The Secretariat of the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities

S.A.D.P.D

Study on Education for Children with Disabilities in Southern Africa

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Preface

Children with disabilities in Southern Africa live with the effects of disability and struggle with a myriad of challenges that can be attributed to the absence of an enabling environment. They are often deprived of resources and services that would enable them to access education which will contribute to their fullest development.

Existing approaches in implementing policies and programmes on education for children with disabilities have led to fragmentation of efforts and lack of resources. This has led to slow progress in implementing policies on the ground. Despite the fact that more than 50% of Southern African countries have ratified the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the SADC Protocol on Education, the majority of existing laws and policies on education for children with disabilities are still not sufficiently prioritised and implemented.

Disability is one of the least visible but most potent factors in educational marginalization. Beyond the immediate health-related effects, physical and mental impairment carries a stigma that is often a basis for exclusion from society and school. The impact is often worse for poorer households across Africa. Throughout the world, children with disabilities have experienced marginalization, segregation, and exclusion from education systems. While there are several reasons for such challenges, a programme that specifically promotes education for children with disabilities will ensure a fulfilled and dignified childhood and a positive unfolding of their present and future.

This Study on Education for Children with Disabilities in Southern Africa focused on education related needs for children with disabilities in the five target countries. It explored the enabling conditions and barriers related to programmes and policies that prevent children with disabilities from accessing and claiming their right to education. The study has generated knowledge and information on access to education by children with disabilities that will contribute to the development of policies and programmes that prioritize purpose, quality and relevance by making strategic interventions aimed at the development of competent and critical citizens of an open society. The Secretariat of the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities (SADPD) promotes the use of evidence based research, not only to influence

policies but also to provide factual information on the situation of the target group -in this case children with disabilities in Southern Africa.

Lastly, let us always remember that children with disabilities are children first and foremost, and are entitled to the same rights in all aspects of their lives as other children. Thus, we all need to commit ourselves to the task of translating words into action. What we need is action that:
- Eliminates discrimination and ensures genuine inclusion;
- Enables children with disabilities to be involved in decisions that affect their lives;
- Eliminates all barriers and ensures equal opportunities and access to basic education;
- Promotes respect and recognition of the contribution of children with disabilities to society.

Kudakwashe Dube, Chief Executive Officer

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

i. Background

The recently published World Report on Disability (2011) by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Bank (WB) estimates that more than a billion people across the world or approximately 15% of the world's population live with some form of disability (WHO & WB, 2011: 7). Most importantly, the report notes the disproportional affects which disability has on people, and children in particular, from lower income countries and those living in the poorest wealth quintile of the world's population. Not only are children and adults in these circumstances most at risk of impairment, but it is in these circumstances, with massive socio-economic challenges, where the needs of children with disabilities are most often marginalised and disregarded. Nowhere are these needs ignored more than in the sphere of education. While at a policy level the rights of children with disabilities to access quality education are recognised, conditions on the ground mean that they remain those children most excluded from accessing education and its benefits. The challenges which children with disabilities, especially in developing contexts, face in accessing education, has a profound effect on the rest of their lives. It restricts their ability to participate equitably within and contribute meaningfully to their societies, and rendered them most vulnerable to ongoing economic and social exclusion.

In most countries in Africa early efforts at providing education for children with disabilities has been through separate special schools, usually targeted at specific impairments, such as schools for the Blind. These institutions continue to reach only a small proportion of children with disabilities and are unable therefore to respond to the need that exists. Moreover, such forms of separate education provision for children with disabilities tend to isolate them from their families and communities and, in many cases, do not equip them with the knowledge and skills they will require to pursue higher education opportunities and access productive employment.

The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCHPD) (2006) makes it clear that all people with disabilities have a right to education and that;

With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties should ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning. In realizing this right, States Parties should ensure that persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability

The UNCHPD's emphasis therefore is not only on realising the right to education for all children, but also on building inclusive education and training systems. The UNCHPD recognises the right of all children with disabilities to be included in the general education and training systems of countries and for them to receive the kinds and levels of support they may require. To achieve this, significant systemic change is needed to remove those barriers that prevent children with disabilities from accessing equitable education opportunities, including those that prevent them from being able to reach their full potential within the classroom.

At the time of completing this final report, all the countries targeted in this study had ratified the UNCRPD. By doing this, these countries have committed themselves to work towards the realisation of all the rights and obligations outlined in the Convention, including realising the right to education for persons with disabilities through the building of inclusive education and training systems.

ii. Purpose of the study

It is against this background that the Secretariat of the African Decade for Persons with Disabilities (SADPD) commissioned a research study into access to education by children with disabilities in Southern Africa. This research was aimed at collating a body of evidence to enhance existing insights and build new knowledge to inform the development and implementation of inclusive education across the region.

The following objectives were used to guide and implement the research in the five countries:
- To establish the current state of affairs concerning access to relevant and quality education in an inclusive environment by children with disabilities;
- Develop a deepened understanding into how the concept of inclusive education is understood and used in the policy frameworks and how more traditional notions and practices around 'special needs education' articulate with these understandings;
- To consider progress that has been made towards improving access and building inclusive systems and identify key challenges that are hindering progress;
- Identify good practices and lessons learnt that can inform future practice;
- Generate recommendations to inform future policy processes and practice at national and regional level.

iii. Research design and methodology

To ensure a representative study across Southern Africa, five countries representing 46% of SADC member states were identified for participation in this study. These were Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland. These countries were identified in view of their diverse economic and political situations and because of the experience which the SADPD has in working with them. One consultant was

identified per country to undertake the research and to produce a report capturing the research findings.

A qualitative research design was developed to guide the research. Primary and secondary data collection methods were used. These included: desktop research to delineate the issues, explore the body of knowledge that exists and define the central concepts for the study; and the administration of questionnaires or structured interview schedules to state and non-state actors such as government officials, policy makers, learners with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities and relevant non-governmental organisations, including Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs). The questionnaires/interview schedules were aimed at exploring the perceptions and experiences of these key role players and assessing the level of awareness on the concept and readiness of the country to implement inclusive education.

iv. Key findings and recommendations
The findings from the study show clearly that *strong political will is in place across the five countries* towards addressing the historical inequalities experienced by children with disabilities in accessing quality education provision. This political will is most evident in the *strong, enabling policy frameworks in place* in each of the countries. Moreover, these policy frameworks demonstrate a clear sense of the developmental challenges involved in creating equitable educational opportunities for children with disabilities and locate these challenges within broader national development agendas.

There is also strong evidence from the study to suggest that these countries recognise the importance of key components to an inclusive education system, such as; adequately trained teachers; appropriate and accessible support systems, including those for learners requiring high levels of support and specialised assistance; and the importance of working with key role players outside government. A key strength across the region is the existence of a vibrant disability rights movement and willingness on the part of both these organisations and the government to engage and work in partnership towards a common objective. The establishment of such partnerships which harness local knowledge and maximise existing community resources are recognised as good practices across the region.

However, not unexpectedly, the study also shows that the real challenge to the realisation of these policy goals lies in their implementation and substantially addressing those systemic factors that hinder and undermine the implementation process. All of the countries in this study face massive socio-economic challenges that have a significant impact on children with disabilities and their ability to access educational opportunities. The study shows that most often good practices emerge where countries have found innovative ways to address these systemic challenges. Such innovation is most often informed by a careful understanding of the local context and insight into those factors within this context which either have the potential to support inclusive education or restrict and hamper progress.

In some respects the study has enabled a clearer picture to emerge of what is happening on the ground with regard to policy implementation. However, inadequate, out of date and/or unreliable data across all of the five countries has severely restricted the study's ability to provide a clear and accurate picture of the extent to which children with disabilities are accessing quality educational provision in inclusive settings within their countries. Despite these gaps in information, evidence collected through the study suggests that too many children with disabilities across the region still remain either outside of the systems that exist or are not provided with the support which they require in inclusive environments to learn and develop to their full potential.

It is also clear from the study that progress is still strongly influenced by the extent to which dedicated resources are in place to fund the change processes and, equally importantly, that the allocation and distribution of these resources are carefully monitored to ensure that they support what they were meant to support.

The study also shows that the trend across the region is towards the development of systems that combine provision that has historically been in place as part of a limited 'special education' system, with interventions that aim to transform existing mainstream systems to become more inclusive and meet the needs of all children. It is evident that for some of the countries in this study, this 'hybrid' model reflects an attempt to harness existing resources and build on what is already in place. While it is recognised that harnessing existing resources, such as existing special schools, is extremely important in resourced constrained environments, what is not sufficiently clear from the study is the extent to which such strategies are informed by a real and sustained commitment to fundamentally transform existing special schools so that they can become viable and progressive resources within an inclusive education system. Similarly, there is little evidence that real attempts are being made to address broader systemic issues which serve both directly and indirectly to undermine the application of inclusive practices in schools and the building of truly inclusive educations systems.

Drawing from the findings of this study, the following are recommended as issues for immediate attention for SADC, the national governments of its member countries and Civil Society organisations.

- SADC should develop a **strategic plan on inclusive education** that aims to increase access to educational opportunities for children with disabilities through the development of inclusive education systems across the region. This plan should be **linked to and aligned with other key SADC instruments and programmes** which seek to increase access to education and address development challenges within the region.

- SADC should facilitate the undertaking of an **extensive regional study** which seeks, through the application of **quantitative data collection and modelling**, to reliably map the participation and/or exclusion of children with disabilities within the education systems of each of the member countries, ensuring that an accurate picture emerges across the region of levels of access and exclusion; the nature and forms of provision within which children with disabilities participate; the kinds and levels of support that are in place to support children with disabilities; and existing financial and human resources dedicated to supporting their participation in the education systems. The study should also attempt to advance some projections with regard to **future resources needed** to support the implementation of inclusive education in the member countries.

- Ministries of Education in partnership with organisations in Civil Society should facilitate among all role players the development of a **common understanding of inclusive education**, giving particular attention to the conceptual concerns underpinning inclusive education to ensure that all role players are able to make sense of what is needed to transform existing education systems to fully meet the needs of all children and are able to translate these concepts into meaningful strategies and practices.

- SADC should facilitate the development of a **regional network on inclusive education** to promote collaboration across countries, especially in the sharing of good practices and the setting up of strategic partnerships for systemic capacity development, especially among education officials, teachers, parents and DPOs.

- SADC should facilitate the development of a set of **regional guidelines** for adoption and implementation by each of the member countries which outline what is required to **transform existing special schools** into viable and progressive resources within the framework of an inclusive education system. They should actively seek to encourage member countries to focus their attention on the transformation of their general education systems, rather than on the setting up of new, separate facilities for children with disabilities, so that countries develop the capacity to meet, within local communities, the educational needs of all children in that community.

- Ministries of Education should prioritise **initiatives aimed at equipping teachers to participate with confidence in inclusive environments** and have the skills to respond to the educational needs of all children in their communities. Initiatives should give attention, in collaboration with relevant professional bodies, higher education institutions and teacher unions, to the integration of the values, principles and practices underpinning inclusive education into the **mainstream curricula of under-graduate student teachers** and the development of appropriate **courses at the post-graduate level** for further, more specialised study. Similarly, governments should, in collaboration with relevant service providers, develop **appropriate in-service training courses** to equip existing teachers with an expanded skills base and enhance their understanding of the values, principles and practices underpinning inclusive education. The latter should form part of **accredited professional development offerings for teachers.**

- Ministries of education should actively encourage and support initiatives towards building inclusive education which are **embedded within local communities** and which actively bring together and support relationships between key role players across communities, especially parents, teachers, DPOs, local health workers, community and traditional leaders, local government officials and other community resources that are able to provide support to schools.

- Ministries of Education should facilitate **greater involvement by parents' organisations and DPOs** in existing initiatives around inclusive education. This should include all initiatives that seek to take forward national development gaols and promote education for all.

- Organisations of parents of children with disabilities and DPOs should actively **facilitate the participation of other parents and people with disabilities** in initiatives towards the development of inclusive education in their countries. This should include their participation in **multi-sectoral and inter-organisational partnerships** established to support government efforts to implement inclusive education and monitor progress.

- Ministries of Education should ensure that policies aimed at increasing access to education for children with disabilities and building inclusive education systems should ensure that attention is given to **facilitating access to all levels of the education system**, especially early childhood development, and that initiatives that are aimed at supporting the **transition of students from school to work** address fully the needs of children with disabilities, so as to enhance their ability to access productive employment.

- Ministries of Education should develop **appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and processes** that are designed to monitor the implementation of inclusive education. This should involve the development of a set of **appropriate indicators** that can be used to measure progress around those elements that are recognised as critical to the building and maintenance of inclusive education systems, especially in developing contexts. The development of appropriate indicators should be matched by immediate efforts to **strengthen existing data collection and analysis capability** so as to ensure that accurate and reliable evidence can be collected to verify progress and inform decision making.

1. INTRODUCTION

This document reports on a research study undertaken in 2011 and 2012 by the Secretariat of the African Decade of Disabled Persons (SADPD) on access to education for children with disabilities into five countries in Southern Africa. It takes as its starting point the provisions of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and its call for the creation of inclusive education systems as necessary to realising the rights of children with disabilities to equitable education opportunities. It synthesises the findings from the five case studies in an attempt to provide an overview of what is happening across the region and to offer insights that will be of benefit to governments and role players in their efforts to address the needs of children with disabilities in their countries.

1.1 Rationale for the study

The recently published World Report on Disability (2011) by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Bank (WB) estimates that more than a billion people across the world or approximately 15% of the world's population live with some form of disability. They argue that this number is growing and is higher than previous WHO estimates which suggested around 10% (WHO & WB, 2011: 7). They also suggest that from a regional perspective Africa has the highest proportion of people with 'severe disabilities' (Ibid). The report estimates further that of the world's approximately 95 million children between 0 and 14 years, 13 million or 0.7% are severely disabled. Perhaps most relevant to this study is the recognition that is given in the report to the disproportional affects which disability has on people, and children in particular, from lower income countries and those living in the poorest wealth quintile of the world's population (Ibid: 8). Not only are children and adults in these circumstances most at risk of impairment, but it is in these circumstances, with massive socio-economic challenges, where the needs of children with disabilities are most often marginalised and disregarded.

Nowhere are these needs ignored more than in the sphere of education where, even when, at a policy level at least, the rights of children with disabilities to access quality education is recognised, conditions on the ground mean that they remain those children most excluded from accessing education and its benefits. The World Report (2011) argues that the stark reality is that children with disabilities are less likely to start and finish school than their non-disabled peers and while 'education gaps' are found among children with disabilities across all levels of income, these gaps are most pronounced in the poorest countries. Of profound importance is the impact which these issues around access and participation in education have on contributing to high levels of unemployment among people with disabilities, leading to very poor levels of economic participation in their societies and high levels of poverty and deprivation, both for the person with a disability and their family (Ibid: 11). Put simply, the challenges which children with disabilities, especially in

developing contexts face in accessing education, has a profound effect on the rest of their lives, restricting their ability to participate equitably within and contribute meaningfully to their societies, and rendering them most vulnerable to ongoing economic and social exclusion.

While the right to education is now broadly accepted as a fundamental human right for all people and, within this rights framework, important initiatives have taken place over the last twenty years to increase access to educational opportunities for children with disabilities, it is estimated that of the 80 million children across the world who remain out of school, 27% of these or 21.6 million are children with disabilities (Sightsavers, 2007). In Africa the situation remains especially bad, with data, for example, from Malawi, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe showing that between 24% and 39% of children with disabilities have never attended school (WHO & WB, 2011).

Perhaps the most important development that has taken place over the last twenty years towards addressing the educational needs of children with disabilities has been the increasing assertion that if the right to education is to be realised for all children, then education systems need to be designed so that they are able to respond to the diverse learning needs that exist among all children (Salamanca Declaration, 1994). This has become recognised as a call for the building of inclusive education and training systems – education systems designed to create learning environments that enable every child to develop and learn to their full potential. It is recognised that for this to happen all children require different types and levels of support and that the provision of such support forms part of the realisation of a child's right to education, including a child with a severe impairment that may require higher levels of support. For children with disabilities, the emphasis on inclusive education is very important. It challenges forms of education provision that unnecessarily separate children with disabilities from their non-disabled peers, often outside the general education system, or which prevent them from accessing equitable levels of education provision to non-disabled children.

The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCHPD) (2006) makes it clear that all people with disabilities have a right to education and that;

> With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, State Parties should ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning. In realizing this right, State Parties should ensure that persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability

> The WHO and WB also argue the case for an inclusive education system, emphasising that; "The inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools promotes universal primary completion, is cost effective and contributes to the elimination of discrimination" (WHO & WBa, 2011).

The emphasis on building inclusive education and training systems and the importance of this for children with disabilities is supported through the United Nation's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) Education For All Movement (EFA). This initiative, to which 164 governments pledged their support in 2000, takes forward a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults through six goals that must be met by 2015. The EFA links with the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals, which include as Goal 2 the achievement of universal primary education. This goal intends as its outcome to ensure that by 2015 all children complete a full course of primary schooling and targets issues of enrolment, completion and entry by all children into school.

1.2 Objectives
It is against this background that the Secretariat of the African Decade for Persons with Disabilities (SADPD) commissioned a research study into access to education by children with disabilities in Southern Africa. At the time of completing this final report, all the countries targeted in this study had ratified the UNCRPD. By doing this these countries have committed themselves to work towards the realisation of all the rights and obligations outlined in the Convention, including, as emphasised above, realising the right to education for persons with disabilities through the building of inclusive educations systems. This research was aimed at collating a body of evidence to enhance existing insights and build new knowledge to inform the development and implementation of inclusive education across the region.

In pursuit of this overarching intention, the following objectives were used to guide and implement the research in the five countries:

- To establish the current state of affairs concerning access to relevant and quality education in an inclusive environment by children with disabilities;

- Develop a deepened understanding into how the concept of inclusive education is understood and used in the policy frameworks and how more traditional notions and practices around 'special needs education' articulate with these understandings;

- To consider progress that has been made towards improving access and building inclusive systems and identify key challenges that are hindering progress;

- Identify good practices and lessons learnt that can inform future practice;

- Generate recommendations to inform future policy processes and practice at national and regional level.

1.3 Key concepts

It was recognised at the beginning of the research process that inclusive education is an emerging concept. In particular, where children with disabilities are concerned, it is often linked to the concept of 'special needs education' or education for learners regarded as having 'special needs'. This has historically referred to education provision for children with disabilities, in most cases in 'special schools' separate from the mainstream education system. Underlying these different concepts are important conceptual differences and debates. It is important therefore that the differences between the concepts and the underlying approaches continue to be debated and be considered as part of national policy processes. Some countries have sought to define and explain inclusive education as distinct from 'special needs education' in their policy processes and to explain the important conceptual issues underpinning inclusive education. In some instances, it is argued that building an inclusive education system involves incremental change from existing 'special needs provision' to a more inclusive system where by addressing the diverse needs of all learners, the 'special needs' category is no longer appropriate. Others appear to use the concepts interchangeably with limited attempts to draw attention to the conceptual differences underpinning the concepts. This results in on going confusion around the concepts and what they mean for addressing the educational needs of children with disabilities. One of the objectives of this study, as indicated above, was to explore how these concepts are taken forward in national policy documents and initiatives so as to contribute to deepened understandings across the region. With this in mind the following concepts have been used as working definitions in the research process.
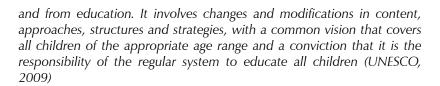
a) Disability

Article 1 of the UNCRPD defines persons with disabilities as people with: "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".

b) Inclusive education

For the purposes of this study, the UNESCO definition of inclusive education has been used. UNESCO defines inclusive education:

a process of addressing and responding to the diverse of needs of all children, youth and adults through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within

and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children (UNESCO, 2009)

c) Special Needs Education (SNE)

UNESCO defines SNE as:

Education designed to facilitate the learning of individuals who, for a wide variety of reasons, require additional support and adaptive pedagogical methods in order to participate and meet learning objectives in an educational programme. Reasons may include (but are not limited to) disadvantages in physical, behavioural, intellectual, emotional and social capacities. Educational programmes in special needs education may follow a similar curriculum as that offered in the parallel regular education system, however they take individuals' particular needs into account by providing specific resources (e.g. specially trained personnel, equipment, or space) and, if appropriate, modified educational content or learning objectives. These programmes can be offered for individual learners within already existing educational programmes, or be offered as a separate class in the same or separate educational institutions (UNESO, 2011).

1.4 Research design and methodology

To ensure a representative study across Southern Africa, five countries representing 46% of SADC member states were identified for participation in this study. These were Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland. These countries were identified in view of their diverse economic and political situations and because of the experience which the SADPD has in working with them. One consultant was identified per country to undertake the research and to produce a report capturing the research findings. Several introductory online meetings were facilitated with the researchers to ensure their understanding of the objectives of the study and to develop data collection tools and methods.

The research was aimed at investigating what is happening on the ground in these countries especially with regard to their existing policy frameworks and challenges. The research also aimed to document good practices and lessons that are being learnt towards the implementation of inclusive education across the region.

A qualitative research design was developed to guide the research. Primary and secondary data collection methods were used. Initially, desktop research was undertaken in an attempt to delineate the issues, explore the body of knowledge that exists and define the central concepts for the study. Some of the key documents

reviewed in this phase included: national constitutions, national development plans, national education related policies and strategies; international and regional conventions and human rights instruments; national policies on disability; and national statistical data sets such as national census reports. The review of these documents was augmented by other existing literature and scholarly work on inclusive education and disability from national, regional, continental and global contexts.

Although slightly different research methods as part of the overall qualitative research design were used in each of the countries, in all cases either questionnaires or structured interview schedules were developed and administered to collect primary data around the perceptions and experiences of state and non-state actors on inclusive education. These questionnaires/interview schedules were aimed at assessing the level of awareness on the concept and readiness of the country to implement inclusive education and were primarily targeted at relevant officials from government. The other questionnaires/interview schedules targeted policy makers, students, parents of children with disabilities, children themselves and other 'ordinary' people (including those with disabilities). The questionnaires/interview schedules sought to gather the following information:

- What the government of the country is doing to promote and support access to quality education for children with disabilities and the national response to inclusive education.

- What non-state actors are also doing regarding inclusive education.

- Whether there are geographic (rural/urban) differences in vulnerability and access to educational services by children with disabilities.

- The quality, relevance and degree of access to educational services by children with disabilities, in an inclusive environment.

- Advocacy opportunities that exist towards promoting access to quality education by children with disabilities.

- The challenges that exist in building and implementing inclusive education.

- Good practices and lessons that are being learnt in an attempt to promote and implement inclusive education.

- Policy recommendations to improve and strengthen the implementation of inclusive education.

Generally, the following criteria were used to stratify samples of target participants to ensure that particular experiences were captured in the study: urban and rural; state and non-state actors; central and local government; men and women; technocrats and non-technocrats, educators and non-educators, children with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities. It is important to note that in constructing the samples, deliberate efforts were made to ensure the participation of key informants. These were identified as: children (disabled and non-disabled) and/or their representatives, the Ministries of Education; the Ministries of Health & Social Services (or similar); parliamentarians; teachers; and representatives of United Nation's agencies such as UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO and UNDP where possible.

National feedback workshops were also organised to explore the validity of the research findings with key stakeholders and to elaborate on emerging issues from the research.

As with any research study, a number of factors impacted on the research process. Firstly, the study was constrained by limited resources. This impacted particularly on the size of the samples and thus the number of people targeted, contributing to less national coverage of the study than had been hoped. Resource constraints also limited travel to rural areas and more remote areas for purposes of data collection, areas recognised to experience significant challenges around education provision for children with disabilities.

Secondly, the study was not able to conduct a detailed analysis of national budgets and government resource provision towards building inclusive education systems and providing equitable educational opportunities for children with disabilities. It is recognised that this remains a critical area for further research as evidence on the extent of government commitment to education for children with disabilities.

2. OVERVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN 5 SADC COUNTRIES

This section provides a brief description of the picture that emerged from each of the country studies around what is happening with regard to education provision for children with disabilities in that country. It is necessarily descriptive as it outlines the policy frameworks that are in place across the five countries and captures, where possible, data around children with disabilities that was collated through the studies. Section 3 which follows, provides a deeper analysis of the findings from the study, often presenting a more complex picture than what is suggested in this section and exposing gaps between policies that are in place and the practice on the ground. The conclusions reached in Section 4 draw strongly from the challenges and issues discussed in Section 3 and are especially important to the recommendations that are made at the end of this report.

2.1 Lesotho

The Kingdom of Lesotho has a population of approximately 2 million people. It is a small, poor, mountainous country with most of the population living in the rural areas. It covers an area of 30 355 km2 and is completely surrounded by South Africa, making it extremely vulnerable to political and economic changes in that country (SINTEF, 2011). Lesotho has one of the least developed economies in the SADC region which, in addition to being extremely dependent on the South African economy, relies heavily on agricultural production. This important sector of the economy, however, has seen a decline in productivity over the past few years as a result of prolonged periods of drought (SINTEF, 2011). Approximately 23% of the economically active population of Lesotho are unemployed and around 49% live below the poverty line (Bureau of Statistics, 2009, 2010) The World Bank indicates that in 2009 Lesotho had a literacy rate of 89,7% (World Bank, 2012). Adult literacy has been rising steadily since 2000 when the Prime Minister of Lesotho called for the implementation of free primary education in response to the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (SINTEF, 2011). Lesotho is also one of those countries that has been hardest hit by HIV and AIDS. In 2009 23,7% of the population between 15 and 49 was HIV positive, with the pandemic having been declared a national disaster by the government in 2003 (World Bank, 2012).

2.1.1 National disability situation

Like many countries in the SADC region it is difficult to provide accurate, reliable figures on the number of people with disabilities in Lesotho at the present time. However, some important initiatives have taken place over the last fifteen years which have helped to begin to develop a picture of the national disability situation in Lesotho. Following years of very limited engagement with the collection of disability statistics in the country, in the early 2000s, the Ministries of Education and Training and Development Planning undertook some studies to estimate the population of people with disabilities in Lesotho. They estimated that in 2008, 5,2% of the population had a disability (SINTEF, 2011).This figure differed slightly with the results of the 2006 Population and Housing Census, the first national census which included questions on disability. The results of the Census indicated that only 3,7% of the population had some form of disability, with slightly more men than women having a disability (Bureau of Statistics, 2009). However, a more recent study on Living Conditions for People with Disabilities in Lesotho conducted by SINTEF 2009/2010 estimated that 10,1% of households in Lesotho had at least one member with a disability (SINTEF, 2011). It is important to note that the South African mining industry has had a significant impact on disability prevalence in Lesotho, especially physical disabilities among males as a result of injuries sustained as migrant labourers in the South African mines. Not surprisingly, the prevalence for all kinds of disabilities is considerably higher in the rural than urban areas.

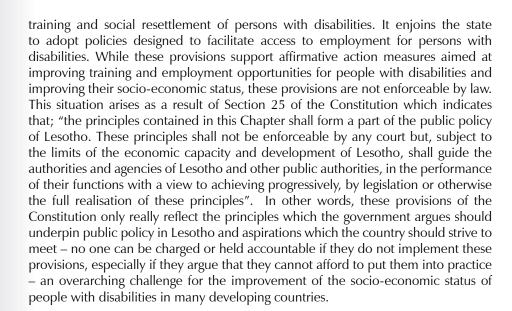### 2.1.2 Policy and legislative framework

2.1.2.1 National constitutional framework

Lesotho has at present no disability-specific legislation. However, the Constitution of Lesotho includes anti-discrimination and other provisions derived from international human rights instruments that provide for the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms (International Labour Organisation, 2005). The Constitution defines discrimination as:

> *affording different treatment to different persons attributable wholly or mainly to their respective descriptions by race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status whereby persons of one such description are subjected to disabilities or restrictions to which persons of another such description are not made subject or are accorded privileges or advantages which are not accorded to persons of another such description.*

Although disability is not specifically mentioned as a ground for discrimination, the expression "or other status" can be interpreted as covering disability.

Section 33 of the Lesotho Constitution also makes provision for the rehabilitation, training and social resettlement of persons with disabilities. It enjoins the state to adopt policies designed to facilitate access to employment for persons with disabilities. While these provisions support affirmative action measures aimed at improving training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities and improving their socio-economic status, these provisions are not enforceable by law. This situation arises as a result of Section 25 of the Constitution which indicates that; "the principles contained in this Chapter shall form a part of the public policy of Lesotho. These principles shall not be enforceable by any court but, subject to the limits of the economic capacity and development of Lesotho, shall guide the authorities and agencies of Lesotho and other public authorities, in the performance of their functions with a view to achieving progressively, by legislation or otherwise the full realisation of these principles". In other words, these provisions of the Constitution only really reflect the principles which the government argues should underpin public policy in Lesotho and aspirations which the country should strive to meet – no one can be charged or held accountable if they do not implement these provisions, especially if they argue that they cannot afford to put them into practice – an overarching challenge for the improvement of the socio-economic status of people with disabilities in many developing countries.

In Section 28 of the Constitution attention is given to education. It states that "Lesotho shall endeavour to make education available to all" and indicates that policies will be adopted that will endeavour to ensure that "primary education is compulsory and available to all". The Constitution also in Section 32 provides for the protection of all children and young persons and that such protection and assistance will be provided without discrimination. In this way, the Constitution provides an important enabling framework for the protection of the rights of children with disabilities and their access to education.

2.1.2.2 International instruments

Lesotho ratified the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in December 2008, binding it to the provisions of the convention. However, Lesotho has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol attached to the UNCRPD which requires countries to recognise the authority of the United Nation's Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to receive individual complaints around any perceived violations of the provisions of the UNCPRD and to possibly investigate these. Lesotho's ratification of the Convention is recognised to have had a very positive impact on improving awareness and changing the attitudes of policy makers and members of the public around disability issues and the rights of people with disabilities (Mosito and Moeletsi, 2011). Lesotho is also a signatory to a number of other United Nations and African Union instruments and initiatives that are important to the rights of children with disabilities and their right to education.

2.1.2.3 National disability policy

Perhaps what is most important to the provision of equitable educational opportunities for learners with disabilities in Lesotho is the Draft National Disability and Rehabilitation Policy of 2011. This is a policy that envisages a nation where all persons with disabilities live a quality life, in dignity, and with equal rights and opportunities through the inclusion and full integration of all citizens of Lesotho with disabilities into all aspects of societal life, thereby equalising their opportunities and encouraging their active participation in order to enhance their dignity, wellbeing and full access to essential services, in the same manner as their non-disabled peers (Government of Lesotho, 2011). Included in the draft policy are priority areas for attention. The objective of Priority Policy Area 4 on Capacity Building is to promote equal access and inclusion of people with disabilities in education and training programmes. This objective would be achieved through:

- Training of specialist educators and ensuring that their training certificates are recognised in terms of remuneration
- Incorporating special needs education into the teacher-training curriculum
- Establishing accessible and well equipped specialist education resource centres throughout the country with multi-disciplinary assessment teams which includes health workers and physiotherapists.

2.1.2.4 Education policy framework

In Lesotho education is viewed as the right of every child. In 2000, in line with the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the associated Education For All (EFA) initiative, the government of Lesotho introduced free primary education across the country. This initiative built on the provisions of the Education Act of 1995, which aimed at promoting education for all children in Lesotho. Especially important to this initiative was the development of the Ministry of Education and Training's (MoET) Strategic Plan for 2005 -2015. This strategic plan aims to take forward the MDGs and EFA by indicating that the aim of the Ministry is to provide free and compulsory primary education of good quality to all children in Lesotho. This commitment has now been put into law through the Education Act of 2010 which legalized the right to free and compulsory education at primary school level and to make provision for education for all in line with Section 28 of the Constitution (MoET, 2010). More specifically with regard to learners with disabilities, the Act goes on to indicate that the government will strive to:

a. ensure, as soon as circumstances permit, that a learner who is physically, mentally or otherwise handicapped is given the special treatment, education and care required by his or her condition;

b. ensure that the learner is free from any form of discrimination in accessing education and is availed all educational opportunities provided;

It is also important to recognise from the perspective of children with disabilities is that the Strategic Plan also alludes to the needs of children with disabilities and recognise the particular levels of disadvantage they have experienced. The Strategic Plan includes a strategic objective which aims to empower disadvantaged groups and ensure that the school curricula and learning materials are relevant to the needs of all children in Lesotho. The Strategic Plan provides a strong enabling framework for the provision of quality education for children with disabilities.

This attempt to build a more responsive schooling system in Lesotho is also reflected through a new integrated National Framework for Curriculum Development and Assessment approved by the Lesotho government in 2008. The new curriculum framework was specifically developed to respond to the MDGs, develop a more relevant national curriculum, respond to the impact of HIV and AIDs and contribute to addressing gender inequalities within the system. Although the curriculum framework does not aim to respond specifically to the needs of children with disabilities, its overarching intention is to guide the transformation of teaching and learning as well as assessment practice across the primary and secondary schooling system so that education at all levels becomes more accessible, relevant, efficient and of the best quality (Government of Lesotho, 2008).

2.1.3   National response to education for children with disabilities

In considering the extent to which the policy framework described above is managing to leverage important changes on the ground, it is worth noting that, in pursuit of its commitment to the MDGs and the EFA initiative, by 2010 Lesotho had managed to achieve the 7% allocation target set by the Dakar Education for All Declaration , despite the challenging economic climate. Similarly, at the moment, Lesotho leads all other African countries regarding spending on education as a percentage of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which presently sits at 13%. While these figures point to important progress that has been made towards the implementation of its policy goals, it is difficult to get a clear sense of the impact of these developments on children with disabilities in the country and ascertain how many of them are actively participating in the school system. However, some useful data emerged from the SINTEF (2011) study conducted in collaboration with the Lesotho National Federation of the Disabled. The study reported a lower percentage of school attendance among children with disabilities aged 5 years old and above, compared to their peers without disabilities. Participants in this study also suggested that while important progress has been made many children with disabilities either remain out of the system or are not benefiting sufficiently from the these initiatives. Central to this, it was argued, is the fact that there appears to be no dedicated budget provision directed towards addressing the needs of children with disabilities.

The path to building an inclusive education system in Lesotho started in 1987. By 1991 Lesotho had established a Special Education Unit (SEU) within the Ministry of

Education and Training. At the same time a national pilot programme was launched to begin to implement inclusive education in Lesotho. The main strategies of the programme were:

- Awareness raising at all levels, including teachers, parents, disabled people, community members and health workers;

- Setting up of cross sectoral committees comprising of all key players;

- The formation of a national parents association,

- In-service training courses for all teachers in 10 districts,

- Production of curriculum materials giving basic information about children with disabilities with minimal use of resources in order to promote sustainability.

The national initiative was informed by a study carried out in 1993 by the Special Education Unit of the Ministry of Education in 25% of the country's primary schools, involving interviews with more than 2600 teachers. The study showed that 17% of children in Lesotho had disabilities. Drawing from this information, the national pilot programme was launched in ten schools, one in each of the districts in the country. Although a number of important things were achieved through the pilot, three are especially important to recognise. The first is the extent to which it was able to demonstrate the real possibilities and benefits that exist in the implementation of inclusive education in very economically deprived conditions, with associated limitations of teaching and learning resources, large class sizes, teachers with limited specialist skills, and the location of schools in remote areas. Secondly, the pilot was able to provide important training to teachers with the assistance of specialists and people with disabilities, which was recognised as especially important to positively changing the attitudes of teachers and improving their practice. Thirdly, the pilot was able to make significant progress towards involving parents of children with disabilities more actively in the education of their children. This element was regarded as an especially impressive part of the pilot and very important to building inclusive education systems.

Despite the challenges that have been apparent in sustaining the momentum started through the pilot, it is important to recognise that it set the basis for a shift in thinking towards a rights based model of education for children with disabilities rather than the charity approaches of the past. This shift is evident in the government's commitment to education for all and the mandate that has been given to the SEU to promote the integration/inclusion of learners with special educational needs (LSEN) into the regular school system at all levels of the education system to enable them to acquire appropriate life skills and education. Towards this objective, at the present time the SEU supports both existing special schools and mainstream schools. The strategies and principles of the education Strategic Plan for 2005 -2015 discussed earlier, suggests that the government is moving towards a more inclusive approach and is committed to ensuring that an inclusive education system forms part of its vision for education for all.

2.2   Malawi

Malawi is a landlocked country sharing its borders with Tanzania in the north, Zambia on its western border and Mozambique on the east and south. The country covers a total area of 118,484 km2 of which 94,276 km2 constitutes land and the rest water, with 84% of the population living in the rural areas (World Bank, 2012). With a population of close to 15 million people against a land holding size of 120,000 km2, Malawi's population density is high. Agriculture accounts for 40% of the Malawi's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 88% of its export revenue. Although agricultural production supports the livelihoods of 85 % of Malawians (Government of Malawi, 2002), in the past three years, mainly as a result of unstable prices of major agricultural projects such as tobacco, the agriculture sector has lacked access to productive assets and opportunities for economic empowerment. Other important factors affecting agricultural production in Malawi have been climate change and the impact of HIV and AIDS on productive farming. These changes have affected the quality of living of most Malawians as 80 % depend on small and medium scale agriculture enterprises that are still underdeveloped (WHO, 2008). In 1994 Malawi went through some important political shifts, moving from a one party dictatorship to a multiparty system of government. These changes have led to good economic progress being made, particularly in the past seven year. In order to combat poverty and encourage economic growth, the government of Malawi has adopted a number of poverty reduction and growth strategies. In 1998 the population census reported an adult literacy rate of 58%. In 2009 the World Bank indicated that the adult literacy rate had increased to 74%. The HIV and AIDS pandemic poses a very serious social, health and economic challenge for the country and has had an especially devastating impact on education, contributing to increased pupil/teacher absenteeism, pupil repetition and drop out, teacher deaths, extended sick leave and increased budgeting (Kadzamira, Maluwa-Banda, Kamlongera and Swaison, 2001).

2.2.1 National disability situation

The 2008 the national Population and Housing Census of Malawi indicated that there were 498 122 people with disabilities in Malawi making up 4% of the population, with most having a visual disability. The Census also indicated that only about 45 000 of this sector of the population were living in urban areas, or put another way, 9% of people with disabilities lived in urban areas and 91% in the rural areas (Government of Malawi, 2008). This suggests that the majority of people with disabilities live in the poorest areas of the country and those areas of the country most affected by the socio-economic challenges noted above. A study on the living conditions for people with disabilities in Malawi conducted by SINTEF in 2004 concluded that the majority of people with disabilities have very limited access to primary education. The study showed that, as a result of existing beliefs around culture and gender, more girls with disabilities have never attended school compared to boys with disabilities and that where access to education existed this was mainly for people with sensory and mental impairments. The study also reported higher levels of unemployment and poor living conditions among people with disabilities, with women and girls with disabilities being the most affected (SINTEF, 2004).

2.2.2 Policy and legislative framework

2.2.2.1 National constitutional framework

An important element of the political shifts that took place in Malawi in 1994 was the review of the country's constitution. Largely as a result of pressure and input from Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) in Malawi, the revised Constitution of the Republic of Malawi now contains a number of provisions that are especially important for people with disabilities. Moreover, one of the fundamental principles on which the Constitution is based refers to support for disabled people, particularly in relation to supporting their full participation in all spheres of Malawian society. More specifically, in Chapter IV Section 20 discrimination of persons in any form is prohibited, including on the basis of disability. Section 20 (1) states:

> Discrimination of persons of any form is prohibited and all persons are under any law, guaranteed equal and effective protection against discrimination on grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, ethnic or social origin, disability, property or other status.

This is very important as it provides a basis for ensuring that all legislation and policy in Malawi is informed by this non-discrimination framework. In addition, the Constitution specifically mentions disability in relation to discrimination in the work place and provides that access to fair wages and equal remuneration cannot be restricted on any basis, especially gender, disability and race. Education is also given prominence in the Constitution and although learners with disabilities are not specifically mentioned in this regard, it provides the basis for the provision of free and compulsory primary education for all citizens of Malawi. It may be assumed

therefore that children with disabilities would be included within this overarching intention. Similarly, the Constitution is clear on the protection of the rights of all children, including their protection from measures which may interfere with their education (Section IV: 23 (b)).

2.2.2.2 International instruments

In August 2009 Malawi ratified the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). By ratifying the Convention the government is required to promote, protect, and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities and ensure that they enjoy full equality under the law. However, Malawi has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol attached to the UNCRPD which requires countries to recognise the authority of the United Nation's Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to receive individual complaints around any perceived violations of the provisions of the UNCPRD and to possibly investigate these. As is the case in many other countries, the ratification of the UNCPRD has helped to reposition disability as a human rights and development issue in Malawi. Malawi is also a signatory to a number of other United Nations and African Union instruments and associated initiatives that have important implications for children with disabilities and their right to education

2.2.2.3 National disability policy

In 2006 the Malawian government developed a National Policy on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (NPEOPWD). The origins of this policy can be traced to on-going advocacy of people with disabilities in Malawi and the development of new polices aligned to the revised Constitutional framework of 1994. The policy recognises the socially constructed nature of disability and aims to equalise opportunities for people with disabilities and facilitate their full integration into all aspects of Malawian society. The policy is underpinned by a number of principles that recognise disability as a human rights issue and one which cuts across all key areas of government responsibility. To this end the policy argues that disability issues need to be fully integrated into all relevant government policies, plans, programmes and projects, and that people with disabilities need to be fully involved in the development of national programmes, projects and services (Government of Malawi, 2006).

The NPEOPWD outlines fourteen key areas for attention. These are: Disability Prevention; Early Identification and Intervention; Rehabilitation; Accessibility; Transport; Information and Communication; Education and Training; Economic Empowerment; Social Welfare and Social Protection; Self-Representation and Participation; Sports, Recreation and Entertainment; Housing; Research and Appropriate Technology; and HIV and AIDS. With regard to education and training the policy aims to promote equal access to and inclusion of persons with disabilities in education and training programmes (Government of Malawi, 2006).

It is important to note that these initiatives are supported by the country's Vision 2020 document which provides the main policy framework guiding the country's development. Especially important is that the Vision 2020 recognizes the need to develop the abilities of people with disabilities and to increase their participation in society and to remove those barriers that prevent them from enjoying equitable opportunities. The policy document also targets the development to policies and legislation in support of these intentions.

2.2.2.4 Education policy framework

In 2001 the government of Malawi developed its Education Policy Investment Framework which took forward its commitment to the creation of quality education for all children, including children with disabilities. The policy commits the government to reducing inequalities in the schooling system by providing bursary schemes, increasing school enrolment of female learners, increasing community participation in the management of local schools and the creation of enabling learning environments for all learners (Government of Malawi, 2001). The policy also recognised the need to strengthen 'Special Needs Education' in Malawi. The policy is aimed at developing and managing an inclusive primary education system and increasing the number of children with disabilities who graduate from primary school. Within the framework of increasing the participation of disadvantaged learners in the system, the policy proposed to increase the enrolment of 'special needs learners' from 5% to 20% by 2012. It also recognises the need for the state to train more specialist teachers to support learners with special needs at primary school as well as to include a module on Special Needs Education (SNE) in the curriculum for secondary school teachers. Finally, the policy provides for improved accessibility of the physical environment in schools for children with disabilities.

In 2006 the National Policy on Special Needs Education was developed by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture which provides an important mechanism for ensuring that disability issues are fully integrated into national education programmes and initiatives. The following issues of importance for children with disabilities are addressed in the policy: increased access; the creation of equity; ensuring quality and relevance of provision; early identification; appropriate placement; and preventive care and support for learners with special educational needs. The policy also recognises and outlines the major challenges that the government faces in the effective implementation of its intentions. It recognises that lack of sufficient funding, environmental inaccessibility, negative attitudes, limited capacity to train specialist teachers, an inadequate institutional infrastructure and poor coordination and partnerships on SNE issues are barriers that need to be addressed (Government of Malawi, 2007).

2.2.3 National response to education for children with disabilities

Like a number of the other countries looked at in this study, the provision of education for children with disabilities in the country has been strongly influenced by the country's colonial history and the setting up of a few special schools by churches and missionary societies. In Malawi, especially important to this history was the setting up by the Roman Catholic Church and the Malawian government of the Monfort College of Special Needs Education in 1968. It was set up in response to the challenges that children with disabilities were experiencing in the education system. This college has been very important to the training of teachers with more specialised schools able to respond to the needs of children with disabilities. Also important to this history was the setting up in 1971 of the Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA) a non-profit making organization set up by the government and charged with responsibilities over the design, implementation and evaluation of disability programs.

Despite these initiatives it would seem that before 1994 and the recognition of the rights of people with disabilities in Malawi's new Constitution, little progress had been made in promoting education for children with disabilities and building an inclusive education system. However, with the introduction of free primary education in 1994, important developments have taken place across the country that has improved overall participation rates in primary school. There is growing evidence to suggest that children with disabilities are also benefiting from these important changes. In 2010 the Ministry of Education in Malawi estimated that between 2008 and 2010 there had been an increase in the enrolment of children with disabilities in primary schools from 43 000 to 83 000 – a very important indication of improvement.

At the present time, emerging from the history of provision noted above and as a result of the government's commitment to create educational opportunities for all children, children with disabilities are presently catered for in the education system in three ways; firstly, through separate special schools with teachers with specialised skills and experience. Secondly, through the provision of specialised support to what are called Integrated Resource Centre Units in mainstream schools; and, thirdly, through itinerant teachers who assist in some mainstream schools.

In 1996, following the spirit of the new constitutional provisions and in an attempt to begin to build a more inclusive education system, the Ministry of Education introduced the Learning Difficulties Programme. The programme aimed to equip specialist teachers with skills on how best to handle children with specific learning difficulties in both special and mainstream schools. It targeted those learners with behavioural or emotional difficulties, language and communication difficulties, as well as other health-related impairments. This programme was able to show some notable successes, including improving awareness around responding to children with learning disabilities and encouraging teachers to improve their levels of skill

and knowledge around these issues. In 2007 a total of 159 teachers with specialist shills to respond to the needs of children with learning difficulties graduated from the Montfort College of Special Needs Education. Other important initiatives that have contributed to improvements for children with disabilities have included a large Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) programme started by MOCOHA, which included a focus on education that was aimed at reducing the number of children with special needs in the Resource Centre Units in mainstream schools as well as those in special schools. These initiatives aimed at establishing a more inclusive education system in Malawi have begun to have some influence on changing the status quo and improving opportunities for children with disabilities. However, many challenges remain and Malawi still has a long way to go if its 'Education for All' commitments are to have meaning for all children with disabilities.

2.3 Namibia

Namibia is a vast middle income country with a small population estimated to be around 2.1 million. The country is classified as semi-arid and is among the least populated countries in the world. More than 60% of the population live in the northern part of the country where the majority of rainfall is received. Overall, it is estimated that 62,6% of the population live in rural areas and 37,4% in cities (UNDP, 2006). Namibia gained its independence from South Africa in 1990 and has since been a stable and peaceful multi-party democracy. The World Bank notes that since independence, Namibia has made significant progress in addressing the structural drivers of poverty in the country. In 2009 Namibia had a literacy rate of 89%. Access to basic education has become more equitable and primary health care services are now widely available. Access to safe water and sanitation has improved, and sound public policies are helping to lay the foundation for greater gender parity (World Bank, 2011). However, despite the progress that has been made, significant socio-economic challenges still remain for the country. In 2008, 38% of Nambia's labour force was unemployed (World Bank, 2012) and although poverty levels have declined, Namibia, with a Gini coefficient of 0.7431, remains, like South Africa, one of the most unequal countries in the world (World Bank, 2012). With an HIV prevalence rate of 13%, it also faces daunting challenges in combating the HIV and AIDS pandemic (World Bank, 2012).

2.3.1 National disability situation

Once again it is difficult to provide up to date, reliable data on the prevalence of disability in Namibia. In 2001 a national census conducted by the government of Namibia estimated that there were between 85 000 and 105 000 people with disabilities in Namibia, making up approximately 5% of the population. A later study conducted by SINTEF into the living conditions of people with disabilities in the country suggested an overall disability prevalence of around 1.62%, which is substantially lower than the national census estimate from 2001. A report commissioned by the Southern African Federation of the Disabled (SAFOD) comments that this significant discrepancy may be the result of the different ways in which questions about disability were phrased in the two studies. Such methodological differences when it comes to determining disability prevalence are common and remain an important challenge for many countries. The SINTEF (2004) study also showed that physical disabilities were most prevalent followed by visual impairments. Moreover, people with disabilities in Namibia faced greater challenges than their able-bodied counterparts in accessing basic socio-economic rights such as education and employment. A very important finding from the SINTEF study suggested that over 50% children with disabilities older than 5 years did not receive any form of primary education (SINTEF, 2004). More recent data from the government's Education Management Information System (EMIS) indicates that 33 614 children with disabilities are in schools, with 46% of these being female and 54% male (Ministry of Education, 2011). It is anticipated that improved data on disability in Namibia will emerge through the post enumeration activities of the 2011 national Population and Housing Census where a thematic report on disability is planned.

2.3.2 Policy and legislative framework

2.3.2.1 National constitutional framework

The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia (1990) explicitly recognizes the inalienable human rights and freedoms of all its citizens, and by implication this must include people with disabilities. Chapter 3 provides for the fundamental human rights and freedoms of all Namibians and protects these rights and freedoms. Article 10 (2) of the Constitution states that; no persons may be discriminated against on the grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or social or economic status. Although disability is not specifically mentioned here, it is implied that people with disabilities would also be protected from discrimination on the basis of their disability by this provision. It is also important to recognise that, like the South African Constitution, the Namibian Constitution recognises that particular groups of people have been historically disadvantaged and that it may be necessary to introduce measures that are aimed at redressing these historical inequalities, such as those experienced by people with disabilities. In Article 20 the Constitution also recognises the right to education for all Namibians, including those with disabilities,

through the provision of free, compulsory primary school education.

2.3.2.2 International instruments

In December 2007 Namibia ratified the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the Optional Protocol attached to the UNCPRD. By ratifying the Convention and the Protocol the Namibian government is required to not only promote, protect, and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities, but to also recognise the authority of the United Nation's Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to receive individual complaints around any perceived violations of the provisions of the UNCPRD and investigate these under particular circumstances. Namibia is also a signatory to a number of other United Nations and African Union instruments and associated initiatives that have important implications for children with disabilities and their right to education.

2.3.2.3 National disability policy

In 1997, the government of Namibia developed a National Disability Policy. The overall objective of this policy is to ensure that all people with disabilities are able to participate in development processes and mainstream contemporary society. It serves as the overarching policy framework on disability informing all sector specific policies. In addition to other provisions dealing with the equalisation of opportunities for people with disabilities in Namibia, the policy endorses the principle of inclusive education as fundamental to the realisation of the right of disabled children to education. It states:

> *The provision of education shall be based on the fundamental principles of inclusive education which demand that all children shall be taught together, whenever possible, regardless of individual differences or difficulties they may have. The process of inclusion entails developing the capacity of the regular school system to enable it to meet the diverse educational needs of all children (Government of Namibia, 1997).*

The National Disability Policy's implementation is supported by a National Disability Council set up under the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. The mandate of the Council is to:

- Monitor the implementation of the National Policy on Disability in the manner provided in this Act;
- Advise any person responsible for the enforcement of existing legislation which provides for equal opportunities for all people;
- Identify provisions in any law, which may hinder the implementation of the National Policy on Disability and make recommendations in that regard;
- Consult with persons with disabilities, organisations of people with disabilities and organisations rendering services to persons with disabilities, and take any other steps in order to obtain necessary information on the implementation of the National Policy on Disability;
- Initiate amendments to the National Policy on Disability in order to ensure that it takes into account changing circumstances; and
- In general take all necessary steps in order to improve the situation of people with disabilities in Namibia (National Disability Council Act, 1994).

2.3.2.4 Education policy framework

Education provision in Namibia is driven by the Ministry of Education's Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP) which is aimed at aligning the entire education system towards the needs of the 21st century and Namibia's national development planning framework and vision for 2030. For children with disabilities these intentions are given meaning through the government's Sector Policy on Inclusive Education: Implementation and Supporting Guidelines developed in 2004. The aim of the policy is to ensure that all learners are educated in the least restrictive educational setting and in schools in their neighbourhood to the fullest extent possible. The policy is recognised as contributing to wider educational development in Namibia and to the realization of "Education for All". It provides for a holistic framework for learning and participation, with a specific focus on those learners who have been and are educationally disadvantaged. The policy also correlates with the National Curriculum for Basic Education (NCBE), the Curriculum for Special Education and the Education Sector Policy for Orphans and Vulnerable Children.

The specific objectives of the Policy are:
- To expand access to and provision of quality education especially for educationally marginalized learners;
- To support learners with a wide range of individual abilities and special needs in compulsory as well as in pre-, primary and secondary education.

The policy has elaborate implementation guidelines. Some of the cornerstones of the implementation framework include: reviewing education legislation and norms; developing a mechanism for collaboration on inclusive education for inter-ministerial, intra-ministerial and other stakeholders; the development of educational support services and expansion of access; revising funding arrangements for inclusive education; raising awareness on the right to education and fostering attitudinal change in support of inclusive education; supporting human, instructional and institutional development; reviewing the curriculum to reflect the diversity of learning needs; widening and developing educational support and developing teacher education and training, including in-service training. The policy concludes by emphasising the importance of continuous monitoring and evaluation of inclusive education and of the Sector Policy.

2.3.3   National response to education for children with disabilities

Before its independence from apartheid South Africa in 1990, education in Namibia was focused on the white minority. Following independence the government of Namibia introduced far-reaching reforms in order to eliminate the massive inequalities in the system and ensure that educational opportunities were available to all people regardless of their economic, cultural, religious or ethnic origin. The government also introduced various measures aimed at decentralising the provision and delivery of education services. These broad transformation initiatives have had an important impact on children with disabilities and the creation of educational opportunities for them. In 2010 the government's Education Management Information System (EMIS) reported that approximately 33 614 learners in the schools were learners with disabilities indicating that more and more children with disabilities are now making it into the school system.

Like the other countries involved in this study the real challenge for the building of inclusive education systems lies in the government's ability, together with role players in Civil Society, to effectively implement what is recognised as a very strong and enabling policy framework. The Sector Policy on Inclusive Education noted above outlines key elements of inclusive education which guide the government's implementation strategies. These are:

- Building an understanding of differentiated learner needs, interests, talents and beliefs.

- Presenting all learners with equal opportunities to build their self-worth, potential skills and talents.

- Ensuring that all learners have access to an appropriate education that affords them the opportunity to achieve their personal potential.

- Recognizing the importance of leaner's emotional and social growth.

- Changing attitudes of the wider society through changing school cultures.

- Bringing back education into local communities, to those who have been formerly excluded or segregated.

- Multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approach to education by bringing together different state and non-state actors.

- Removing barriers to learning and participation.

Although it has a long way to go in pursuit of these goals, an important initiative that has been initiated by the National Disability Council of Namibia that is intended to support the role-out of the education plan is the development of a computerised database of all people with disabilities in the country. Although it is still in its early stages, it is seen as a key milestone for 2012 and is recognised as crucial for designing and implementing programmes on inclusive education across Namibia. It is intended that this data base will be compatible with the existing EMIS co-ordinated by the Ministry of Education, which at the present time produces various education statistics for government planning, including the enrolment of children with disabilities.

The Sector Policy on Inclusive Education also argues that one way of enhancing inclusive education is to promote the development of community resource centres. In this regard the Ministry of Education has established the Centre for Communication and Deaf Studies as a resource and service centre for Deaf education in Namibia. Already it is clear from responses of participants in the study that this has been a very successful initiative and should be replicated in other ways across the country.

2.4   South Africa

South Africa has a population of approximately 50 million people (Stats SA, 2010) with 43% of the population living in rural areas. It covers an area of 1 219 090 km2 at the tip of the African continent and is regarded as a middle income country with one of the biggest and fastest growing economies on the continent. In 1994 South Africa became a democracy following a long period of struggle against colonialism and the system of apartheid, a repressive, racially defined political and economic system that maintained white minority rule through the disenfranchisement and economic exploitation of the country's black majority. Since 1994 the new democratic government has made significant progress towards addressing the inequalities of the past and building a stable, multi-party democracy. Adult literacy has increased to 89% and there have been steady increases in access to basic services such as electricity (World Bank, 2012). However, despite the progress that has been made, South African society is still characterised by high levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment that present ongoing challenges for the country. South Africa is recognised to be one of the most unequal societies in the world with a Gini co-efficient of 0.679 and an unemployment rate broadly defined at 35.4% (Presidency, 2010). Similarly, it is estimated that despite important interventions to address poverty across the country, including increasing the uptake of social grants and improving access to basic services, around 39% of the population still live below the poverty line (Presidency, 2010) . South Africa has also been significantly challenged by the HIV and AIDS pandemic with an HIV prevalence rate of 18% (World Bank, 2012).

2.4.1 National disability situation

Although the collection of data on disability in South Africa has improved considerably since 1994 and is now recognised to be an important indicator of South Africa's development profile (Presidency, 2010), challenges still remain with ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the data, especially where the definition of disability used to collect data has changed or been challenged. South Africa's national census of 2001 estimated that 5% of the population had a disability (Stats SA, 2001). A national Community Survey in 2007 reduced this percentage to 4% and in 2009 the General Household Survey for the country estimated that 7,9% of the population was disabled. The latter survey indicated that there were slightly more women with disabilities (53%) than men (47%). The Community Survey of 2007 indicated that the greater number of people with disabilities had a physical disability, followed by those with a visual disability. This survey also shows that those provinces of South Africa that have large poor, rural areas also have relatively higher percentages of disabled people among their populations, suggesting that the majority of people with disabilities in South Africa are concentrated in the poorest areas of the country. In 2001 the National Integrated Disability Strategy for South Africa estimated that in 1994 when the new democratic government came into power, approximately 70% of children with disabilities were out of the school system completely. It is difficult to ascertain to what extent this situation has changed as statistics on the number of children with disabilities in schools tend to rely only on the number of children attending special schools. However, even with these limitations in the data, it is important to note that substantially more learners with disabilities are now attending school. The Education Management System in South Africa (EMIS) reports that of the 12 644 208 learners and students enrolled in all sectors of the basic education system in 2010 (primary and secondary), 0.8% were in special schools, with the percentage of those passing their final matriculation examination in a special school having steadily improved from 68% in 2002 to 80% in 2009 (Presidency, 2010). However, despite these improvements statistics also suggest that, in general, there are fewer children with disabilities enrolled at all levels of education than their non-disabled peers (Census, 2001).

2.4.2 Policy and legislative framework

2.4.2.1 National constitutional framework

Following the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994, a new Constitution was developed that is recognised to be one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, including the manner in which disability is addressed in the document. In Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) fundamental human rights are guaranteed to all citizens of the country. In Section 9 of this chapter it is recognised that these rights for some citizens may be directly or indirectly compromised by different forms of discrimination. One of the criteria listed is disability and therefore, it is recognised as a basis for discrimination and

discrimination on this basis is outlawed. This non-discrimination provision within the Constitution is extremely important for disabled people in South Africa. Since the country's legislative framework is subject to the provisions of the Constitution this means that in all spheres of social, political and economic life, discrimination on the basis of disability is unconstitutional and therefore illegal. This constitutional imperative is carried forward in a number of pieces of legislation that directly affect the social and economic participation of people with disabilities in South Africa.

However, equally important for people with disabilities in South Africa, is the recognition given, and the connection made in the Constitution to redressing existing inequalities. The Constitution states that;

> *Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken.*

Since disability is recognised as a basis for discrimination, people with disabilities are also recognised as people who have experienced unfair discrimination in the past and are therefore recognised as the recipients of measures aimed at redressing the inequalities they have experienced in the past. To this end, a number of pieces of legislation either recognise disabled people as the target of necessary affirmative action measures, or locate them in some way as having been historically disadvantaged. Both these constitutional principles have a bearing on children with disabilities gaining access to education. However, most important to the right of people with disabilities to education is Section 29 of Chapter 2 which states that:

> *Everyone has the right ¬- to a basic education, including adult basic education; and to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.*

It is important to note that protection from discrimination by people with disabilities is defined and protected further through the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (2000), which also recognises disability discrimination as a key concern. In defining such discrimination, the Act states that this includes among other practices;

> *failing to eliminate obstacles that unfairly limit or restrict persons with disabilities from enjoying equal opportunities or failing to take steps to reasonably accommodate the needs of such persons.*

2.4.2.2 International instruments

In November 2007 South Africa ratified the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the Optional Protocol attached to the UNCPRD. By ratifying the Convention and the Protocol the South African government is required to not only promote, protect, and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities, but to also recognise the authority of the United Nation's Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to receive individual complaints around any perceived violations of the provisions of the UNCPRD and investigate these under particular circumstances. South Africa is also a signatory to a number of other United Nations and African Union instruments and associated initiatives that have important implications for the rights children with disabilities, especially basic socio-economic rights such as education.

2.4.2.3 National disability policy

South Africa does not have any specific disability legislation, that is, legislation which only deals with disability issues. Rather, following the framework of the Constitution, disability is integrated into all legislation and policy in key areas of government responsibility. In some instances, references to disability and the needs of people with disabilities are made overt through specific provisions, such as recognising disabled people as a target group for affirmative action measures. In others, people with disabilities are recognised as members of the population who are most vulnerable to particular forms of discrimination and exclusion and thus a vulnerable group requiring particular attention, especially through development related initiatives. Equally important for people with disabilities in South Africa is the Integrated National Disability Strategy (INDS) (1997) which provides the framework for government policy and planning around disability issues. In the INDS disability is recognised as a human rights and development issue and as such argues that disability must be fully integrated into any processes of reconstruction and development within the country.

In addition to locating disability as a human rights and development issues, the INDS addresses all key area of concern affecting people with disabilities, describing both the nature of the inequalities they have experienced in the past and outlining the broader parameters for government responsibility towards addressing these. With regard to education for children with disabilities, the INDS emphasises that "A human rights and development approach to disability has significant implications for the way in which we provide education for the nation" and to this end it indicates that "All South Africans should have equal access to education opportunities, irrespective of the severity of their disability(ies)". It goes on to emphasise that "Equity for learners with disabilities implies the availability of additional support mechanisms within an inclusive learning environment" (Office of the Deputy President, 1997).

2.4.2.4 Education policy framework

In 1996 the new democratic government published the South African Schools Act which sought to dismantle the divisions of the apartheid education system and create a single, unified public schooling system in South Africa, free from discrimination, in which all learners are provided with quality education provision. In the Schools Act (1996) a public school is not allowed to unfairly discriminate in any way, and, since the law is subject to the provisions of the Constitution, this would include on the basis of disability. In addition the Act says that the government;

> *where reasonably practicable, (must) provide education for learners with special education needs at ordinary public schools and provide relevant educational support services for such learners…(and) must take all reasonable measures to ensure that the physical facilities at public schools are accessible to disabled persons.*

Although the South African Schools Act provides the broad framework for schooling in South Africa, the needs of children with disabilities have been taken further through the government's Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (2001). This policy outlines its strategic intentions towards building an inclusive schooling system, where the system is transformed to accommodate the full range of learning needs within the population, including where those needs arise from impairment and associated disability. The policy argues that substantial transformation is needed within the system to meet the learning needs of all learners and that key to this is finding ways to address barriers that prevent all children from being able to learn to their full potential in the classroom. In this way, White Paper 6 signals a move towards an inclusive system and puts in place various strategies towards progressively building such a system. Other policies governing schooling, such as those dealing with physical infrastructure and curriculum, also support through their areas of focus the broad intentions of an inclusive education system. Similarly, policies and legislation dealing with other levels of the education system also aim to support these intentions of the government.

2.4.3   National response to education for children with disabilities

Like Namibia education under the apartheid system was divided along racial lines with massive inequalities in provision between white and black learners, by far the majority of learners. In general very limited provision existed for children with disabilities, especially black disabled learners where only a very few special schools existed. As already noted, in 1997 the INDS estimated that approximately 70% of children with disabilities had no access to school at all. Thus, when the new democratic government came into power in 1994 it recognised the need to address these massive inequalities in the system.

One of the most important developments that has taken place in post-apartheid South Africa towards the provision of equitable educational opportunities for children with disabilities was the government's setting up in 1997 of two national ministerial commissions. These were the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee for Education Support Services (NCESS). With representation by a while range of role players, including Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) and parents organisations, they were mandated to investigate and make recommendations on all aspects of 'special needs' and 'support services' in South Africa.

The work of the commissions involved a lengthy process of research and extensive consultation with role players across the country where public hearings were held and opportunities were created for people to make submissions that could be discussed and deliberated on. A final report on the process was produced entitled; Quality Education For All: Overcoming Barriers to Learning an Development. It was presented to the Ministry and taken forward by the government as Education White Paper 6 in 2001. As already indicated, White Paper 6 outlines the government's intensions towards building an inclusive education and training system in South Africa.

White Paper 6 outlines a number of strategies which now guide the implementation of the policy at the national, regional and local level. In the National Department of Basic Education inclusive education is managed by dedicated personnel. Such capacity is reproduced in each of the nine provinces. One of the most important strategies taken forward by White Paper 6 has been the designation of a number of schools across the country as "full-service" schools, which are being supported to build their capacity to become fully inclusive schools for all the children in the surrounding community, including those with disabilities. It is envisaged that these full-service schools will act as pilots, from which the country can learn as inclusive education is rolled-out further. Central to the provisions of White Paper 6 is the designation of all special schools in the country as resource centres. This means that they are being supported to provide both a service to the learners who attend the school and to surrounding schools, offering specialist support to teachers in the mainstream schools and other kinds of support where necessary. These schools and their personnel are also recognised to form part of district-based support teams that are intended to provide support to all schools in their district.

In addition to these central strategies much attention has also been paid to developing guidelines that can be used in schools to assist teachers, including around issues of assessment, curriculum flexibility, classroom management etc. These are recognised as critical resources to the building of inclusive practices and understandings across the country. In order to support the roll-out of White Paper 6 the government also implemented two country-wide pilot projects on inclusive education using donor funding. These were extremely successful interventions and made a significant contribution towards raising awareness about the importance of inclusive education and, like other countries, demonstrated what can be possible in extremely deprived conditions. Although the roll-out of White Paper 6 has been uneven across the country and it is recognised that much still needs to be done, it continues to provide an important basis for building an inclusive education system across South Africa.

2.5   Swaziland

Although Swaziland is classified as a lower middle-income country, much of the country's wealth falls within the control of a few industries and individuals, making it a very unequal society with significant rural-urban disparities. It has a population of just over 1.185 million, 47% of which are children below the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2009). It is situated between South Africa and Mozambique and covers an area of 17,200 Km2. Swaziland, which obtained its independence from Britain in 1968, is ruled by a traditional monarchy with a dual legal system made up of customary and common law. It has a diversified economy with agriculture and manufacturing contributing an estimated 50 % to the national GDP. 69% of Swazi citizens live below the national poverty line (Swaziland Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2010) with 70% of the population living in the rural areas where the highest levels of poverty are concentrated. As is the case in other Southern African countries, Swaziland's economy, especially among subsistence farmers, has been badly affected in the last ten years by extended periods of drought, associated with the impact of climate change, and by the challenges associated with the HIV and AIDS pandemic. In 2009 approximately 26% of the population between 15 and 49 were HIV positive (World Bank, 2012). Despite these very real challenges for the country, a number of initiatives have been undertaken by the government over the last fifteen years, including a 25 year National Development Strategy, which have contributed to some important improvements. Over the last ten years adult literacy rates have steadily improved and the number of children out of school has been halved – from 61,147 in 2002 to 29,972 in 2010 (World Bank, 2012).

2.5.1   National disability situation

The Swaziland National Census of 2007 indicates that people with disabilities constitute 16,8% of the total population with 18% living in the urban areas and 82% in the poorer rural areas. This suggests a higher prevalence of disability than has been reported in the other countries in this study. The Census also recognises that the majority of people with disabilities are poor and marginalised with little to no access to services such as public transport, employment and education. People with disabilities are also especially vulnerable to abuse and HIV and AIDS (Census, 2007). Disaggregated by age, the incidence of disability is greatest amongst children, especially between 5 and 14 years, suggesting a strong link between the conditions in which the majority of young children live and the incidence of disability. A situation assessment of children and young persons with disabilities conducted by

the Deputy Prime Minister's (DPMs) office in 2010, reported that the net school attendance ratio was 92% for the primary school level and 15% for the secondary school level (this refers to the percentage of primary school children with disabilities aged 6-12 years and secondary school children with disabilities aged 13-17 years that are attending school) (DPM Office, 2010). However, the government's National Children's Coordination Unit (NCCU) responsible for launching the National Plan of Action for Children, reported that 50% of disabled children 10 years and older had no access to education, 33% had some form of primary education and only 15% had post primary education (National Plan of Action for Children, 2012-2015).

2.5.2 Policy and legislative framework

2.5.2.1 National constitutional framework

Having come into effect in 2005 the Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland provides in Chapter 3 for the protection and promotion of the fundamental rights and freedoms of all citizens. In Section 14(3) specific mention is made of disability where the Constitution says:

> *A person of whatever gender, race, place of origin, political opinion, colour, religion, creed, age or disability shall be entitled to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual contained in this Chapter but subject to respect for the rights and freedoms of others and for the public interest.*

In Section 20 which deals with equality before the law, disability it is specifically indicated where it states that no person can be discriminated against on a number of grounds, including disability. Importantly, this Section also ensures that no state legislation can be discriminatory and that protection from discrimination does not prevent the state from implementing measures designed to redress inequalities that have existed in the past, such as the marginalisation and exclusion of people with disabilities. Most importantly, Section 30 deals specifically with the rights of people with disabilities. This section states:

(1) Persons with disabilities have a right to respect and human dignity and the Government and society shall take appropriate measures to ensure that those persons realise their full mental and physical potential.

(2) Parliament shall enact laws for the protection of persons with disabilities so as to enable those persons to enjoy productive and fulfilling lives.

These provisions in the Constitution are especially important as they go a long way to ensuring that the state and society take appropriate measures to respect the rights of people with disabilities and perhaps, most importantly, to ensure that people with disabilities realise their full potential (Dube & Magagula, 2007).

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland also provides in Section 29 for the right to free public primary education for all Swazi children. It states that within three years of the Constitution coming into effect, all children shall have the right to "free education in public schools at least up to the end of primary school, beginning with the first grade".

2.5.2.2 International instruments

In September 2009 Swaziland ratified the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the Optional Protocol attached to the UNCPRD. By ratifying the Convention and the Protocol the government of Swaziland is required to not only promote, protect, and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities, but to also recognise the authority of the United Nation's Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to receive individual complaints around any perceived violations of the provisions of the UNCPRD and investigate these under particular circumstances. Swaziland is also a signatory to a number of other United Nations and African Union instruments and associated initiatives that have important implications for children with disabilities and their right to education.

2.5.2.3 National disability policy

Although at the present time Swaziland does not have a specific policy on disability, the government is in the process of holding public consultations to inform the drafting of a policy and associated Bill which is intended to be in place by the end of 2012 (Mavuso, 2012). In addition, and very importantly for people with disabilities in Swaziland, is the focus that is given in the government's long-term National Development Strategy (1997 to 2022). This twenty-five year plan of action developed through the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development is aimed at meeting the socio-economic challenges that hamper the country's development. The strategy has addresses the needs of people with disabilities and provides a framework for equalizing opportunities. It aims to:

- Promote the integration of persons with disabilities into the mainstream of the education system;

- Enable persons with visual impairments to have access to colleges and universities by providing the necessary equipment for their training;

- Ensure equal access to education and training for women and girls at all levels and in all sections of formal, non-formal and life skills development.

- Promote education as a basic human right and ensure that males and females receive equal treatment and benefits at all levels and in all areas of the education system.
- Seek and enforce equitable access to bursaries and scholarships

2.5.2.4 Education policy framework

In April 2011, the Government of Swaziland released the Education and Training Sector Policy (EDSEC). It was developed to help realise the country's national, regional and international obligation and operates within the socio-legal frameworks provided by Swaziland's current Education Act and its Poverty Reduction Strategy Action Plan (PRASP). The framework provides for all levels of the education and training system and addresses specific areas such as teacher training, special education and non-formal and distance learning, and provides a 'blue print' for related policies dealing with key education related matters (Government of Swaziland, 2011).

What is especially important for children with disabilities is that the EDSEC also informs the country's approach to education for children with disabilities. The framework argues strongly for a 'mainstreaming' approach that recognises that "a number of important cross-cutting issues must be effectively integrated, or mainstreamed, into the body of this EDSEC Policy to ensure they are comprehensively addressed, monitored and reported". It argues further that this approach "eliminates the need for separate, free-standing policies for such issues as HIV and AIDS, Schools as Centres of Care and Support (SCCS), or Inclusive Education. In principle, this means that attention to these issues, and the management of response to them, will be a routine function of the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) at every level including all departments of the Ministry.

It is important to recognise therefore that the EDSEC signals the government's commitment to inclusive education as an integral part of its education and training objectives for the country. In Section 6.3 of the framework the state's understanding and approach to inclusive education is explained. It states that:

Inclusive Education (IE) is a policy approach that includes, and meets the needs of all learners –whatever their gender, life circumstances, state of health, disability, stage of development, capacity to learn, level of achievement, financial or any other circumstance. It enables schools to serve and welcome all learners.

The policy therefore commits the state to:

To mainstream relevant, quality education for every learner, irrespective of gender, life circumstances, health status, disability, impairment, capacity to learn, level of achievement, financial status, or any other limiting circumstance.

To achieve these progressive intentions the framework outlines specific goals for the short, medium and long-term. These goals are designed to achieve an inclusive educations system where every learner in Swaziland is assured of "meaningful participation and achievement in the teaching and learning process" (Government of Swaziland, 2011).

2.5.3 National response to education for children with disabilities

In its 1968 Independence Manifesto (The Imbokodvo Manifesto), the newly independent Monarchy of Swaziland prioritised education. Over the years, several policy reviews and commitments to education took place including the development of a Special Education Policy Statement (SEPS) in 1999. This policy statement provided the basis for the EDSEC described above that now drives the government's intentions towards building inclusive education across Swaziland. As described above, the new EDSEC policy aims to move away from the separation of special education and inclusive education and seeks to involve learners, parents and communities in the education of all children and youth. This approach is recognised to be a whole school approach and encourages schools to set up school-based teams to drive the concept of inclusion.

In pursuit of these strategic intentions the following initiatives have been undertaken toward implementing the policy goals.

- In 2006, nine mainstream schools were designated pilot schools to help develop models of inclusive education. Four teachers were trained in special and inclusive education and were identified as key support personnel for other teachers;

- During 2009 and 2010 a course in special and inclusive education was introduced in the foundation course of the formal teacher training programme in teaching training colleges

- In 2010 resource centres were established in two of the country's four regions in order to support teachers who have already been trained in special and inclusive education. They also provide awareness and training workshops for all other school staff members.

- In 2010, three regional Inspectors were appointed and deployed to three regions, to help identify and provide support to learners with special education needs.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) report for 2011 produced by the Ministry of Education reported on the extent to which inclusive education was being mainstreamed across the country through the implementation of a universal basic education policy. It indicated that progress was being made in making schools more accessible by removing physical barriers. It also indicated that strides had been made in introducing and supporting special schools for children with hearing impairments and in the provision of learning texts in Braille for children with visual impairments (Ministry of Education, 2011). However, the report also drew attention to the ongoing challenges that exist for the country around building its capacity

to implement its policy goals in this area. These include the limited number of adequately trained teachers in the schools and too few education personnel in the Ministry of Education to support the implementation process. These remain important priorities for the government to address in the near future.

3. EMERGING ISSUES AND INSIGHTS

This section is intended to provide an overview of the central findings from the research undertaken across the five countries. It attempts to synthesise and analyse those issues that emerge as especially important to what is happening in the region and to the creation of equitable education opportunities for children with disabilities in these countries. It focuses on the issues that emerge as having the most relevance for the countries in order to provide a sense of key regional issues and challenges. It is recognised that in doing this, however, some of the nuances around each of the specific contexts is lost and that other issues, specific to a particular country, may still be very important for that country to consider in the way forward. Where possible and where they have meaning for the finding that is being discussed, differences or similarities across the five countries are pointed to. The insights captured here, especially regarding the key barriers restricting access and undermining the building of inclusive education systems, as well as good practices evident across the region, all provide a basis for the conclusions and recommendations that are made in the final chapter of this report.

3.1   Defining inclusive education

In discussing the background and rationale for the research in Section 2 of this report, it was argued that inclusive education is an emerging concept and is often linked, especially where children with disabilities are concerned, to the concept of 'special needs education' or education for learners regarded as having 'special needs'. The latter terms have been the dominant terms used historically to describe education provision for children with disabilities where it has existed. It was emphasised that underlying these different concepts are important conceptual differences that are the subject of on-going debates. They are also important to informing how countries approach education for children with disabilities, especially in pursuit of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) and UNESCO's Education For All initiative. It was explained that in recognising the complexities around these concepts and the continued used of all of them, the study set as one of its objectives to:

Develop a deepened understanding into how the concept of inclusive education is understood by roleplayers and used in the policy frameworks and how more traditional notions and practices around 'special needs education' articulate with these understandings.

The findings from the research suggest that across all five countries a lack of clarity still exists around notions of 'inclusive education' and 'special needs education'. This

lack of clarity is most often reflected in the interchangeable use of the two terms and the absence of a common understanding among key role players around what the concepts mean. However, despite this lack of clarity, both of these concepts, either in the way in which they are taken forward in policy documents and/or explained by role players, are underpinned by a strong human rights approach to education for children with disabilities and are linked to attempts by all the countries to ensure access to quality education for all children. The concepts are also linked to the recognition that children with disabilities have been historically marginalised and have not been able to access education opportunities to the same extent as their non-disabled peers, rendering them continually vulnerable to those factors such as poverty that limit or restrict access to education.

The findings show that some of the countries (South Africa, Namibia and Swaziland) have sought to explicitly define and explain inclusive education in their policy frameworks. They have also attempted to explain the important conceptual issues and principles that underpin the nature of the inclusive education system they seek to build. Although there are slight differences across these three countries, the following stand out as issues of importance to how inclusive education is understood and defined by these countries:

- An inclusive education system is one that is premised on the principle of equity where all children must be provided with equitable opportunities to develop to their full potential and benefit from what the education system is able to offer

- Inclusive education is about responding to diversity. This includes addressing the different needs that children have, for example, as a result of impairment. Responding to such needs may involve particular forms of specialised support and/or teaching practices

- Inclusive education involves removing those factors/barriers/impediments that stop learning from being accessible to all

- Inclusive education focuses on the system itself and its responsibilities towards all the learners in must serve

- Inclusive education involves incremental processes of change that include transforming existing provision and practices around 'special needs education' that have historically provided separate provision for some children with disabilities.

The education frameworks of Lesotho and Malawi rely more heavily on the concept of 'special needs education' to define their approach to addressing the needs of children with disabilities. However, these countries still have a strong orientation towards 'inclusive education' in their policy frameworks. In other words, where 'special needs education' is discussed or explained in the policy documents it is linked to approaches that may be regarded as having strong 'inclusivity' elements to them. For example, right of all children to access quality education opportunities and a focus on the general education and training system to do this.

However, in all five countries, whether inclusive education is defined or not, the two terms 'inclusive education' and 'special needs education' are often used interchangeably by role players. The conflation of the terms in this way indicates that, as already suggested, the conceptual distinctions underpinning the concepts are not necessarily clearly understood. This is reinforced by the assertions made by some of the researchers. They indicated that a number of the respondents had experienced difficulties in explaining what they understood by 'inclusive education'. The following quotations from roleplayers across the five countries provide examples of the differences in understanding that exist across the region:

√ Inclusive education is defined as education, as well as training and skills development programs aimed at benefiting all (citizens) irrespective of their creed, race, background, disability or any other social challenges that may be used as a yard stick towards the equalization of the unequal, and consequently the equitable distribution of social goods such as education, health and other essential or constitutional and fundamental rights of all Africans.

√ Teaching learners with specific challenges in a different setting e.g. special school

√ Removal of all barriers and impediments to learning and making learning accessible to all

√ Rendering individualized assistance to learners with special needs in the mainstream class

√ Special needs education is a branch that looks at the welfare of the children with disability to reduce stigma in different categories of disability, while inclusive education is a branch that tries to incorporate disabled children in the mainstream so that they learn with others.

√ Special Needs education is the support services to children with disabilities who are sidelined in schools according to their individual difference. It is individualized support to the child with disability

√ Inclusive education means that education should be accessible in the mainstream school by children with disabilities

√   I think these are attempts being made in schools to make sure that all children have access to education. Children with special education needs are being enrolled in schools

√   Those [children] needing extra help, extra attention and educating them in totality without discrimination.

√   Including all learners in mainstream education systems which can cater for all children, including those with disabilities.

Despite the emphasis that is placed by all countries on the right of children with disabilities to access quality education provision, the lack of a common understanding around the concept of inclusive education must be recognised as a potential barrier to its effective implementation across the region and to the realisation of the goals of the UNCRPD. Effective implementation is dependent on all key role players having a common understanding of what inclusive education means, why it is so important to children with disabilities and therefore what needs to be monitored to assess progress and identify good practices.

3.2   Enabling policy and legislative frameworks embedded in national development agendas

The study shows clearly that all the countries involved have made important progress towards the development of strong, enabling policy frameworks aimed at addressing the educational needs of children with disabilities. In all cases these policy frameworks are supported and informed by the country's signing or ratification of important international and regional human rights instruments. These instruments either address directly the rights of people with disabilities, including their right to education, or speak to broader human rights issues, especially for children. Linked to the five countries' commitment to the rights and obligations contained in these instruments, is their direct involvement in global initiatives that seek to support the active realisation of these rights and obligations among the citizens of these countries. The most important of these for children with disabilities, is the ratification by all five countries of the United Nation's Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) and the UNCRPD (2006). Equally important, has been their active involvement in striving to meet the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and in UNESCO's Education For All initiative.

In addition, all five countries targeted in this study have either signed or ratified the following international and regional instruments. These are all regarded as important to realising the right to quality education by children with disabilities and building inclusive education and training systems:

•   The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994)
•   African Charters on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) (1981)
•   African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (1990)
•   Social Policy Framework for Africa (African Union) (2008)
•   Windhoek Declaration on Social Development (African Union) (2008)
•   SADC Charter of Fundamental Social Rights (2003)
•   SADC Protocol on Education and Training (1997)
•   SADC Orphans, Vulnerable Children and Youth (OVCY) Framework (2008 – 2015)

Clearly, the ratification of these instruments and the involvement of the five countries in these global and regional initiatives demonstrate political will to address the educational needs of children with disabilities. However, they also appear to have been important to influencing and providing impetus to national educational processes now in place, including those around inclusive education. What is also evident from the study is that the countries have been careful to translate these international guidelines within their domestic contexts and develop policies that are framed by their own priorities and challenges. This is extremely important for the sustainability of inclusive education across the region.

Across all five countries the policy frameworks guiding education provision for children with disabilities are also informed by national constitutional provisions. Across the five countries these provisions, either speak directly to the rights of people with disabilities (e.g. by noting disability as a basis for unfair discrimination, or targeting people with disabilities for redress measures) or provide for the protection from discrimination of all citizens, which, by implication, includes people with disabilities. In addition, these constitutional frameworks make provision for the realisation of the right to state funded primary education for all children – a very important provision for the promotion of access to quality education for children with disabilities. In countries such as South Africa, Namibia and Malawi these progressive constitutional frameworks have emerged out of important political changes associated with the building of democracy in these countries. The rights of children with disabilities have therefore become recognised as key to the building and strengthening of democracy in these countries.

The table below provides a summary of the most important policy instruments identified in the study that are driving the building of inclusive education and training systems across the five countries.

Country	Policy and legislative framework in place
Lesotho	• Rights based National Constitution (1993)- protection from discrimination (disability implied) and right to free and compulsory primary education • Ratification of UNCRPD (2008) • Draft National Disability and Rehabilitation Policy (2011) • Education Act (1995) • Ministry of Education and Training's Strategic Plan for 2005-2015
Malawi	• Rights based National Constitution - protection from discrimination (disability stated) and right to free and compulsory primary education (1994) • Ratification of UNCRPD (2009) • National Policy on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (2006) • Education Policy Investment Framework (2001) • National Policy on Special Needs Education (2006)
Namibia	• Rights based National Constitution - protection from discrimination (disability implied) and right to free and compulsory primary education (1990) • Ratification of UNCRPD and Optional Protocol (2007) • National Disability Policy (1997) • Sector Policy on Inclusive Education: Implementation and Supporting Guidelines (2004)
Malawi	• Rights based National Constitution - protection from discrimination (disability stated) and right to free and compulsory primary education (1994) • Ratification of UNCRPD and Optional Protocol (2007) • Integrated National Disability Strategy (2001) • South African Schools Act (1996) • White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (2001)
Swaziland	• Rights based National Constitution - protection from discrimination (disability stated) and right to free and compulsory primary education (2005) • Ratification of UNCRPD and Optional Protocol (2012) • National Development Strategy (1997 – 2022) • Education and Training Sector Policy (2011)

Equally important at a national level are the links that are made in all the countries' policy frameworks between the realisation of the rights of children with disabilities and national development priorities. In all of the countries, the promotion of education for all, including for children with disabilities, is recognised as critical in addressing poverty and meeting national development priorities. In some of the policy frameworks it is also clear that children with disabilities are recognised as being especially vulnerable to educational exclusion. This means that they must be targeted in programmes that address those socio-economic barriers that keep children out of school and restrict their participation.

While the study was able to identify strong, enabling policy frameworks across the five countries targeted, it has to be noted that some weaknesses are evident in the policy frameworks in all of the five countries. These weaknesses may effectively restrict the right of children with disabilities to education, especially in inclusive environments, where state resources are limited. For example, in all of the five countries it is recognised in the policy frameworks that limitations may need to be imposed on the realization of socio-economic rights. These are argued to be necessary in contexts defined by huge resource-intensive developmental challenges that the state must respond to. It is clear, however, that in some cases the necessary limitation of socio-economic rights provides a loop-hole which states use to justify their failure to implement the policy commitments noted above.

3.3 Key obstacles to the creation of equitable access to education for children with disabilities

Although much has been done across the region towards realising the rights of children with disabilities to quality education provision, through the development of inclusive education systems, the research showed that significant challenges still exist. This section captures the main obstacles that were articulated by the role players surveyed and interviewed and which were apparent through the data collected. Whilst most respondents from the five countries were positive about the policy frameworks now in place and the commitment that these demonstrated from their governments, they articulated a strong desire for their governments to demonstrate much more substantial progress towards the implementation of these policies. The challenges identified by the respondents suggest that a myriad of factors come into play which effectively exclude children with disabilities from quality provision. These factors either directly or indirectly restrict access to the education system by children with disabilities or undermine the building of inclusive education systems. They are also systemic in nature and, while not unexpected in developing contexts, are not given sufficient attention by governments or recognised as critical to the success of inclusive education environments. What is of particular concern is that where these implementation challenges are not sufficiently understood and addressed, the very idea of inclusive education is called into question and the inequalities of the past are perpetuated. For example, where teachers are ill equipped to

respond to children with disabilities in their classrooms, the problem is seen to lie with 'inclusive education', rather than the state's failure to provide adequate and appropriate teaching training opportunities. The findings suggest that while the challenges are largely systemic in nature, they have a major impact on the psycho-social wellbeing of children with disabilities affecting their levels of confidence and thus their effective participation in the education system.

3.3.1   Lack of reliable data on children with disabilities

The study showed clearly that accessing reliable, current information on disability remains a challenge in all the five countries. This is especially true regarding accurate information able to provide insight into how many children with disabilities are gaining access to existing education provision, where these children are now at school and how many remain excluded. As the study shows, it is very difficult to develop an accurate picture of access and participation by children with disabilities across the system. In those countries where special schools are in place, data on children with disabilities in the education system tends to rely heavily on the numbers of children attending these schools with limited attention to what is happening in the mainstream system.

It is equally important to recognise that the 'inclusivity' of an education system is dependent on its ability to respond appropriately to the different needs of all learners, including those with disabilities -its very ability to be inclusive requires it to move away from a 'one size fits all' approach. To develop such capacity the system must be able to ascertain the nature and levels of support that different learners may require in the learning process (e.g. learning material in Braille). It must also be able to identify the barriers preventing particular learners from accessing existing services and participating in the classroom to their full potential. The absence of accurate and reliable data around the nature and extent of the different kinds of support that children with different disabilities may require, remains a central challenge across the region.

3.3.2   Lack of awareness around inclusive education

Lack of awareness around inclusive education and its importance for children with disabilities continues to be an important challenge for the region. This lack of awareness appears to be most obvious in two important areas. Firstly, general ignorance prevails among many sectors of the population around the importance of educating children with disabilities and their potential to succeed. A number of the country studies suggested that such ignorance tends to be informed and reinforced by historically dominant understandings of disability that regard people with disabilities as objectives of charity rather than as productive citizens who have a right to be educated. It was also suggested that cultural beliefs are still evident which stigmatise people with disabilities and perpetuate their discrimination and marginalisation within communities. Such discrimination is reinforced by derogatory language and

expression which carries with it negative connotations and stereotypes. One of the most important effects of these attitudes and beliefs is the failure on the part of many parents to believe that their child with a disability should be educated. The study showed that some parents in poverty situations tend to invest more in the education of their able-bodied child than their disabled child.

The lack of awareness in the five countries was also evident around the notion of inclusive education itself. Many important roleplayers reached in the study, such as government officials, teachers and principals, appear to have a limited understanding of inclusive education and the key principles on which it is based. From some of the responses from students with disabilities it was clear that, at the level of the school and classroom, there is still a strong tendency to categorise learners with disabilities as 'special' and 'different'. As two students said;

> "Teachers should make (them) feel welcome, treat them equally and avoid calling us out as 'special'..."

> "I catch up slowly, no one cares at times about me and if you go to school at an older age, you feel like an outsider because you are not viewed as 'normal'..."

Such practices serve to perpetuate the categorisation of leaners into those regarded as 'normal' and those regarded as 'special', requiring different and separate forms of provision. It was clear from some of the respondents that this lack of understanding around what inclusive education is about and its translation into practice in the classroom, contributes to learners with disabilities feeling isolated and marginalised, including by their peers. Some expressed sentiments suggesting that they preferred to 'suffer silently' and 'avoid shame' as a way of adapting to the lack of inclusivity created by the teacher in the classroom. This lack of awareness and inadequate understanding among important role players must be recognised as an important challenge for the region. It must be addressed as a key area of focus in the implementation of the relevant policy processes and associated initiatives to build inclusive education.

3.3.3   Lack of adequately and appropriately trained teachers

One of the most pervasive challenges that emerged across the five countries was the lack of teachers adequately and appropriately trained to support an inclusive education system. Respondents pointed to an insufficient number of suitably qualified teachers, especially in remote rural areas, and to the existence of teachers who are inadequately trained to respond to the full diversity of needs present among the children in their classrooms.
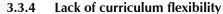
Many of the teachers who participated in the study, when asked about the barriers they experience in creating inclusive classrooms and applying inclusive practices, argued that they lacked more specialised skills to meet the needs of some learners in their classrooms, including those with particular kinds of disabilities. They indicated that not having the required skills undermined their confidence. It was also suggested that even where teachers have sought to improve their levels of skill and acquire more specialised knowledge, limited recognition has been given to these endeavours, both in relation to remuneration and professional status. This suggests that important skills exist within the system that are not being sufficiently utilized. These challenges impact on the morale of teachers and undermine their commitment to being part of the building of an inclusive education system. One teacher expressed her frustration:

> "I am a qualified teacher from the colleges and I went for a special course in special needs where I got a certificate, but four years now I am not recognized or promoted based on this certificate, it seems it is useless..."

It was also clear in some of the countries that government imperatives to improve pass rates and increase efficiency in the system placed teachers and principals under significant pressure to demonstrate their own performance through the number of children that pass in the least amount of time. It was argued that in response to this pressure, teachers and principals preferred not to enrol children with disabilities as they were perceived to require more of the teacher's time and to take more time to complete their studies.

Underpinning this challenge is the failure on the part of the higher education systems in these countries, especially teacher training institutions, to meaningfully support the building of inclusive education systems. It was evident across all five countries that insufficient attention is being paid by universities and training colleges to offering courses that equip teachers with more specialised skills and build their capacity to implement inclusive practices in their classrooms.

This challenge is linked to the failure on the part of some teachers and education officials to draw support from parents of children with disabilities and from people in the community that may be in a position to assist them. In general, there was a sense that not enough is being done to facilitate the participation of parents of children with disabilities in the education of their children. Similarly, optimum use is not being made of community resources that already exist, such as community-based rehabilitation (CBR) workers to assist teachers and support the development of inclusive schools in their communities.

3.3.4   Lack of curriculum flexibility

Despite important progress that some of the countries have made towards curriculum change as part of their educational improvements, a number of the respondents emphasised that, in their opinion, curricula remain inaccessible to many children with disabilities. Some parents and teachers, in particular, emphasised that the curriculum is not flexible enough to meet the diverse needs of different learners with disabilities.

Concerns were raised, in particular, about existing assessment practices and the extent to which they fail to take into account different ways of learning and communicating. It was argued that some schools have access to equipment (e.g. Brailling machines) and assistive devices that are important to supporting effective assessment. However, many schools did not have access to these resources. In the absence of these resources it was unfair to assess learners with particular disabilities in the same way as those without such disabilities. One learner expressed his frustration with the school's failure to make learning materials more accessible:

> "For me, they do not make notes on large print. I also do not have the notes in time to study for a test or examination, so I borrow exercise books from students who write in big handwriting and copy the notes. There is not much special service that I get at school, but at home, my aunt knows that I do not have to work at a dark place..."

It was also noted that, in some instances, the national school curricular failed to provide different learning pathways for learners to follow. For example, vocational study pathways that may be more suitable for some children with intellectual disabilities to pursue. For some of the respondents, the 'over–emphasis' on academic achievements has, in part, resulted in grade repetition for some learners, and consequently bred frustration and de-motivation. It is clear that improving curriculum flexibility remains an important priority for the region to pursue.

3.3.5 Limited education facilities and learning materials, poor infrastructure and inadequate resource allocation

It was argued earlier that important attempts have been made across all the countries to situate the needs of people with disabilities, including their educational needs, within the national development framework of the country. It was argued that this is an extremely important development for building inclusive education systems It creates a firm basis for the allocation of resources towards addressing this imperative as part of the development challenges for the country.   It was also pointed out, however, that one of the study's limitations was that it was not able to conduct a

detailed analysis of national budgets and government resource provision towards building inclusive education systems and that this remains an important area for further enquiry.

Despite this limitation, it is still clear from the study that, in the view of the respondents, the political will reflected in the policy frameworks is not matched by the allocation of sufficient resources dedicated to supporting the implementation of these policy goals. This was especially evident at the local level where respondents overwhelmingly identified limited educational facilities, poor infrastructure and insufficient learning materials as significant barriers to building an inclusive educations system. They mentioned specifically the physical inaccessibility of educational facilities, such as classrooms, for many physically disabled learners and the limited provision of accessible learning materials such as textbooks. Linked to the latter was the inadequate provision of necessary assistive devices that some children with disabilities may require to be able to effectively learn and communicate in the classroom. These challenges appeared to be most acute in the rural areas where increased levels of poverty, poor service delivery and inadequate infrastructure generally, exacerbate these problems for disabled children.

Attention was also drawn by a number of the respondents to the inaccessibility or absence of Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres for children with disabilities. The provision of appropriate ECD services is recognised as critical for children with disabilities, both for ensuring the early identification of impairments and for building their confidence for school. ECD facilities accessible to children with disabilities are therefore central to enhancing their chances of progression through the education system.

Some of the respondents suggested that, even where dedicated budgets are in place at the national level to drive inclusive education initiatives, at the local level, especially in strongly decentralised systems, other priorities often absorb this funding, resulting in the inadequate provision of resources for inclusive education. They suggested that inadequate monitoring of resource distribution at the local level allows such problems to continue and exacerbates the tension between national imperatives and local realities. Some respondents also indicated that the resourcing of inclusive education in their country continues to rely too heavily on donor funding. This renders many of the things that have been achieved unsustainable. Much evidence also emerged to suggest that a substantial contribution is being made to building inclusive education by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and religious organisations. Such partnerships between the state and civil society are very important. However, building sustainable inclusive education systems must involve the provision of adequate state resources at the national and local level to effectively fund its implementation. In addition, monitoring of implementation must include attention to where and how such resources are being used.

3.4 Emerging good practices

One of the objectives of the research was to identify good practices taking place across the five countries in their efforts to build and strengthen inclusive education. The study shows clearly that most often 'good practices' emerge where countries have found innovative ways to address the kinds of challenges discussed in the previous section. Such innovation is most often informed by a careful understanding of the local context and insight into those factors within this context which either have the potential to support inclusive education or restrict and hamper progress. Examples of such innovation are evident across all of the five countries and it is not possible within the limitations of this report to do justice to each of these. This section provides a brief overview of those broad practices that have emerged through the research. These may be regarded as useful 'tools' to consider towards building and strengthening inclusive education across the region.

3.4.1 Maximising local knowledge, networks, capacity and resources
One of the most important 'learnings' that emerges from the study, which is especially important for the Southern African region, is that much can be achieved with very limited material resources. In fact, without discounting the critical importance of necessary resources for creating equitable opportunities for children with disabilities, some of the most innovative initiatives have taken place in the most resource constrained contexts. One of the most important ways this has happened is through harnessing local expertise, making use of existing infrastructure and getting whole communities involved in the process of building inclusive education in their communities.

Two of the most important community resources which have been used are parents of children with disabilities and people with disabilities within communities, especially through Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs). Examples in this regard include;

- using parents and DPOs to train teachers and other relevant role players and raise awareness about the particular needs of children with disabilities;

- setting up parent support groups to provide help and advice to parents especially where their children are going to school for the first time;

- establishing parent's groups to visit homes where there are children with disabilities who are not in school to offer support to these parents.

The research shows that community resources are best harnessed through the establishment of partnerships to support the implementation process. Partnerships set up have facilitated collaboration between higher education institutions (universities

and colleges) responsible for teacher education, DPOs, district education officials, school management, community leaders, relevant Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other professionals in the community such as health workers. These partnerships have been used to; develop appropriate training and awareness raising material; link specialist support to teachers in the schools; increase general awareness about what inclusive education is trying to achieve; and integrate the needs of children with disabilities into community deliberations. The research shows that such partnerships have made a significant contribution to implementation efforts and have built up much needed capacity to sustain inclusive education efforts within communities.

One of the strategies which a number of the countries have pursued involves integrating existing special schools into inclusive education programmes as community resource centres that can be used to provide support to surrounding schools. Most often this support involves teachers with more specialist skills in the special schools assisting with the training of teachers in the mainstream schools and offering their support and experience to help the teachers as problems and challenges arise. Similarly, where special schools have necessary equipment, such as brailing machines, these have been used to develop accessible learning materials. It was argued by a number of the respondents that these schools have an important role to play in an inclusive education system and provide a way of maximising existing resources. Some respondents felt that existing special schools are important to building the capacity of the system to meet the needs of all children, especially those that may require high levels of specialised support in the classroom. However, others emphasised that for existing special schools to be able to play a meaningful role within an inclusive education system, these schools still require significant support. Such support must be directed at transforming old, exclusionary practices that are still prevalent and equipping them with the resources they require to play their role as community resource centres.

3.4.2   Piloting for learning towards system-wide application

Across the five countries piloting has been used a key strategy to build and strengthen inclusive education. In some of the countries government implementation of inclusive education has been initiated through pilot programmes in a designated number of schools. In these cases the intention has been to learn from the pilot and for the government to systematically roll-out what has been learnt across the rest of the system. In others, government programmes have been supported by additional pilot initiatives to strengthen the programme. In all cases, piloting has been an extremely important and valuable strategy for the implementation of the government's policy goals. These initiatives have involved piloting;

- new teaching and learning practices;

- new forms of school organisation and management;

- new processes to provide specialist support to teachers, especially through the sharing of existing resources; and

- new partnerships such as the ones discussed above.

What is evident from the examples shared in the research is that these initiatives have created 'supported spaces' within the education system or within schools where new practices and ideas and thus new ways of thinking could be explored. They have created opportunities for teachers and other role players to come together and experiment with new ways of doing things in a project environment that is non-threatening. Piloting activities have created opportunities for in-depth discussion between different role players around complex and sometimes sensitive issues, especially for teachers, without undermining their confidence or exposing their existing practice to unfair criticism. These piloting activities have also created opportunities for people to work together in an 'equal' space where each role player's contribution is recognised and valued and differences can be challenged in a positive way. This has been important in addressing unequal relations of power between teachers and parents or between people with disabilities and professionals, contributing to the building of greater trust and recognition about the importance of each role player's contribution to building an inclusive education system.

3.4.3   Raising awareness and building capacity to implement inclusive education

This research study has consistently shown how critical adequately and appropriately trained teachers are to the building of inclusive education systems. While, as noted early, the lack of such capacity remains a key challenge across the region, the research also shows that where significant attention has been paid to the training of teachers and the raising of awareness among educators, this focus and effort has yielded very positive results. Equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge they require to respond to the needs of all children in their classrooms, including those with disabilities, remains, arguably, the most important priority for ensuring quality education for all children.

Good practices evident across the five countries point to successful efforts to influence both formal teacher training in universities or colleges and in-service training in the classroom. Specific efforts have been made to integrate inclusive education issues into the formal curricula of teacher training institutions and to accredit in-service training courses aimed at equipping teachers with new skills and deepening their existing knowledge. Closely linked to these measures are initiatives that have resulted in the development of training materials for the training of other teachers and the production of learning materials for teachers to use in the classrooms. Where such products have been developed, they have often resulted from an action research approach, where initial materials have been piloted and

then refined based on teachers and other roleplayers' feedback.

Other important initiatives towards building capacity for inclusive education include specific activities aimed at raising awareness among children themselves, both with and without disabilities. Interesting examples include; getting children to act as mentors to other children; and facilitating discussions among children in schools on issues of diversity and difference. The success of these initiatives suggests that children's behaviour, which isolates or marginalises other children because they are seen as different, is often learned behaviour reflecting the prejudices of society. Initiatives that challenge existing stereotypes and get children to think differently about their peers are important to creating welcoming school environments - an important element of inclusive education.

The research also demonstrates innovative advocacy initiatives aimed at raising awareness, especially among the broader community, around people with disabilities and the contribution which they are able to make to their communities. Examples were cited where recognised international days, such as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, were used to launch campaigns around inclusive education and build public awareness about government efforts in this regard. A number of these examples made good use of the media to publicise important messages around what the government and other role players are trying to achieve through inclusive education. It would seem that the use of the radio, especially to reach people in rural areas, has been an especially successful method of communication.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research study has shown clearly that strong political will is in place across the five countries to address the historical inequalities experienced by children with disabilities in accessing quality education provision. This political will is most evident in the strong, enabling policy frameworks in place in each of the countries. These policy frameworks demonstrate a clear sense of the developmental challenges involved in creating equitable educational opportunities for children with disabilities and locate these challenges within broader national development agendas. This is an extremely important development across the region. It provides a sound basis for future action around building inclusive education systems that is appropriately directed and underpinned by clarity of understanding and intention. These policy frameworks also support the commitments that have been made in ratifying the UNCRPD and take on board the overarching intentions and vision of the Millennium Development Goals and the UNESCO Education for All Initiative.

There is also strong evidence from the study to suggest that these countries recognise the key elements of an inclusive education system and their importance to successful progress. These include; adequately trained teachers; appropriate and accessible support systems, including those for learners requiring high levels of support and specialised assistance; and the importance of working with key role players outside government. Of particular importance here are Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) and parents. A key strength across the region is the existence of a vibrant disability rights movement and willingness on the part of both these organisations and the government to engage and work in partnership towards a common objective.

Not unexpectedly, the study also shows that the real challenge to the realisation of these policy goals lies in their implementation and substantially addressing those systemic factors that hinder and undermine the implementation process. All of the countries in this study face massive socio-economic challenges that have a significant impact on children with disabilities and their ability to access educational opportunities. In some respects the study has enabled a clearer picture to emerge of what is happening on the ground with regard to policy implementation. However, inadequate, out of date and/or unreliable data across all of the five countries has severely restricted the study's ability to provide a clear and accurate picture of what is happening on the ground. This includes the extent to which children with disabilities are accessing quality educational provision within their countries and, equally importantly, the extent to which such provision forms part of a truly inclusive education and training system.

In a number of cases, for example, countries report on levels of participation of children with disabilities by referring to the number of children presently attending various forms of 'special education' provision in existence in that country. There are very few examples of countries mapping the participation of children with disabilities outside of existing special schools and almost no attempt to map their participation in the broader mainstream system. This problem is exacerbated by the reliance on old reporting mechanisms that do not pick up on key indicators of progress towards inclusive education systems. This has , impacted on the study's ability to provide a more thorough picture of activities on the ground and their success or failure. Despite these gaps in information, evidence collected through the study suggests that too many children with disabilities across the region still remain either outside the systems that exist or are not provided with the support which they require in inclusive environments to learn and develop to their full potential.

It is also clear from the study that progress is still strongly influenced by the extent to which dedicated resources are in place to fund the change processes and, equally importantly, that the allocation and distribution of these resources are carefully monitored to ensure that they support what they were meant to support. In resourced constrained contexts it is very easy for disability related issues and the needs of the most vulnerable children to become subsumed by other priorities.

The study also shows that the trend across the region is towards the development of systems that combine provision that has historically been in place as part of a limited 'special education' system, with interventions that aim to transform existing mainstream systems to become more inclusive and meet the needs of all children. It is evident that for some of the countries, this 'hybrid' model reflects an attempt to harness existing resources and build on what is already in place. While it is recognised that harnessing existing resources, such as existing special schools, is extremely important in resourced constrained environments, what is not sufficiently clear from the study is the extent to which such strategies are informed by a real and sustained commitment to inclusive education. Although some special schools provide excellent services and expertise related to a specific impairment, they have little or no experience in supporting children with these impairments in the mainstream. Furthermore, some special schools are inadequately resourced and staffed to the extent that abusive practices can occur and educational progress is difficult to detect. Special schools as resource centres need to be able, therefore, to ensure excellent provision in their area of expertise and demonstrate a conceptually clear and constructive approach to inclusive education if their expertise is to be fully harnessed. There is also limited evidence from the study that real attempts are being made to address broader systemic issues which serve both directly and indirectly to undermine the application of inclusive practices in schools and the building of truly inclusive educations systems.

Drawing from the findings of this study, the following are recommended as issues for immediate attention for SADC, the national governments of its member countries and Civil Society organisations.

- SADC should develop a strategic plan on inclusive education that aims to increase access to educational opportunities for children with disabilities through the development of inclusive education systems across the region. This plan should be linked to and aligned with other key SADC instruments and programmes which seek to increase access to education and address development challenges within the region.

- SADC should facilitate the undertaking of an extensive regional study which seeks, through the application of quantitative data collection and modelling, to reliably map the participation and/or exclusion of children with disabilities within the education systems of each of the member countries, ensuring that an accurate picture emerges across the region of levels of access and exclusion; the nature and forms of provision within which children with disabilities participate; the kinds and levels of support that are in place to support children with disabilities; and existing financial and human resources dedicated to supporting their participation in the education systems. The study should also attempt to advance some projections with regard to future resources needed to support the implementation of inclusive education in the member countries.

- Ministries of Education in partnership with organisations in Civil Society should facilitate among all role players the development of a common understanding of inclusive education, giving particular attention to the conceptual concerns underpinning inclusive education to ensure that all role players are able to make sense of what is needed to transform existing education systems to fully meet the needs of all children and are able to translate these concepts into meaningful strategies and practices.

- SADC should facilitate the development of a regional network on inclusive education to promote collaboration across countries, especially in the sharing of good practices and the setting up of strategic partnerships for systemic capacity development, especially among education officials, teachers, parents and DPOs.

- SADC should facilitate the development of a set of regional guidelines for adoption and implementation by each of the member countries which outline what is required in order to transform existing special schools into viable and progressive resources within the framework of an inclusive education system. They should actively seek to encourage member countries to focus their attention on the transformation of their general education systems, rather than

on the setting up of new, separate facilities for children with disabilities, so that countries develop the capacity to meet, within local communities, the educational needs of all children in that community.

- Ministries of Education should prioritise initiatives aimed at equipping teachers to participate with confidence in inclusive environments and have the skills to respond to the educational needs of all children in their communities. Initiatives should give attention, in collaboration with relevant professional bodies, higher education institutions and teacher unions, to the integration of the values, principles and practices underpinning inclusive education into the mainstream curricula of under-graduate student teachers and the development of appropriate courses at the post-graduate level for further, more specialised study. Similarly, governments should, in collaboration with relevant service providers, develop appropriate in-service training courses to equip existing teachers with an expanded skills base and enhance their understanding of the values, principles and practices underpinning inclusive education. The latter should form part of accredited professional development offerings for teachers.

- Ministries of education should actively encourage and support initiatives toward building inclusive education which are embedded within local communities and which actively bring together and support relationships between key role players across communities, especially parents, teachers, DPOs, local health workers, community and traditional leaders, local government officials and other community resources that are able to provide support to schools.

- Ministries of Education should facilitate greater involvement by parents' organisations and DPOs in existing initiatives around inclusive education. This should include all initiatives that seek to take forward national development gaols and promote education for all.

- Organisations of parents of children with disabilities and DPOs should actively facilitate the participation of other parents and people with disabilities in initiatives towards the development of inclusive education in their countries. This should include their participation in multi-sectoral and inter-organisational partnerships established to support government efforts to implement inclusive education and monitor progress.

- Ministries of Education should ensure that policies aimed at increasing access to education for children with disabilities and building inclusive education systems should ensure that attention is given to facilitating access to all levels of the education system, especially early childhood development, and that initiatives that are aimed at supporting the transition of students from school to work address fully the needs of children with disabilities so as to enhance their ability to access productive employment.

- Ministries of Education should develop appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and processes that are designed to monitor the implementation of inclusive education. This should involve the development of a set of appropriate indicators that can be used to measure progress around those elements that are recognised as critical to the building and maintenance of inclusive education systems, especially in developing contexts. The development of appropriate indicators should be matched by immediate efforts to strengthen existing data collection and analysis capability so as to ensure that accurate and reliable evidence can be collected to verify progress and inform decision making.

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