



Knowledge hub - Collection of best practices

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

Inclusive participatory approach with organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs)

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Nigeria

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

Sightsavers

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

System strengthening, collaboration with organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), inclusive education, children with disabilities, participatory approach

6. What makes it a best practice? *

Inclusive and participatory project planning in education with OPDs creates an inclusive learning environment, where all children can participate equally.

Description of the best practice

7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

Nigeria has the highest number of out-of-school children in the world. Despite free and compulsory primary education, approximately 10.5 million children aged 5-14 years are not in school, many of whom are children with disabilities. As 15% of the Nigerian population live with a disability there is a clear need for the education system to respond to the needs of children with disabilities to ensure inclusion and improved learning outcomes for all children. The Nigerian government has taken action to make Nigeria's education system inclusive and accessible for children with disabilities. This has resulted in the development and implementation of legal and policy frameworks at national and state levels to ensure inclusion, including the ratification of the United Nations Convention of the Right of the Child (CRC) and the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). However, despite these policy agreements, children with disabilities and special needs in Nigeria still face significant barriers to equal participation in education.

To support the Nigerian government in its efforts to deliver on SDG4, Sightsavers and partners initiated a new community-driven project in Kaduna State to promote an innovative approach to inclusive education. The FCDO-funded project, "Support Mainstreaming Inclusive Education to all Learn Equally" (SMILE) aims to create a locally driven, sustainable, and scalable model of disability-inclusive education in eight schools in Jema'a Local Government Area (LGA), Kaduna State, Nigeria to support the government in addressing some of the gaps in service delivery. Sightsavers collaborated with the Nigerian Teachers Institute (NTI) to develop, publish and implement inclusive education training for primary school teachers. OPD partners support school-based management committees to address disability inclusion more effectively by increasing awareness at school level and in the community, providing guidance to parents of children with disabilities and helping to make the school environment more inclusive so that all children with disabilities feel welcome and safe to participate. The SMILE project is part of the Inclusive Futures initiative, funded by UK aid, to ensure all children and adults with a disability have the same likelihood as everyone else to access quality education, health and work opportunities.

8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation?

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The SMILE project started in January 2021 and is currently in its inception phase. The project is committed to supporting the Nigerian government in its efforts to deliver on SDG4 through active collaboration to promote disability inclusive education.

One of the SMILE strategies to support the government to achieve its inclusive education goals is to invest in capacity building of School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs). In Nigeria, SBMCs are established by state governments to bridge the gap between government schools and communities. SBMCs are meant to create a sense of community ownership in the development of inclusive schools, to increase enrolment and improve the learning outcomes of all students. Another project strategy is to promote a participatory approach with active involvement of all stakeholders, in particular engagement of organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) to ensure their perspective is included and guides the decision making. The project established a Steering Committee (SC), who provides project leadership and facilitates joined decision making. An effective response requires close collaboration between government and organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) as well as other key stakeholders in the education sector. Sightsavers adopted a phased approach to programming:

(i) The participatory design phase (a 12-month development phase, including a series of consultations and workshops with key stakeholders from government and OPDs to analyse the situation of children with disabilities in education in Nigeria, identify key barriers and develop approaches to ensure successful participation of children with disabilities. This resulted in a project proposal for a locally driven initiative to promote cost-effective solutions to make mainstream schools more inclusive so they can address the specific needs of children with disabilities more effectively. This proposal received funding approval from Inclusive Futures/UK Aid.

(ii) The implementation phase (30 months, led and managed by a Steering Committee comprised of OPD partners, Government representatives and consortium partners Sightsavers/IDS).

Through the SMILE initiative, investments were made to further strengthen institutional capacity and sustain inclusive education. All staff of the NTI Academic Services Department were trained to facilitate the training for 100 primary school teachers and administrators. They will receive continuous professional development support until 2023 to create inclusive learning environments in their schools. Their experiences are intended to guide future inclusive education policy and practice in Nigeria.

As recommended by the UN CRPD principle 'nothing about us, without us', realising true inclusion in education requires structural, coordinated engagement from OPDs to facilitate joint decision making to ensure that the needs of learners with disabilities are effectively addressed. Following this recommendation, Sightsavers established a steering committee with 20 key

stakeholders from federal, state and local government and the OPD community to jointly develop and manage an innovative community-driven inclusive education project in Nigeria: the SMILE project. The Steering committee is led by one of the OPD partners and co-chaired by a government representative.

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

To ensure meaningful engagement of OPDs, Sightsavers developed a transparent process to identify OPD members for the project steering committee with guidance from IDA. Five OPDs were selected, and minimum partnership criteria (MPC) assessments were carried out. Other applicants were encouraged to engage in other ways recognizing that their participation can add value. It was important to recognise the perspective of many marginalised groups is not homogenous, with some groups not being represented e.g. learners who have deaf blindness and learners with intellectual disabilities. We recognised efforts to be made to include the most marginalised groups within the disability community in inclusive education dialogue and application processes to prevent further exclusion. The Steering Committee was established during the design phase and held responsibility for finalising and submitting the project proposal. OPD members volunteered to lead on selected project interventions and are an integral part of the project team. A key aspect of the project is that it is a locally driven initiative, led by government and OPDs with technical support and oversight of Sightsavers. Decisions are made by the Steering Committee comprising of 15 government officials from federal, state and local level and 5 OPD representatives, which ensures a good representation of different perspectives. It is a project for Nigerians by Nigerians, developed locally with decision making by all key stakeholders together. This has resulted in very strong ownership at all levels and we believe that this makes our initiative successful, illustrating how OPDs can be meaningfully engaged in the development and implementation of education plans and programmes.

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

A learning review was conducted to gather and distil learning from the participatory planning process, highlighting both the practical and technical aspects with reference to participation, inclusion and accessibility. Quantitative, qualitative and participatory methods were used consisting of a desk-review of relevant project documentation, consultations with key informants, surveys and written evaluative feedback. The review found that participants perceived the planning process to be inclusive and participatory. Stakeholders reported that they had been continuously engaged, that their suggestions had influenced the design and they had been afforded decision making powers on the project's design. Recommendations for conducting inclusive and participatory project planning and implementation processes include:

- Ensure the pre-conditions to inclusion are met (including accessibility of content, communications, and collaborative spaces as well as diversity and representation of different stakeholders),
- Establish mechanisms for desired levels of participation right from the start of each project and include them systematically in project planning and implementation plans,
- Undertake participatory stakeholder mapping and a power analysis to identify inclusive strategies and approaches,
- Build stakeholders' knowledge of the subject area before and during design and implementation work,
- At the start of a project, agree on appropriate methods to ensure meaningful, accessible, and inclusive consultations with partners to ensure their engagement at all stages of the project.
- Facilitate varied methods of engagement so no-one feels excluded.

11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a "best practice".

What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented "best practice" or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

Disability inclusion and inclusive education are often under-prioritised in development work. The SMILE project exemplifies how to do inclusive and participatory project planning in education and how to create an inclusive learning environment, where all children can participate equally. Implementing inclusive education requires systematic and coordinated involvement from OPDs. It is key to have community-driven, joint decision making to ensure that the needs of learners with disabilities are effectively addressed.