



ACERWC
African Committee of Experts on
the Rights and Welfare of the Child

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CONCEPT NOTE FOR A WEBINAR ON EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN AFRICA

**By the Working Group on Children with Disabilities and the Special Rapporteur
on Education of the ACERWC**

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Background

Education as a fundamental right is provided for all children under the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Charter). Article 11 of the Charter provides that every child shall have the right to education. This is a clear legal safeguard for the education of children with disabilities. Article 13 of the Charter further stipulates that children with disabilities have the right to special measures of protection to ensure the enjoyment of their rights and full participation in society. Moreover, the Charter the obligation of States to ensure that children with disabilities have access to training, preparation for employment, and recreational opportunities. The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (African Disability Protocol) under Article 17 provides that children with disabilities have the right to free, compulsory and quality primary and secondary education. It also obliges States to ensure that education institutions are equipped with teaching aids tailored to support the specific needs of students with disabilities. The Protocol also requires States to take policy, legislative and other measures to ensure that children with disabilities are provided education and recreational opportunities in an environment most conducive for achieving their individual development.

International instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the General Comment on Children with Disabilities by the Committee on the Rights of the Child as well as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the General Comment on the Rights to Inclusive Education by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with disabilities, among others, provide key protections of the rights of children with disabilities to education by underlining the specific measures that should be undertaken by States. In addition to these progressive legal protections, the right to education of children with disabilities forms part of the Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Aspiration 1 of Agenda 2063 envisages a prosperous African with inclusive development by achieving a social security and protection of persons with disabilities. Target 4.5 of the aims for the equal access to education of children with disabilities by building and upgrading education facilities to be disability sensitive.

Despite these legislative provisions for the education of children with disabilities in Africa, there are real time challenges that hinder the full realisation of the provisions under the Charter and other instruments and development goals. The challenge includes lack of data on children with disabilities and the type of impairments among children which are key factors for States to be able to design measures to reach to all children. According to

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UNESCO's data, globally there are only 21 Countries that have living standard surveys that collect data on disability¹ which showcases the lack of data. While there is no reliable data on children with disabilities, the Global estimate of children with disabilities under the age of 14 is 93 million and 4 out of 5 of them live in developing countries, the highest number being in Africa.² There is no comprehensive data on children with disabilities in Africa. UNICEF's data shows that there are around 29 million children with disabilities in eastern and southern Africa.³ According to estimates, about 40% of Africa's population consists of people with disabilities out of which 10-15 per cent are school-age children.⁴ However, school enrolment of children with disabilities is estimated between 5 and 10%.⁵ Disability has been a major factor for out of school children as an estimated one-third of all out-of-school children at the primary level have a disability.⁶

This high level of exclusion is a result of various factors. The discrimination and stigma at community and structural level result in exclusion of children with disabilities including in education. Children with disabilities are often not enrolled in schools by their caregivers due to stigma and lack of awareness. Moreover, most schools are not accessible for children with disabilities, specialized teachers are not trained adequately, and learning materials are not accessible. Moreover, special schools are not available in all regions, especially in rural areas. In addition, public transportation and facilities are not accessible to children with disabilities hindering their access to educational facilities. Such inaccessibility coupled with lack of adequate and responsive social security schemes leads to exclusion of children with disabilities from schools.

The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the regional treaty body established to monitor the implementation of the African Children's Charter has been engaging with States and other stakeholders to advocate for accessible and quality education for children

¹ UNESCO, Global Education Monitoring Report, https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2024/01/GAW2014-Facts-Figures-gmr_0.pdf.pdf p1

² As above, Pp 4.

³ UNICEF, Children with Disabilities in Eastern and Southern Africa: A statistical overview of their well-being, <https://data.unicef.org/resources/children-with-disabilities-in-eastern-and-southern-africa-a-statistical-overview-of-their-well-being/>

⁴ Agenda 2063, Framework Document, 2015, Pp 88 available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc-framework_document_book.pdf

⁵ As above

⁶ UNESCO, Global Education Monitoring Report, https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2024/01/GAW2014-Facts-Figures-gmr_0.pdf.pdf p4

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with disabilities. The Committee established a Working Group on Children with Disabilities which has developed Guidelines on Children with Disabilities, and a Continental Study on the Status of Children with Disabilities in Africa. The Continental Study outlines the challenges on access to education among others highlighting the very low access to education by children with disabilities as most facilities are private and only at primary level. The Committee also has established a Special Rapporteur on Education whose mandate includes education for children with disabilities. The two special mechanisms, noting the challenges in the education of children with disabilities, and the need to enhance advocacy work among States and all stakeholders, intend to hold a Webinar on Education for Children with Disabilities.

Objectives

The objectives of the Webinar include:

- Promoting the international and regional instruments on children with disabilities and the right to education focusing on the added values under the Charter and the African Disability Protocol
- Documenting the progress achieved in providing education for children with disabilities and best practices by States and other stakeholders
- Identifying the legislative, administrative, institutional, and budgetary challenges faced in realizing the right to education for children with disabilities
- Identifying the modalities of effective inclusion of children with disabilities in education
- Outline actions and measures to be undertaken to ensure the right to education of children with disabilities from enrollment to completion of higher education in line with the international and regional standards

Scope and Methodology

The Webinar will bring together various actors to deliberate on the matter and propose recommendations. It intends to feature a State Party to share best practice, and a child representative to share experience. The event will take place virtually as a webinar where it will be open to anyone interested to participate. Invitations will be sent Member States as well as NRHIs and CSOs working with the Committee. Media and private sector will also be encouraged to participate.

The discussions will provide insight on understanding education for children with disabilities in its comprehensive form, i.e. from early childhood education to higher

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education. The Webinar aims to assess the education system and how responsive it is for the various disabilities that children are living with in Africa. In this regard, discussions on types of disabilities that should be taken into account by education strategies will be considered. The Webinar will also underline how the standards on education such as free and compulsory education can be implemented for children with disabilities. It will identify the special measures that should be adopted for the realization of children with disabilities. The deliberations will promote responsive actions that are tailored for all types of disabilities. The meaning and scope of inclusive education will be discussed and the progressive approaches towards inclusive education will be promoted to ensure that it accommodates all children with disabilities in a manner conducive for their learning experience.

Date and Time

The webinar is tentatively scheduled to take place on 03 September 2025.

Program for the Webinar on Education for Children with Disabilities: 03 September 2025

Time (SAT)	Activity
11:00-11:15	Opening Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working Group on Children with Disabilities - Special Rapporteur on Education
11:15-11:20	Introduction to the Webinar – Objectives & Key Topics
11:20-12:00	Overview of instruments and policies on inclusive education in Africa
12:00-12:20	Models & Good Practices for Inclusive Learning: Success Stories: Inclusive Schools & Programs That Work
12:20-12:40	Experience Sharing on education for Children with Disabilities by a Child Representative



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12:40-13:00	Assistive and adaptive technologies and education for children with disabilities
13:00-13:20	Question and Answer Session
13:20-13:30	Closing