



Project Impact Report

Increasing the access, quantity, and quality of inclusive education in Tanzania



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Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Inclusive education in Tanzania has been developing steadily for over a decade. Since 1994, inclusive education was becoming the agreed approach among government officials for children with disabilities. By 2009, inclusive education was formally embedded as a commitment in the Tanzanian education system within the Education Sector Development Programme (2008-2017) and the first National Strategy on Inclusive Education (2009 - 2017).

Despite this progress towards inclusive education, many children with disabilities in Tanzania face substantial barriers to accessing education. In 2018, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology reported that of the total 362,847 children

with disabilities aged 4–14 years, 15.5% were refused entry to schools because of their disabilities¹. At present, negative attitudes towards disability remain one of the most pervasive barriers, however there are several barriers that compound this.

The “Take All My Friends To School” project increased the access, quantity and quality of inclusive education for children with disabilities through adapting the child-to-child approach to inclusive education. The project was delivered with Child Support Tanzania and was funded through the *All In, All Learning* Programme by Comic Relief & the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

1. Tanzania Country Report (2018) Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, The United Republic of Tanzania, Dar es Salaam, Accessed on 10th April 2021.

Project approach

The project's overall approach was to utilise the child-to-child approach in the design and delivery of activities. The child-to-child approach² empowers children to apply their knowledge and work together to achieve objectives³. We have found this approach to be particularly effective in our previous projects at identifying out of school children with disabilities and including them in school life. It also has secondary benefits of building the confidence of the children involved, as they are able to lead their own activities and achieve goals without adults needing to decide each step for them.

A core component of the child-to-child approach is the "six steps" approach that children were taught in the Child Rights Clubs. This method empowers children to lead any activity following a process that has six progressive steps. The children progress through the steps together (in groups or pairs) to achieve the set objective(s). The six steps of the approach are:



2. The Child-to-Child approach was developed by the organisation, Child to Child since 1978. Child to Child is an international child-rights agency located at the Institute of Education, University of London and is a pioneer of the children's participation movement. See here for a general introduction to their Step Approach - Child to Child <http://www.childtochild.org.uk/child-participation/participation-approaches/step-approach/> accessed on 15th May 2022.
3. See the Child to Child website for more information on what defines the approach: <https://www.childtochild.org.uk/child-participation/idea/> (accessed 5th July 2022)

Applying the child-to-child approach to inclusive education development programming was something that Able Child Africa pioneered with the Child-to-Child organisation in our project work since 2012. The child-to-child approach was primarily used in this project to identify out-of-school children with disabilities in the community who should be in school, as per their inalienable right to education⁴.

In this project, the child-to-child approach was applied in three main ways:

1. Six steps approach used to guide children with and without disabilities to identify barriers to inclusion during inclusive Child Rights Clubs and other project activities.
2. Buddying children with and without disabilities together to make classroom and play activities more inclusive and to break down barriers further.
3. Empowering children with disabilities to identify barriers to inclusion in their environment and identify out-of-school children with disabilities to enrol in inclusive education.

Children already enrolled in school proved to be more effective than adults in identifying the hidden children in the community and helping to get them enrolled in school. The child-to-child approach was also deployed in the Child Rights Clubs to enable children to work together as equals to solve problems and find things out, without adults running each aspect of the activity.

The project used a holistic approach to inclusion in order break down the multifaceted barriers (environmental, attitudinal, institutional and personal barriers) that children with disabilities face. This included having activities specifically designed to address each of the barriers identified (outlined in the next section). These barriers often interact and strengthen each other, effectively locking children with disabilities out of education and out of the general life of a society.

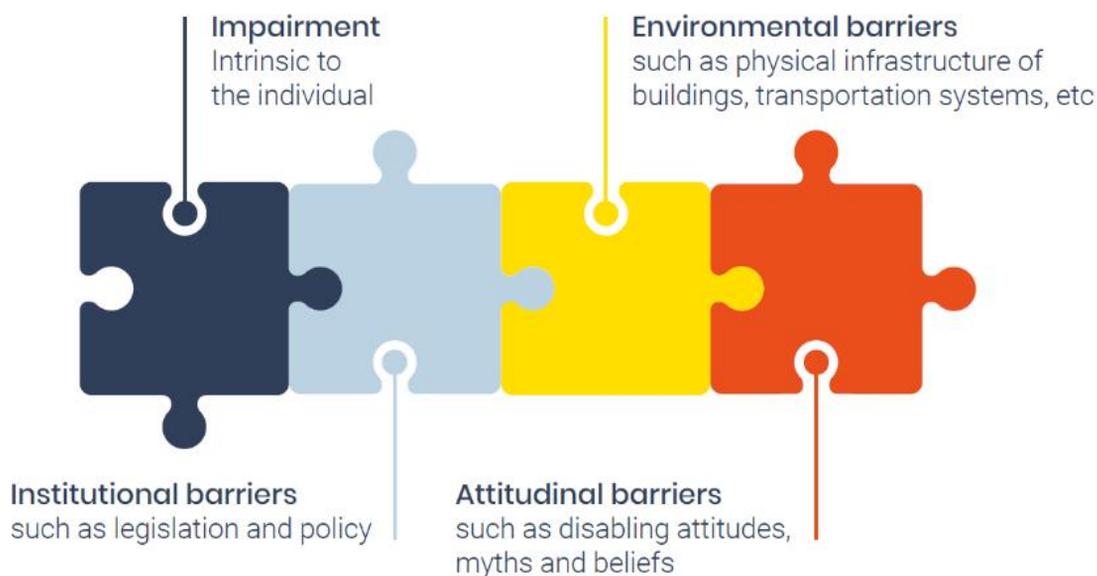
4. For more information on children with disabilities right to education and how we approach achieving inclusive education, see our Inclusive Education Position Paper: <https://ablechildafrica.org/inclusive-education-our-position-paper/> (accessed 5th July 2022)

Project summary

The project began with **identification of children with disabilities** who were currently out of school, using the child-to-child approach. These children were then enrolled across 8 project primary schools in order to begin their educational journey.

To support the new students with disabilities, the schools were made more inclusive through the **training of teachers in inclusive education methodologies** and inclusive techniques they could deploy in their lesson plans to ensure all children could be involved in the learning.

To provide a holistic approach to breaking down barriers in the project, parents were also heavily engaged through Parent Support Groups (PSGs) that were linked to each school. PSGs are groups of parents of children with disabilities who meet regularly to share parental knowledge, mentor each other and lead activities. The PSGs enabled parents to work together in schools and communities to raise awareness of disability issues, tackle stigma and create change through community-based activities.



In line with our holistic approach to inclusion, the project also delivered activities simultaneously that would address the different kinds of barriers to inclusion children with disabilities faced, for example:

Institutional barriers:

Activities to tackle these types of barriers included **trainings with national and district government officials** to inform them of international and national disability rights laws that are required to be upheld in government policy and practices. We also **worked with national government officials to improve policies** to allow for disability considerations and develop inclusive policies that will benefit all children, with and without disabilities.

One notable achievement here was Child Support Tanzania were invited by the national government to consult on the development of the new National Strategy for Inclusive Education (NSIE)

Environmental barriers:

Activities to tackle these barriers included supporting schools to undergo **infrastructure modifications** to their school compounds to enable physical access of the buildings and classrooms for all types of disabilities.

These modifications vary depending on the needs but can include ramps, railings, widened doorways, brightly coloured signs & posts, or inclusive materials on the walls to make children with disabilities feel more included.

Attitudinal barriers:

Activities to tackle these kinds of barriers included **training teachers on inclusive teaching methodologies** in order to deliver an inclusive education curriculum. It also involved training and mentoring parents on disability rights and how to support each other in good parenting for children with disabilities.

Community trainings and information campaigns were also run to help dispel myths about what causes disability and raise awareness of the specific harms that exclusion of children with disabilities causes.

Personal barriers:

Activities to tackle these barriers included **running weekly Child Rights Clubs in schools** to empower children with disabilities through rights education and build confidence through learning. Children with disabilities were also supported through **medical assessments and follow up hospital appointments** to determine their health needs. This process also identified any risks to their healthy development in the early years of their lives that could create additional barriers to their education. These medical assessments were then followed up by the measurement and **provision of assistive devices & individual supports** to help the children live more independent lives. Examples of the devices provided include wheelchairs, crutches, hearing aids, glasses or sensory aids.

Project outcomes

The project had 4 overarching outcomes that activities with children, teachers, parents, communities, and government officials were aimed at achieving. After the 4 years of the project, the following target outcomes were achieved:



Outcome 1:

Increased enrolment of out of school children with disabilities in Early Childhood Education and Primary in 8 target schools.



Outcome 2:

Improved quality of Early Childhood Education and Primary education for children with disabilities in 8 target schools.



Outcome 3:

Improved attitudes of communities towards children with disabilities and inclusive education.



Outcome 4:

Improved capacity of District Government Officials to deliver inclusive education for children with disabilities.



Key Results

370

children with disabilities enrolled into inclusive education who were out of school previously.

116

children with disabilities provided with assistive devices & individual supports to enable them to participate more in school and playtime, with dignity and equality.

378

teachers trained on inclusive education methodologies and teacher practices, giving them inclusive education skills to deploy throughout their careers across the Tanzanian education sector.

All **8**

project schools undergoing infrastructure modifications to make their school buildings and environments inclusive of the accessibility needs of children with disabilities.

884

children with and without disabilities attending Child Rights Clubs, learning about their human rights together.

147

children with disabilities able to sit modified, inclusive annual exams, enabling them to progress through their school years in a way that accounts for their needs, while also challenging them appropriately academically.

168

teachers who are successfully embedding the child-to-child methodology in their classroom and lesson design.

90%

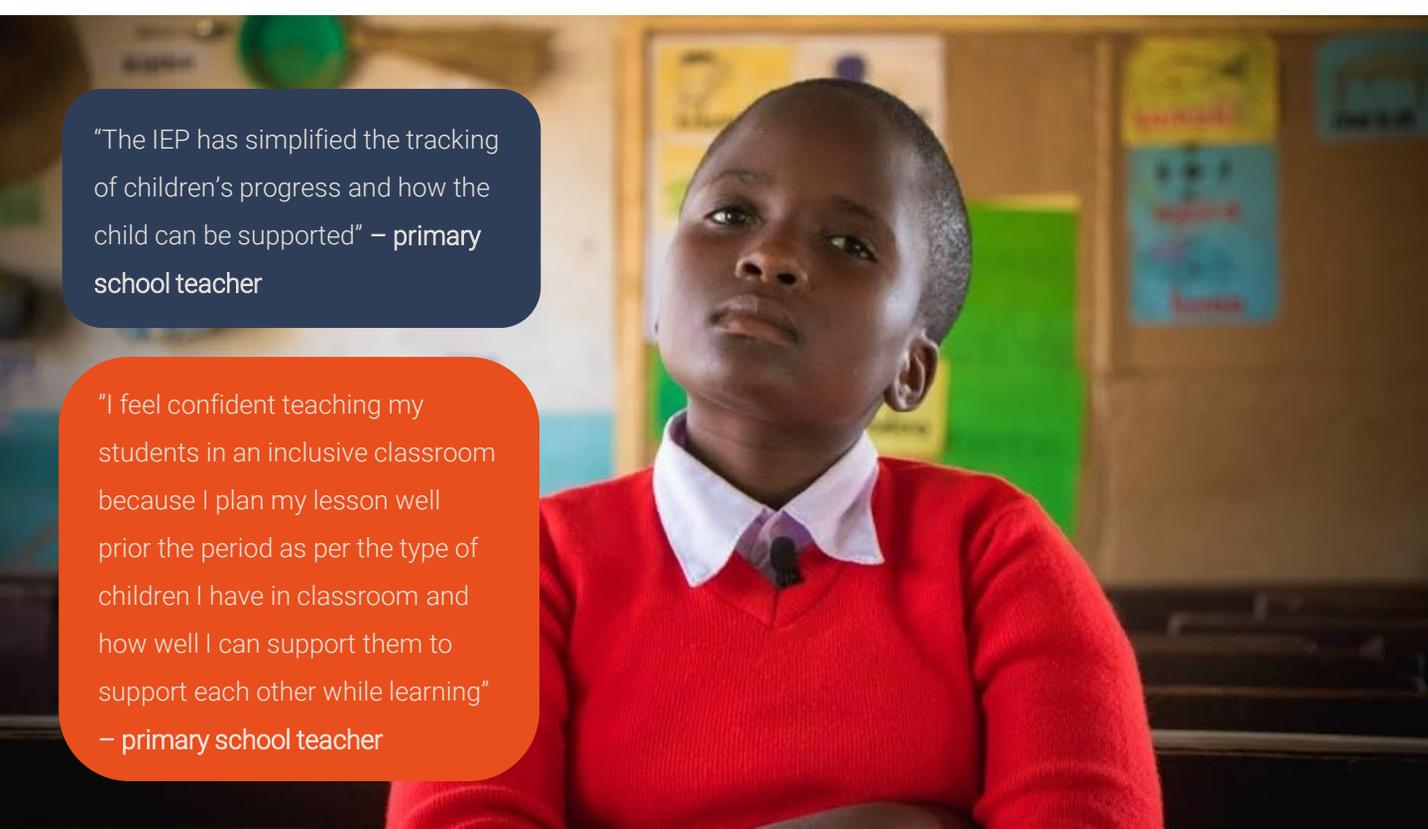
of children with disabilities reporting that they now feel fully accepted and supported by their peers in school activities.

Beyond the numbers...

The project also impacted the educational journeys of the children with disabilities involved in the project. Project stakeholders reported that the project's use of Individualised Education Plans had improved educational development. Teachers reported that training in inclusive lesson planning helped them support the individual learning needs of children with different disabilities.

Key learnings

- Importance of the holistic approach to maximise the inclusion of children with disabilities in education projects. This approach enabled the project to tackle the attitudinal barriers they face by training teachers, parents and community members, changing the prevailing view about the potential of these children. It also involved changing environments to allowed them to access school buildings and advocating to government officials to improve policies through planning and resourcing to address the specific needs children with disabilities face.
- Effectiveness of child-to-child approach for inclusion and empowerment of children with and without disabilities. This builds a great deal of confidence in both children with and without disabilities that is hard to achieve through more traditional, top-down teaching methods. These impacts would be less pronounced if adults were leading all activities.



"The IEP has simplified the tracking of children's progress and how the child can be supported" – primary school teacher

"I feel confident teaching my students in an inclusive classroom because I plan my lesson well prior the period as per the type of children I have in classroom and how well I can support them to support each other while learning" – primary school teacher

- Effectiveness of the twin-track approach for disability inclusion. Supporting the immediate needs of children with disabilities in school while also advocating to government for long-term inclusive policy change was very effective at creating tangible change. The project was able to achieve immediate gains for children with disability in schools while also ensure future children with disabilities will benefit from a more inclusive education system through better designed policies.
- Working with government officials and school leaders from the beginning creates a sense of ownership of the project and allowed these decision makers to see the impact of the project first-hand, which in turn resulted in increased willingness to adapt policies to ensure the holistic activities detailed above could take place.
- Making environmental modifications and conducting medical assessments made school more welcoming and safer for children with disabilities meaning they missed less school and were able to increase their attendance in class, which are two significant barriers children with disabilities face in accessing inclusive education.
- Working with both ECE and primary schools to ensure that children with disabilities transition effectively between school years and into primary school after ECE. Transitions can be difficult for children with disabilities, causing school dropouts if not managed properly.

Overall, the project showed that delivering inclusive education using this approach creates multiplier effects beyond the initial project. Teachers develop inclusive teaching skillsets that they can use throughout their careers, children with disabilities build self-esteem that will enable them to reach their potential, and communities become more inclusive, enabling them to become more collaborative around social issues. Collectively, this provides powerful incentives for government officials and educational leaders to invest in this area for the prosperity of all Tanzania.

Recommendations

This project showed the exponential value the child-to-child approach has for the inclusion of all children, both children with and without disabilities in inclusive education settings. The empowerment and inclusion that these children felt by leading activities together goes beyond the classroom and helps give them skills for lifelong learning.

Policy-level recommendations:

- Provide schools with additional budget to foster an inclusive culture for children with disabilities. This money could be given to Parent Support Groups to decide where best to spend the funds in the interests of children with disabilities or be used to deliver a rolling programme of inclusive Child Rights Clubs. Schools could also use the funds to purchase inclusive learning materials for classrooms and make accessibility modifications to ensure school buildings are safe.
- Provide training and financial support for school management staff to implement disability-inclusive child safeguarding systems within their schools; including training for teachers on the principles of disability-inclusive child safeguarding, funding Child Rights Clubs to learn about their safeguarding rights and conducting activity-level risks assessments to identify risks to children with disabilities on a rolling basis.
- Provide the training and resources (such as stipends and inclusive stationary materials) to teachers to deliver Inclusive Education Plans with their students with disabilities. This will help narrow educational inequalities between children with and without disabilities and allow specific learning needs for children with disabilities to be addressed through bespoke development objectives.
- Support children with disabilities in school through the provision of individualised learning plans that help identify their specific needs and design achievable goals that will enable them to reach their full potential while in education.
- Support children with disabilities with medical assessments and, where appropriate, assistive devices from a young age to ensure their healthy growth and development throughout the key growth stages of their childhood.

Project-level recommendations:

- Conduct inclusive co-design project processes with children with disabilities before the project begins to allow their ideas to inform activity design. This improves the suitability of activities for their needs and reveals potential barriers to engagement that would be missed if only adults design the project.
- Engage children, parents and the wider community in the identification and enrolment of children with disabilities in schools to ensure the hardest to reach children are identified.
- Empower children with and without disabilities by using the child-to-child approach to conduct child-led activities. This creates positive multiplier effects by creating ownership over activities while also building confidence and breaking down inclusion barriers.
- Conduct disability-inclusive risk assessments that allow for the insights of children with disabilities and their parents to be included. This allows subtle risks to their safety or inclusion to be identified before the project begins and adjustments to be made.
- Deliver inclusive Child Rights Clubs alongside general inclusive education activities to empower children with disabilities to learn about their legal rights while also breaking down barriers between children with and without disabilities. Leading to a multiplier effect for inclusive interventions that would be missed with generic activities in schools.
- Budget for the inclusion of children with disabilities in activities and across projects. This includes providing ringfenced time and resources to allow for the full inclusion of children with disabilities through supplying sign language interpreters, information in Braille formats, financially supporting the transport costs for parents and children to attend design sessions or activities.
- Provide medical assessments and assistive devices for children with disabilities in need to allow them to build independence and participate in child-led project activities with children without disabilities. This allows them to also feel more included in their communities.
- Include a mix of activities that target the different barriers to disability inclusion in school and communities and ensure that they work together to ensure that multifaceted barriers are broken down in projects to ensure sustainability of positive outcomes beyond the project lifecycle. One example is working with parents specifically to reduce fears of them sending their children with disabilities to schools.



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