

- SADC will facilitate the establishment of a Regional Inclusive Early Childhood Development & Education fund. Resources for the fund will be sourced from Member States and Development partners. The main purpose of this fund will be to ensure availability of funds towards the implementation of the Strategy at both regional and national levels. Operating guidelines of the fund will be developed and agreed upon by Member States and Stakeholders.

Strategic Priorities and objectives

Strategic priority	Objectives
Strengthening member states' capacity to implement a comprehensive inclusive ECDE system that will benefit young children with disabilities through enhanced advocacy and partnership building	4. Large network of stakeholders: Active disability and ECD CSOs, stakeholders, networks, partnerships
	3. Political will for inclusion: SADC inclusive strategy on education shows commitment to inclusive practices in education
	2. Available legislature: commitment to global, regional human rights agenda on ECD and inclusion
	8. Committed workforce: disability and ECD workforce are committed to their work. Some schools have specialised personnel
	9. Available learning materials: some schools have adapted materials to support inclusive learning
Strengthening policies and legislative environment for enhanced access to quality early learning programmes and services for young children with disabilities	9. Available learning materials: some schools have adapted materials to support inclusive learning
	10. Poor implementation of policies: limited operationalisation, enforcement, accountability mechanisms
	8. Committed workforce: disability and ECD workforce are committed to their work. Some schools have specialised personnel
	2. Available legislature: commitment to global, regional human rights agenda on ECD and inclusion
	6. Greater access to ECDE: enhanced access to ECD through pre-primary centres
	7. Existing infrastructure: existing ECDE centres/pre-primary schools
	5. Existing partnerships and collaborations: collaborations across govt and non-state actors
	1. Prioritisation of ECDE: global, regional and national prioritisation of ECD
	4. Large network of stakeholders: Active disability and ECD CSOs, stakeholders, networks, partnerships
Promote knowledge generation and	Available legislation
	Guidelines for infrastructure

dissemination of inclusive ECDE practices	Need sensitization/growing awareness – development of inclusive learning materials for workforce
	1. Prioritisation of ECDE: global, regional and national prioritisation of ECD
	5. Existing partnerships and collaborations: collaborations across govt and non-state actors
	7. Existing infrastructure: existing ECDE centres/pre-primary schools
	8. Committed workforce: disability and ECD workforce are committed to their work. Some schools have specialised personnel
Member states have adequate resources to implement, monitor and evaluate programmes	Establishment of monitoring and evaluation mechanism/directorate for inclusive ECDE
	Creation of a regional fund for inclusive ECDE
	Guidelines/facilitate/support for public/private partnerships and other alternative systems
	Establish a SADC regional training institution for inclusive ECDE
	Encourage member states to partner with community-based organizations for sensitization and quality programmes
	Partnerships/collaboration (especially, media, private sector..etc...)

PROGRAMME OF ACTION

Strategic Priority 1: Strengthening member states' capacity to implement a comprehensive inclusive ECDE system that will benefit young children with disabilities through enhanced advocacy and partnership building

Objective	Goal	Outcomes	Outputs
1.1. To guide member states in advocacy, disability awareness and partnerships for enhanced prioritisation, allocation and dispensation of resources for inclusive programmes and services for young children with disabilities.	50% of SADC member states with an existing advocacy and disability awareness strategy by 2025	More inclusive societies' existing in SADC member states	5 out of 10 member states are conducting training on inclusive education
		Increase in advocacy and disability awareness campaign among SADC member states	5 out of 10 member states are in partnership with different media houses to create awareness on inclusive education
		Inclusive education policies in place within SADC region	1 regional advocacy strategy on inclusive ECDE
			X meetings/trainings on advocacy for inclusive ECDE
In SADC 5 member states with policies on inclusive education			
1.2. To facilitate the review, development and implementation of inclusive early learning curricula for early learning/childcare programmes	Training and capacity building for ongoing empowerment	Increased number of stakeholders engaged	1 regional training manual on.....
		Increased lobbying by stakeholders for improved inclusive ECDE programmes in member states	Training material development
		Increased number of stakeholders engaged	Facilitation and assessment
Monitoring and evaluation			
1.3. To facilitate review, development and implementation			

of training/capacity building and continuous empowerment for early learning/childcare practitioners, parents/caregivers and other stakeholders			
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Strategic Priority 2: Strengthening policies and legislative environment for enhanced access to quality early learning programmes and services for young children with disabilities

Objective	Goal	Outcomes	Outputs
2.1 To provide guidance in the formulation of clear policies, legislation and good governance that enables the establishment of an inclusive early childhood education system that supports young children with disabilities.	50% of member states have clear policies, legislation on inclusive ECDE to facilitate budget line by respective member states	All member states implement and practice ECDE policies at grassroots level	Train legislatures and relevant stakeholders from member states
		All member states to pledge implementation of the legislation and policies	Train member states and policy makers on inclusive ECDE
		All member countries give allegiance to put legislation into policy and practice	Coordinate training of implementation of early learning policies in member states
		implementation of policies, advocacy for
			SADC review policies and monitoring mechanism to monitor the development, operationalisation and implementation of policies/legislation
			Policy registry/tracking.....

2.2 To facilitate, the review, development and implementation of guidelines and standards for planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating inclusive early learning programmes and services for young children with disabilities.	Create development standards that are measurable and attainable	Implementation of ECDE standards in other member countries year 2	Development of regional standards
		National operationalisation of the regional standards	Training workshops on the standards (curriculum, implementation, M&E) in all member states
			Evaluate implementation of the standards in member countries year 3 to 5
			Establish an M&E mechanism, curriculum development

Strategic Priority 3: Promote knowledge generation and dissemination of inclusive ECDE practices

Objective	Goal	Outcomes	Outputs
3.1 To strengthen partnerships and collaboration between research, policy and practice in inclusive ECDE and facilitate networking and sharing of inclusive ECDE practices that promote access to quality early education for young children with disabilities	50% of SADC member states to have strengthened research-based policies and practices by 2025	Increased partnerships and knowledge sharing among 5 SADC member states	5 out of 10 SADC member states will facilitate networking and sharing of inclusive ECDE practices
		Increased number of member states with national platforms for knowledge sharing and networking	5 SADC member states have a platform for sharing knowledge on inclusive education
		Increased number of member states with national platforms for knowledge sharing and networking	SADC develops a platform for sharing knowledge and dissemination X/year
		Increased number of member states participating in the	

		regional platform for knowledge sharing and networking	
3.2 To build capacity of leaders in inclusive, accessible, and equitable quality ECDE			

Strategic Priority 4: Member states have adequate resources to implement, monitor and evaluate programmes

Objective	Goal	Outcomes	Outputs
4.1 To Guide member states in allocating resources that provide funding for the implementation of equitable inclusive programs and services for young children with disabilities	Ensure sustained resource availability for inclusive ECDE programmes	Increased local (public-private) partnerships for enhanced resource mobilisation	SADC leads X trainings of X member states in resource mobilisation
		Increased budget allocation by member states for inclusive ECDE	Training X DPOs in 5 countries in resource mobilisation
			SADC monitoring of member states' budgets on inclusive ECDE
			...advocacy for increased budget allocation
4.2 To guide member states in resource mobilisation and allocation (including local strategies and other alternative sources of financing) that make available funding for the implementation of equitable quality inclusive programmes and			

services for young children with disabilities.			
4.3 To mobilise funding for the implementation of the strategy	To financially enable member states to start with implementation of the strategy	Capacitation	Technical assistance
		Networking	X% of member states fundraising activities...final resource
		awareness	Training X% of SADC member states in resource mobilisation
4.4 To coordinate and support the development of national and regional country monitoring and evaluation mechanisms			

MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Strategic Priority: Strengthening member states' capacity to implement a comprehensive inclusive ECDE system that will benefit young children with disabilities through enhanced advocacy and partnership building

Objective 1.1: To guide member states in advocacy, disability awareness and partnerships for enhanced prioritisation, allocation, and dispensation of resources for inclusive programmes and services for young children with disabilities

	INDICATOR	DEFINITION How is it calculated?	BASELINE What is the current value?	TARGET What is the target value?	DATA SOURCE How will it be measured?	FREQUENCY How often will it be measured?	RESPONSIBLE Who will measure it?	REPORTING Where will it be reported?
Goal 50% of SADC member states with an existing advocacy and disability awareness strategy by 2025	% of SADC member states with existing advocacy and disability awareness strategy by 2025	The number of member states with existing advocacy and disability awareness strategy divided by the total number of members states multiplied by 100	TBA	8 member states	Monitoring data	Once at the end of the strategic period 2025	SADC secretariat	SADC member states meeting; African Union

Outcomes More inclusive societies' existing in SADC member states	# of member states with inclusive education programmes	The total number of member states out of target 10 who conduct trainings	TBA	5 member states	Monitoring data	Annually, and at the end of the planning period	SADC secretariat	SADC member states & Africa Union
Output 5 out of 10 member states are conducting training on inclusive education	# of members states conducting training on inclusive education # of trainings conducted. # of individuals/organizations trained	The total number of member states out of target 10 who conduct trainings	TBA	5 member states	Monitoring data	Annually, and at the end of the planning period	SADC secretariat	SADC member states & Africa Union
Outcomes Increase in advocacy and disability awareness campaign among SADC member states	% Change in level of disability awareness among SADC member states	The difference between % level of awareness at end of project and at baseline or at some point into the life of the project.	TBA	TBA	Monitoring data; mid-line and end line evaluation	at midpoint and at the end	SADC secretariat and NGO partners	SADC member status, Africa Union and Development partners
Output 5 out of 10 member states are in	# of members states in partnership with	The total number of member states	TBA	5 member states	Monitoring data	Annually, and at the end of	SADC secretariat	SADC member states & Africa Union

partnership with different media houses to create awareness on inclusive education	different media houses to create awareness on inclusive education	out of target 10 who create partnership with media houses.				the planning period		
Outcome 3: Inclusive education policies in place within SADC region	# of members states with inclusive education policies with the region	The total number of member states out of target 10 who create develop inclusive education policies.	TBA	5 member states	Monitoring data	Annually, and at the end of the planning period	SADC secretariat	SADC member states & Africa Union
Output 1 regional advocacy strategy on inclusive ECDE	# of regional advocacy strategies on inclusive ECDE developed	The number of regional advocacy strategies on inclusive ECDE	TBA	1	Monitoring data	Annually, and at the end of the planning period	SADC secretariat	SADC member states & Africa Union
Output X meetings/trainings on advocacy for inclusive ECDE	# of meetings/trainings on advocacy for inclusive ECDE	The number of trainings on advocacy for inclusive ECDE	TBA	TBA	Monitoring data; training reports	Annually, and at the end of the planning period	SADC secretariat	SADC member states & Africa Union
Outputs In SADC 5 member states with policies	# of members states with	The total number of member states	TBA	5 member states	Monitoring data;	Annually, and at the end of	SADC secretariat	SADC member states & Africa Union

on inclusive education	policies on inclusive	with inclusive ECDE policies			training reports	the planning period		
Objective 1.2: To facilitate the review, development and implementation of inclusive early learning curricula for early learning/childcare programmes								
	INDICATOR	DEFINITION How is it calculated?	BASELINE What is the current value?	TARGET What is the target value?	DATA SOURCE How will it be measured ?	FREQUENCY How often will it be measured?	RESPONSIBLE Who will measure it?	REPORTING Where will it be reported?
Goal: Training and capacity building for ongoing empowerment	% of SADC member states with where training and capacity building is done	The number of member states that conduct training and capacity building divided by the total number of members states multiplied by 100	TBA	5 member states	Monitoring data	Once at the end of the strategic period 2025	SADC secretariat	SADC member states meeting; African Union
Outcome Increased number of stakeholders engaged	% increase in stakeholders involved in implementing early learning curricula for early	The difference between implementers of early learning curricula at baseline and at endline	TBA	TBA	Monitoring data	Once at the end of the strategic period 2025	SADC secretariat	SADC member states meeting; African Union

	learning programmes	expressed as a %						
<u>Output</u> 1 regional training manual	Number of manuals	The total number of manuals	TBA	1	Monitoring data	Once at the end of the strategic period 2025	SADC secretariat	SADC member states meeting; African Union
<u>Outcome</u> Increased lobbying by stakeholders for improved inclusive ECDE programmes in member states								
<u>Output</u> Training material development								
<u>Outcome</u> Increased number of stakeholders engaged	% increase in stakeholders involved in implementing early learning curricula for early learning programmes	The difference between implementers of early learning curricula at baseline and at endline expressed as a %	TBA	TBA	Monitoring data	Once at the end of the strategic period 2025	SADC secretariat	SADC member states meeting; African Union
<u>Output</u>								

Facilitation and assessment								
Output Monitoring and evaluation								
Objective 1.3: To facilitate review, development and implementation of training/capacity building and continuous empowerment for early learning/childcare practitioners, parents/caregivers and other stakeholders								
	INDICATOR	DEFINITION How is it calculated?	BASELINE What is the current value?	TARGET What is the target value?	DATA SOURCE How will it be measured?	FREQUENCY How often will it be measured?	RESPONSIBLE Who will measure it?	REPORTING Where will it be reported?
Goal: Training and capacity building for ongoing empowerment	Number of capacity building events undertaken	Enumeration of the total number of events	TBA	TBA	Monitoring data	Once at the end of the strategic period 2025	SADC secretariat	SADC member states meeting; African Union
Outcome Increased number of stakeholders engaged	Number of stakeholders engaged presently	Difference between stakeholders involved currently and at baseline	TBA	TBA	Monitoring data	Once at the end of the strategic period 2025	SADC secretariat	SADC member states meeting; African Union
Output								

1 regional training manual on.								
Outcome Increased lobbying by stakeholders for improved inclusive ECDE programmes in member states	Number of lobbying events and types for improved inclusive ECDE programmes in members states	Difference between number of events held currently and at baseline and year-on-year annual variations	TBA	TBA	Monitoring data	Once at the end of the strategic period 2025	SADC secretariat	SADC member states meeting; African Union
Output Training material development	Number of training materials developed	Enumeration of training materials developed	TBA	TBA	Monitoring data	Once at the end of the strategic period 2025	SADC secretariat	SADC member states meeting; African Union
Outcome Increased number of stakeholders engaged	Number of stakeholders engaged presently	Difference between stakeholders involved currently and at baseline	TBA	TBA	Monitoring data	Once at the end of the strategic period 2025	SADC secretariat	SADC member states meeting; African Union
Output Facilitation and assessment	Number of facilitation events and number of assessment events	Enumeration of number of facilitation events and assessments	TBA	TBA	Monitoring data	Once at the end of the strategic period 2025	SADC secretariat	SADC member states meeting; African Union

<u>Output</u> Monitoring and evaluation	Number of monitoring and evaluation events	Enumeration of monitoring and evaluation events	TBA	TBA	Monitoring data	Once at the end of the strategic period 2025	SADC secretariat	SADC member states meeting; African Union
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Strategic Priority 2: Strengthening policies and legislative environment for enhanced access to quality early learning programmes and services for young children with disabilities

Objective 2.1: To provide guidance in the formulation of clear policies, legislation and good governance that enables the establishment of an inclusive early childhood education system that supports young children with disabilities.

	INDICATOR	DEFINITION How is it calculated?	BASELINE What is the current value?	TARGET What is the target value?	DATA SOURCE How will it be measured?	FREQUENCY How often will it be measured?	RESPONSIBLE Who will measure it?	REPORTING Where will it be reported?
Goal 50% of member states have clear policies, legislation on inclusive ECDE to facilitate budget line by respective member states	% of SADC member states with clear policies and legislation on inclusive ECDE to facilitate budget line by respective	Number of member states with clear policies/legislation divided by total number of member states multiplied by 100	TBA	8 member states	Reports from member states to SADC secretariat	Annually and at endline	SADC secretariat	SADC member states

	member states							
Outcomes All member states implement and practice ECDE policies at grassroots level	Number of member states that implement and practice ECDE policies at grassroots level	Enumerating the countries that implement ECDE policies	TBA	16 member states	From member countries to SADC secretariat	Annually and at the end of the project	SADC secretariat	SADC member states summit; AU, international forums.
Output Train legislatures and relevant stakeholders from member states	Number of legislature and relevant stakeholders from member states trained	Enumerating the countries that train legislatures and other stakeholders	TBA	16 member states	From member countries to SADC secretariat	Annually and at the end of the project	SADC secretariat	SADC member states summit; AU, international forums.
Outcomes All member states to pledge implementation of the legislation and policies	Number of member states pledging to implement	Enumerating the member states that pledge to implement the	TBA	16 member states	From member countries to SADC secretariat	Annually and at the end of the project	SADC secretariat	SADC member states summit; AU, international forums.

	t the policies	legislation and policies						
Output Train member states and policy makers on inclusive ECDE	Number of member states and policy makers trained on inclusive ECDE	Enumerating the member states and policy makers trained on inclusive ECDE	TBA	16 member states	From member countries to SADC secretariat	Annually and at the end of the project	SADC secretariat	SADC member states summit; AU, international forums.
Outcomes All member countries give allegiance to put legislation into policy and practice	Number of member states that give allegiance to put legislation into policy and practice	Enumerating the member states give allegiance to put legislation into policy and practice	TBA	16 member states	From member countries to SADC secretariat	Annually and at the end of the project	SADC secretariat	SADC member states summit; AU, international forums.
Output Coordinate training of implementation of early learning policies in member states	Number of trainings of implementation of early learning policies in	Enumerating the number of trainings for implementation of early learning policies in	TBA	TBA	From member countries to SADC secretariat	Bi-annually, Annually and at the end of the project	SADC secretariat	SADC member states summit; AU, international forums.

	member states	member states						
Output implementation of policies, advocacy for	Number & type of advocacy events for implementation of policies	Enumerating the number and types of advocacy events for implementation of policies	TBA	TBA	From member countries to SADC secretariat	Bi-annually, Annually and at the end of the project	SADC secretariat	SADC member states summit; AU, international forums.
Output SADC review policies and monitoring mechanism to monitor the development,	Number of monitoring mechanisms	Enumerating the number of monitoring mechanisms	TBA	TBA	From member countries to SADC secretariat	Bi-annually, Annually and at the end of the project	SADC secretariat	SADC member states summit; AU, international forums.

Strategic Priority 3: Promote knowledge generation and dissemination of inclusive ECDE practices

Objective 3.1: To strengthen partnerships and collaboration between research, policy, and practice in inclusive ECDE and facilitate networking and sharing of inclusive ECDE practices that promote access to quality early education for young children with disabilities.

	INDICATOR	DEFINITION How is it calculated?	BASELINE What is the current value?	TARGET What is the target value?	DATA SOURCE How will it be measured?	FREQUENCY How often will it be measured?	RESPONSIBLE Who will measure it?	REPORTING Where will it be reported?
Goal 50% of SADC member states to have strengthened research-based policies and practices by 2025	% of SADC member states with strengthened research-based policies and practices by 2025	Number of member states with strengthened research-based policies divided by total number of member states multiplied by 100	TBA	8 member states	Reports from member states to SADC secretariat	Annually and at endline	SADC secretariat	SADC member states

Outcomes Increased partnerships and knowledge sharing among 5 SADC member states	Number of partnerships and knowledge sharing forums	% increase in number partnership compared to the past	TBA	TBD	Reports from member states to SADC secretariat	Annually and at endline	SADC secretariat	SADC member states
Output 5 out of 10 SADC member states will facilitate networking and sharing of inclusive ECDE practices	Number of networking and sharing events of inclusive ECDE practices	Enumerate the number of networking and sharing events by SADC member states	TBA	TBD	Reports from member states to SADC secretariat	Annually and at endline	SADC secretariat	SADC member states
Outcomes Increased number of member states with national platforms for knowledge sharing and networking	Number of partnerships and knowledge sharing forums	% increase in number partnership compared to the past	TBA	TBD	Reports from member states to SADC secretariat	Annually and at endline	SADC secretariat	SADC member states
Output 5 SADC member states have a platform for sharing knowledge on inclusive education	Number of SADC member states with an inclusive education knowledge	Enumerate the number of networking and sharing events by SADC	TBA	5 SADC member states	Reports from member states to SADC secretariat	Annually and at endline	SADC secretariat	SADC member states

	sharing platform	member states						
Output SADC develops a platform for sharing knowledge and dissemination X/year	Number of platforms developed	Enumerate the number of platforms developed	TBA	1	Reports from member states to SADC secretariat	Annually and at endline	SADC secretariat	SADC member states

Strategic Priority 4: Member states have adequate resources to implement, monitor and evaluate programmes

Objective 4.1: To Guide member states in allocating resources that provide funding for the implementation of equitable inclusive programs and services for young children with disabilities

	INDICATOR	DEFINITION How is it calculated?	BASELINE What is the current value?	TARGET What is the target value?	DATA SOURCE How will it be measured ?	FREQUENCY How often will it be measured?	RESPONSIBLE Who will measure it?	REPORTING Where will it be reported?
Goal Ensure sustained resource availability for inclusive ECDE programmes	Amount of resources allocated and utilized for inclusive ECDE programmes	The amount of money allocated and utilized for inclusive ECDE programmes annually	TBA	TBA	SADC member states	Annually, endline	MoE of SADC member states, SADC secretariat	SADC members, AU, Global
Outcomes Increased local (public-private) partnerships for	Number of public-private	Enumeration of the number of public private	TBA	TBA	SADC member states	Annually, endline	MoE of SADC member states, SADC secretariat	SADC members, AU, Global

enhanced resource mobilisation	partnerships initiated	partnerships						
Output SADC leads X trainings of X member states in resource mobilisation	Number of trainings/member states trained on resources mobilization organized	Enumeration of the number of trainings and member states trained	TBA	TBA	SADC member states	Annually, endline	MoE of SADC member states, SADC secretariat	SADC members, AU, Global
Outcomes Increased budget allocation by member states for inclusive ECDE	Additional amounts allocated for inclusive ECDE by member states yearly	The difference between current and previous years allocation for inclusive ECDE	TBA	TBA	SADC member states	Annually, endline	MoE of SADC member states, SADC secretariat	SADC members, AU, Global
Output Training X DPOs in 5 countries in resource mobilisation	Number of DPOs trained in 5 countries on resource	Enumeration of the number of DPOs trained in 5 countries	TBA	TBA	The 5 SADC member states	Annually, endline	MoE of SADC member states, SADC secretariat	SADC members, AU, Global

	mobilization							
Output SADC monitoring of member states' budgets on inclusive ECDE	Number of monitoring activities of member states' budgets on inclusive ECDE	Enumeration of the monitoring activities of inclusive ECDE budgets	TBA	TBA	The 5 SADC member states	Annually, endline	MoE of SADC member states, SADC secretariat	SADC members, AU, Global
Output ...advocacy for increased budget allocation	Number & type of advocacy events for implementation of policies	Enumerating the number and types of advocacy events for implementation of policies	TBA	TBA	From member countries to SADC secretariat	Bi-annually, Annually and at the end of the project	SADC secretariat	SADC member states summit; AU, international forums.
Objective 4.2: To guide member states in resource mobilisation and allocation (including local strategies and other alternative sources of financing) that make available funding for the implementation of equitable quality inclusive programmes and services for young children with disabilities								
Goal								

Objective 4.3: To mobilise funding for the implementation of the strategy								
Goal To financially enable member states to start with implementation of the strategy	amount of financial resources provided for implementation of the strategy	The amount of money actually made available for implementation of the strategy	TBA	TBA	From member countries to SADC secretariat	Bi-annually, Annually and at the end of the project	SADC secretariat	SADC member states summit; AU, international forums.
Outcomes Capacitation			TBA	TBA	From member countries to SADC secretariat	Bi-annually, Annually and at the end of the project	SADC secretariat	SADC member states summit; AU, international forums.
Outputs Technical assistance	Types and number of technical assistance programmes	Enumeration of different types and number of technical assistance programmes	TBA	TBA	From member countries to SADC secretariat	Bi-annually, Annually and at the end of the project	SADC secretariat	SADC member states summit; AU, international forums.

Outcomes Networking	TBD	TBD	TBA	TBA	From member countries to SADC secretariat	Bi-annually, Annually and at the end of the project	SADC secretariat	SADC member states summit; AU, international forums.
Outputs X% of member states fundraising activities...final resource	TBD	TBD	TBA	TBA	From member countries to SADC secretariat	Bi-annually, Annually and at the end of the project	SADC secretariat	SADC member states summit; AU, international forums.
Outcomes awareness	TBD	TBD	TBA	TBA	From member countries to SADC secretariat	Bi-annually, Annually and at the end of the project	SADC secretariat	SADC member states summit; AU, international forums.
Outputs Training X% of SADC member states in resource mobilisation	% of SADC member states trained in resource mobilization	The difference between the number trained and the total membership multiplied by 100	TBA	TBA	From member countries to SADC secretariat	Bi-annually, Annually and at the end of the project	SADC secretariat	SADC member states summit; AU, international forums.

Objective 4.4: To coordinate and support the development of national and regional country monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

<p>Goal</p> <p>50% of member states supported to develop national monitoring and evaluation mechanisms</p>	<p>% of member states supported to develop national monitoring and evaluation mechanisms</p>	<p>The number of member states supported to develop national monitoring and evaluation mechanisms divided by the total number of members multiplied by 100</p>	<p>TBA</p>	<p>50%</p>	<p>From member countries to SADC secretariat</p>	<p>Bi-annually, Annually and at the end of the project</p>	<p>SADC secretariat</p>	<p>SADC member states summit; AU, international forums.</p>
<p>Outcome</p> <p>Enhanced accuracy of data on inclusive ECDE</p>	<p>Number of countries with complete and accurate inclusive ECDE implementation data</p>	<p>Enumeration of countries with complete and accurate inclusive ECDE implementation data</p>	<p>TBA</p>	<p>50%</p>	<p>From member countries to SADC secretariat</p>	<p>Bi-annually, Annually and at the end of the project</p>	<p>SADC secretariat</p>	<p>SADC member states summit; AU, international forums.</p>

<p>Outputs</p> <p>5 countries have national monitoring and evaluation plans</p>	<p>Number of countries with monitoring and evaluation plans</p>	<p>Enumeration of the countries with monitoring and evaluation plans</p>	<p>TBA</p>	<p>5 member states</p>	<p>From member countries to SADC secretariat</p>	<p>Bi-annually, Annually and at the end of the project</p>	<p>SADC secretariat</p>	<p>SADC member states summit; AU, international forums.</p>
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ANNEXES

Annex 1: Identified Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in inclusive ECDE

<p>Strengths</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritisation of ECDE: global, regional, and national prioritisation of ECD Available legislature: commitment to global, regional human rights agenda on ECD and inclusion Political will for inclusion: SADC inclusive strategy on education shows commitment to inclusive practices in education Large network of stakeholders: Active disability and ECD CSOs, stakeholders, networks, partnerships Existing partnerships and collaborations: collaborations across govt and non-state actors Greater access to ECDE: enhanced access to ECD through pre-primary centres Existing infrastructure: existing ECDE centres/pre-primary schools Committed workforce: disability and ECD workforce are committed to their work. Some schools have specialised personnel Available learning materials: some schools have adapted materials to support inclusive learning 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Poor implementation of policies: limited operationalisation, enforcement, accountability mechanisms Insufficient financing: Limited financing for ECDE and disabilities overall Limited access to services: Rural and marginalised populations have limited access to ECDE/disability services Limited skills and support for workforce: high turn-over, limited, professional development, remuneration, planning and implementation Limited research, monitoring and evaluation: Inadequate documentation and monitoring of existing programmes Stigma and cultural barriers: reduce access to services and impacts the integration of children with disabilities in community Limited knowledge and awareness: media, private sector and others lack knowledge about inclusive ECDE
<p>Opportunities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborative environment: governments, private sector and non-state actors collaborate on ECD and disability issues Regional bodies: SADC, SAFOD and other regional bodies provide guidance to countries Financing from donor community: Continued interest in financing 	<p>Threats</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Poor governance/political instability: Shifting priorities and mismanagement of resources Competing priorities: Competing priorities for resources – ECD/inclusion not a priority area Dependency and reduction of donor funding: funding landscape has

<p>ECD/disability from development partners</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Growing awareness/buy-in: increased awareness about ECD and inclusion 5. Existing infrastructure: existing ECDE centres/pre-primary schools 6. Media engagement: media platforms raise awareness about key issues 	<p>changed, continual donor funding is not guaranteed</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Conflict and emergencies: civil unrest, natural disasters 5. Stigma and cultural barriers: limited community acceptance for inclusive ECDE practices 6. Misinformation: negative practices are upheld and divide communities
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Annex 2: Linking Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats to Strategic objectives

	<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prioritisation of ECDE 2. Available legislature 3. Political will for inclusion 4. Large network of stakeholders 5. Existing partnerships and collaborations 6. Greater access to ECDE 7. Existing infrastructure 8. Committed workforce 9. Available learning materials 	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Poor implementation of policies 2. Insufficient financing 3. Limited access to services 4. Limited skills and support for workforce 5. Limited research, monitoring and evaluation 6. Stigma and cultural barriers 7. Limited knowledge and awareness
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaborative environment 2. Regional bodies 3. Financing from donor community 4. Growing awareness/buy-in 5. Existing infrastructure 6. Media engagement 	<p><i>Which of the strengths can be used to maximise the opportunities?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To strengthen partnerships and collaboration between research, policy, and practice in inclusive ECDE and facilitate networking and sharing of inclusive ECDE practices that promote access to quality early education for young children with disabilities b. To guide member states in advocacy, disability awareness and partnerships for enhanced prioritisation, allocation, and dispensation of resources for inclusive programmes and services for young 	<p><i>What action(s) can you take to minimize the weaknesses using the opportunities identified?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide guidance to member states in advocacy, disability awareness and partnerships for enhanced prioritisation, allocation, and dispensation of resources for inclusive. b. To facilitate review, development, and implementation of inclusive early learning curricula for early learning/childcare programmes c. To facilitate review, development and implementation of training/capacity building and continuous empowerment for early learning/childcare practitioners, parents/caregivers, and other stakeholders

	children with disabilities.	
<p><u>Threats</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Poor governance/political instability 2. Competing priorities 3. Dependency and reduction of donor funding 4. Conflict and emergencies 5. Stigma and cultural barriers 6. Misinformation 	<p><i>How can you use the strengths to minimize the threats identified?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To guide member states in resource allocation that makes available funding for the implementation of equitable inclusive programmes and services for young children with disabilities b. To facilitate, the review, development and implementation of guidance and standards for planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of inclusive early learning programmes and services for young children with disabilities 	<p><i>How can you minimize the weaknesses to avoid the threats you identified?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. To mobilise funding for the implementation of the strategy b. To coordinate and support the development of national and regional country monitoring and evaluation mechanisms c. To provide guidance in the formulation of clear policies, legislation and promote good governance that enables the establishment of an inclusive early learning system that supports young children with disabilities