LASER PULSE

Long-Term Assistance and SErvices for Research (LASER) Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine (PULSE)

Multi-Country Study on Inclusive Education: Evaluation Guide on Measuring Disability-Inclusive Education

About LASER PULSE

Long-Term Assistance and Services for Research Partners for University-Led Solutions (LASER PULSE) is a $70 million program funded through USAID's ITR Hub that delivers research-driven solutions to field-sourced development challenges in USAID partner countries.

A consortium led by Purdue Applied Research Institute, LLC (PARI) with core partners Purdue University, Catholic Relief Services, Indiana University, Makerere University, and the University of Notre Dame, implements the LASER PULSE program through a growing network of 3,700+ researchers and development practitioners in 86 countries.

LASER PULSE collaborates with USAID missions, bureaus, independent offices, and other local stakeholders to identify research needs for critical development challenges and funds and strengthens the capacity of researcher-practitioner teams to co-design solutions that translate into policy and practice.

About the Project

This guide presents information and recommendations about how to collect, monitor, and evaluate data on learners with disabilities based on the lessons learned from the Multi-Country Study on Inclusive Education (MCSIE) for learners with disabilities in Cambodia, Malawi, and Nepal. The findings in this guide will help the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and its partners inform existing and future disability-inclusive programming across the learning and education continuum globally.

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MCSIE has been executed by Inclusive Development Partners (IDP), the lead institution, in partnership with Kathmandu University (KU), the Cambodian Disabled Persons Organization (CDPO), and Invest in Knowledge (IKI) through sub-contracts with PARI.

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Acronyms

ADS	Automated Directive Systems
CFM	Child Functioning Module
CFM-TV	Child Functioning Module-Teacher Version
CLA	Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DPI	Disabled People's International
EDU	Center for Education
EGMA	Early Grade Mathematics Assessment
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EMIS	Education Management Information System
HELO	Higher Education Learning Outcome
IDA	International Disability Alliance
IDP	Inclusive Development Partners
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
IPI	Bureau for Inclusive Growth, Partnerships, and Innovation
IR	Intermediate Result
ITR	Innovation, Technology, and Research
LASER PULSE	Long-Term Assistance and SErvices for Research Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine
LMA	Labor Market Assessment
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCSIE	Multi-Country Study on Inclusive Education
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MICS	Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey
NCEO	National Center on Education Outcomes
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
OPD	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
PARI	Purdue Applied Research Institute
RELM	Receptive and Expressive Language Module
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound
UDA	Universal Design for Assessment
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USG	U.S. Government
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
YWFD	Youth Workforce Development

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1. Background

In the decades since the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) first issued its Disability Policy Paper in 1997, USAID and its many implementing partners have become increasingly committed to including persons with disabilities in project activities worldwide. Global policies and commitments, such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), have sharpened attention to disability inclusion in development efforts. However, as with any evolving practice, gaps remain in disability-inclusive practice and monitoring.

One of these gaps is generating evidence and using data to monitor and evaluate disability-inclusive education programming effectively. While prevalence data can capture the number of learners with disabilities enrolled in the education system,[1] this data alone is not enough. Projects must use a variety of data to understand whether their interventions are improving the experiences and outcomes of learners with disabilities across the education continuum. Measuring disability-inclusive education programming is still an emerging field of practice, and there remains much to learn about effective approaches to implementation and measurement.

1.1   Purpose and Audience

1.1.1   Purpose

The Evaluation Guide on Measuring Disability-Inclusive Education aims to assist USAID staff and implementing partners in generating evidence and using data to measure disability inclusion in programming across the education continuum that will ultimately support improved learning outcomes. This guide is recommended to be used in conjunction with USAID's (2018a) *How-To Note: Collecting Data on Disability in Education Programs*.[2] As stated in the U.S. Government (USG) Strategy on International Basic Education 2024–2029, the USG is committed to ensuring all learners acquire the skills that are critical to future success—from early childhood to primary, secondary, youth workforce development (YWFD), and vocational training—in both formal and non-formal settings (USAID, 2024a). It is important to ensure that disability inclusion is considered throughout the education continuum, especially regarding access to quality educational opportunities and the utility of these opportunities to support a successful transition to meaningful adult outcomes such as employment and community participation.

This document aims to provide a concise but thorough explanation of measuring disability inclusion within education programming, using example indicators from across the education continuum. It supplements existing USAID monitoring and evaluation (M&E) resources available through the general agency website and Education Links. The development of this document was steered by existing USAID and M&E resources and consulting with USAID staff and M&E experts; a complete list of document resources used to inform this guidance is available in Annex F and references. Furthermore, this

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[1] It is important to note that many learners with disabilities are out of school and do not have access to education. Focused project activities can support the enrollment and retention of learners with disabilities.

[2] An update of USAID's *How-To Note: Collecting Data on Disability in Education Programs* is anticipated to be released in December 2024. The hyperlink in the title will take you to the current publicly available document.

document uses the term "learning space" to encompass both formal and non-formal spaces where learning and training take place and the term "educator" to encompass any person who teaches or supports teaching in learning spaces to be more inclusive of the diverse instructors and administrators represented globally in the education sector.

1.1.2 Audience

This document is for monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) staff at USAID missions and implementing partner organizations. For brevity and given the assumed expertise of MEL staff, this guide does not cover foundational M&E content. The annexes include expanded content for readers who require more detailed information. Gender equity and social inclusion specialists, project managers, and country-level data collection managers may also find this guide applicable.

1.2 How to Use the Guide

This guide can support education projects in prioritizing disability inclusion throughout the USAID Program Cycle for operationalizing development programming. However, this guidance is most beneficial during the country/regional strategic planning and project design stages of new solicitations, proposal development, and initial activity design and work planning for implementation. High-quality MEL-related work requires advance planning and careful budgeting in all cases, especially when incorporating elements not previously considered or explicitly emphasized that can be easily overlooked, such as disability inclusion within education programming.

1.3 Conceptual Framework

USAID's forthcoming updated disability policy provides a conceptual framework of disability inclusion within USAID's work. In this policy, which references Preambular paragraph (e) of the CRPD, disability is framed as "an evolving concept…resulting from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others." As illustrated by Exhibit 1, the *social model* of disability embodied by the CRPD "identifies barriers in society as the problem, not persons with disabilities" (USAID, 2020, p. 7). Anticipating and addressing barriers that learners with disabilities encounter when seeking to access education is key to ensuring that development interventions align with the social model of disability and that interventions support the international human rights legal obligations undertaken by those countries where USAID works, particularly those that are parties to the CRPD. Aligning interventions with the social model of disability allows MEL staff to evaluate disability-inclusive education based on the environment and "can help partner countries make data-informed decisions about education investments" (USAID, 2024b).

Exhibit 1. Models of Disability
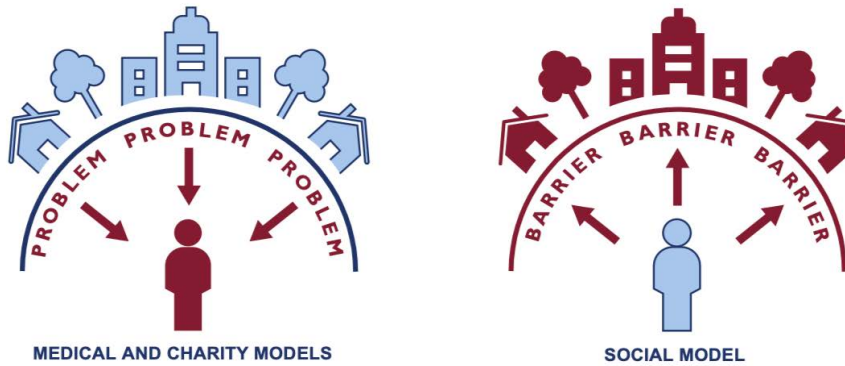
Source: USAID Education Disability Measurement Toolkit, 2024b

The Twin-Track Approach

Disability-inclusive MEL requires that MEL teams consider 1) how learners with disabilities access and actively participate in and successfully achieve the outcomes of planned education projects and 2) the additional focused interventions necessary to ensure that the specific learning needs of learners with disabilities are met. Using both approaches is called the twin-track approach to inclusion. Exhibit 2 highlights the two approaches that can be used in program design and measurement. MEL staff will require specific knowledge and competencies or will need to work closely with technical experts in disability-inclusive education to ensure the appropriate M&E of interventions for either approach.

Exhibit 2. The Twin-Track Approach to Disability-Inclusive Education Programming
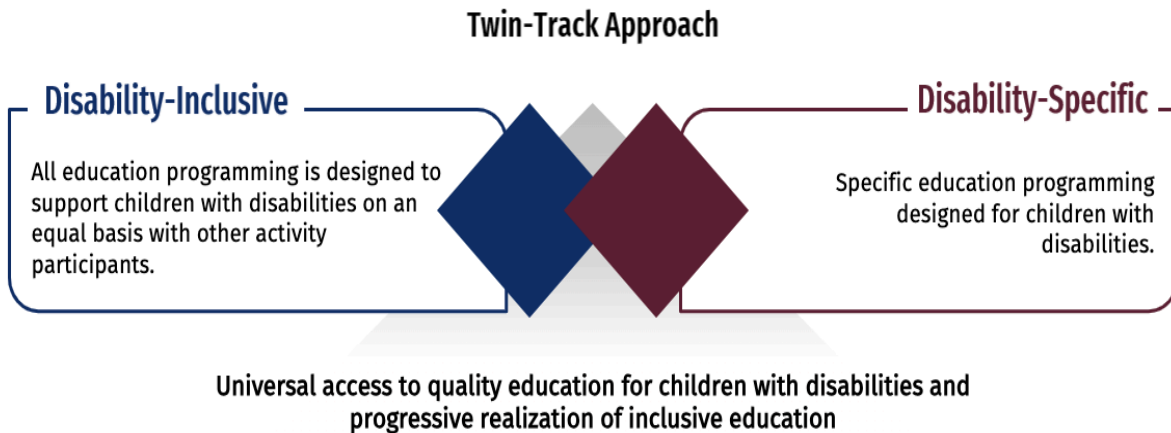
Source: Review of Disability-Inclusive Education in USAID Asia Education Programming, USAID, 2022b

2. Monitoring and Evaluation of Disability-Inclusive Education

2.1   Measuring Disability-Inclusive Education Programming

MEL for disability-inclusive education programming goes beyond simply including learners with disabilities in data collection. It requires a shift in mindset, recognizing the need to weave accessibility and inclusivity into every aspect of the MEL process. This requires using appropriate data collection tools and methodologies, ensuring the accessibility of information and communication, and analyzing data with a lens of disability awareness.

When planning to monitor and evaluate the inclusion of learners with disabilities, project teams should carefully develop MEL systems and plans so that the resulting data can be used to develop actionable steps for improving accessibility, participation, and learning. This requires critically analyzing MEL plans and asking, "Will this MEL plan provide data indicating our progress toward achieving our goal of including learners with disabilities?"

A good MEL plan for disability-inclusive education programming will describe how to measure the intended disability-inclusive outcomes and will help pave the way for achieving those outcomes . To this end, the MEL plan should:

✔ **Reflect stakeholder needs**: Develop and adapt activities and programs in collaboration with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs)[3] and those learners with disabilities whom the project may impact to ensure the activities' relevance and effectiveness.

✔ **Track progress**: Help assess whether project activities effectively steer the process toward the planned goals of improving disability-inclusive education.

✔ **Reflect a clear theory of change**: Identify specific disability-inclusive education intervention(s), include learning questions that address evidence gaps, define how those questions will be addressed, integrate learning into decision-making, and have a plan to influence the broader education ecosystem.

✔ **Measure accessibility**: Evaluate how accessible project activities are for people with disabilities.

✔ **Measure attitudinal change**: Evaluate attitudinal changes and shifts in perspective about disability inclusion among education system actors, such as governmental officials, education administrators, educators, peers, and parents.

✔ **Consider formal and informal settings**: Education and YWFD occur in both formal and informal settings. This should be reflected as a MEL plan is developed to ensure that all progress is captured effectively.

✔ **Measure disability-inclusive outcomes**: Evaluate education project outcomes for disability inclusion through specific indicators or disability disaggregation for broader outcome indicators. This includes educational outcomes and outcomes that bridge to the workforce and meaningful social participation.

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[3] The Disability Rights Fund (2022) defines OPDs as organizations with representational groups of persons with disabilities and/or relatives of persons with disabilities who have expertise on disability and can support efforts to achieve the inclusion of persons with disabilities within all aspects of society.

While no formal or set list of outcomes is tied to supporting disability-inclusive education, Exhibit 3 provides a list for measuring disability-inclusive outcome areas that project teams can review and consider for relevance to their project scope. This can be done by collecting a variety of quantitative and qualitative data through a project's M&E efforts, such as disability prevalence data, observational data, checklists that measure accessibility and inclusion, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, surveys, and more.

Exhibit 3. Outcome Areas for Disability-Inclusive Education Programming

Outcomes for disability inclusion in education projects

1. Enrollment, retention, and progression
2. Inclusive physical environment
3. Inclusive learning environment
4. Learning outcomes
5. Social inclusion
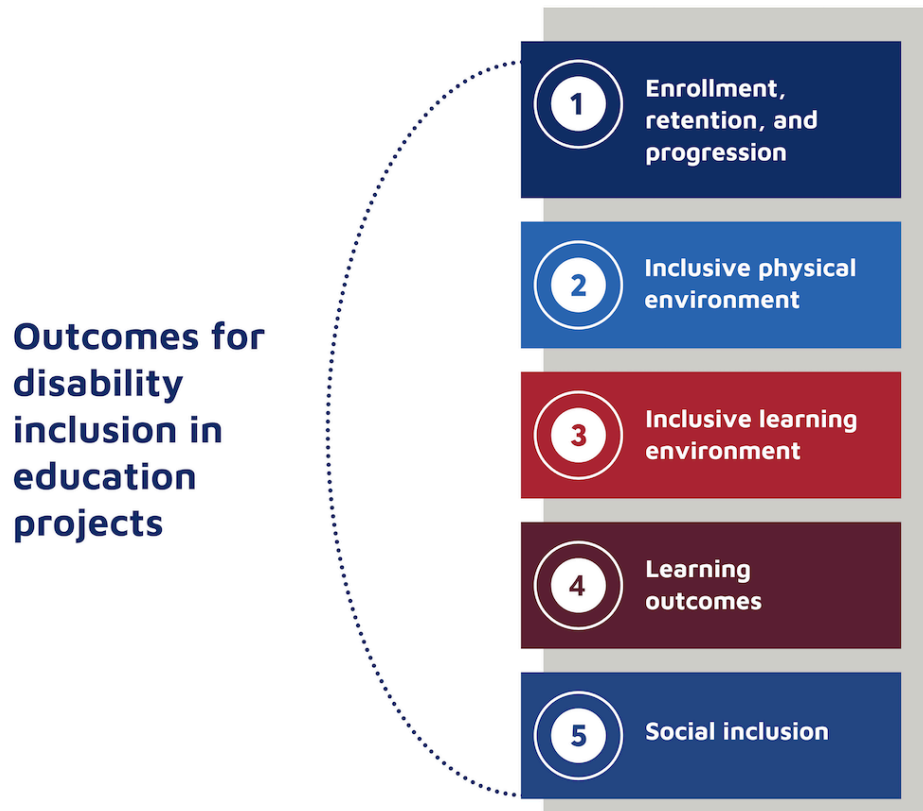
Author: Inclusive Development Partners, 2024

Project teams should not wait until implementation begins to determine the outcomes to measure or to develop disability-inclusive MEL systems. As MEL is a cross-cutting element in the overall project, it is essential to proactively embed approaches to strengthen disability inclusion throughout the different phases of the education project, from planning and start-up to implementation and project closure. Given the need to allocate funding for MEL activities in the budget, planning is also critical during the start-up phase when teams typically develop detailed M&E plans and work plans. The following section presents specific approaches to help MEL teams measure progress toward the outcomes listed in the Outcome Areas for Disability-Inclusive Education (see Exhibit 3, hereafter referred to as "the Outcome Areas") through embedding disability-inclusive actions within programming. These actions can include:

- Engaging advisors and partners with expertise in disability measurement.
- Assessing the disability landscape to determine what data does and does not already exist.
- Formulating project goals, indicators, and data collection tools with considerations of disability-inclusive education.
- Planning for disability-inclusive education within the project's collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA) approach.
- Budgeting for inclusion.

2.2   Engage Advisors and Partners with Expertise in Disability Measurement

Because disability inclusion is an emerging practice in many contexts, MEL professionals and teams may have limited experience considering, planning for, and measuring disability-inclusive education. Forming a disability inclusion advisory group can provide valuable insights for a project overall. In the context of MEL, such a group can support teams in developing MEL plans and advising on disability-inclusive measurement practice. This can include helping to ensure representation and inclusiveness when selecting project partners for evaluation.

When selecting project partners for evaluation activities related to disability-inclusive education, consider the following:

- Disability-inclusive education will be most effective if members of the local disability community and their representative OPDs are recognized as key actors in every stage of the project cycle (USAID, 2018a). While evaluation firms may have limited direct experience working with disability populations, collaborating with and learning from OPDs and individuals with disabilities, particularly those with research experience, will significantly enhance evaluators' ability to develop contextually appropriate and accessible tools and interpret and validate data.
- OPDs and other non-governmental organizations—as well as governmental agencies—have a crucial role in the educational continuum's transitional phases, especially as youth with disabilities transition from basic education to post-secondary higher education, YWFD, and the labor market. It is important to partner with stakeholders like OPDs as MEL plans are developed and during data collection and analysis.
- Evaluation partners should demonstrate a commitment to disability-inclusive education and/or be willing to engage with the advisory group for guidance.

OPDs should be adequately compensated for their time and expertise. Historically, people with disabilities have been unpaid or underpaid for their contributions as technical experts, which can lead to a dynamic of power imbalance, tokenism, or exploitation. These dynamics can leave individuals and organizations with a sense that their contributions are not truly valued or robustly integrated into project activities. Any engagement of individuals with disabilities or OPDs for technical guidance should be compensated, just as projects would do for any technical consultant, resource, or partner organization. If OPDs are invited to be part of a broader advisory group or steering committee that includes members of government, per diem and any necessary travel should be covered; as non-governmental members, an additional consulting fee is appropriate. Compensation for reasonable accommodations, including assistants (e.g., sighted guides or interpreters), should also be factored into budgeting.

2.3   Assess the Landscape of Disability within the Country's Context

Taking intentional steps to understand the local context with regard to disability will provide a critical foundation for planning MEL for disability-inclusive education. It is essential to know the current context of disability inclusion within a given education system and where and to what extent there is and is not alignment with the Outcome Areas in Exhibit 3. Assessing the landscape through this lens can also help identify what data related to disability-inclusive education currently exists and anticipate and plan for what data the project may need to collect. A landscape assessment or sector analysis can also help identify local actors (such as OPD members or employers) who can support disability-specific MEL activities, including tool development and data collection.

In addition to assessing the current status of a given context to measure progress toward the disability-inclusive outcomes listed in the Outcome Areas, other data collection could include 1) existing disability prevalence data (e.g., what is included and how was this data collected?), 2) disability data within the education system and data used by other donors (e.g., how was the education system data collected?), and 3) engagement of the disability community within the country/region in issues relating to education and job training. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)/United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)–International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) (2021) *Education Sector Analysis Methodological Guidelines Volume III* includes comprehensive guidance on conducting a sector analysis of inclusive education for children with disabilities (see Chapter 11). In 2024, UNICEF and the Washington Group released the *Module on Inclusive Education–Questionnaires*,[4] which assesses school participation for all learners. The Module on Inclusive Education was designed to evaluate the experiences of learners with disabilities; however, the questions apply to all learners. The tool is meant to be used in conjunction with the UNICEF Washington Group Child Functioning Module (CFM) to best assess the inclusion of disability. USAID (2023d) also offers broader guidance for assessing education systems in the publication *Mapping of Systems Diagnostic and Assessment Tools and Approaches*. Additionally, a checklist for consulting with OPDs is available in Annex B.

When considering disability-inclusive education outcomes across the education continuum, landscape reviews should also include labor market assessments to better understand YWFD and higher education indicators and outcomes. The USAID (2018b) *Workforce Connections* labor market assessment criteria include an analysis of economic contexts; the demand for skills; and the supply of skills, systems/stakeholders, policy, and alignment. This is explained further in Annex D.

2.4   Formulate Project Goals and Intended Outcomes with Considerations for Disability Inclusion

The purpose of prioritizing disability inclusion within education programs is to support equitable outcomes for learners with disabilities aligned with the Outcome Areas (Exhibit 3). The MEL team's work will be critical to the successful achievement of these outcomes.

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[4] The UNICEF Module on Inclusive Education was released to the public in June 2024 after being piloted; however, it has not been tested in all countries or undergone large-scale rollout at the time of this publication. MEL staff should pilot the tool in their specific context to ensure compatibility prior to full-scale rollout within programming.

Education programs develop MEL plans to align with the project's logic model or theory of change. Incorporating disability inclusion explicitly into these frameworks will make it easier to evaluate whether planned inputs and activities adequately address disability inclusion and to identify opportunities for measuring the inclusivity of both outcomes and impacts. Exhibit 4 provides an example of how to reflect disability inclusion within the logic models.

Exhibit 4. Considerations for Developing Disability-Inclusive Logic Models

Considerations for Developing Disability-Inclusive Logic Models

1 Inputs	2 Activities	3 Outputs	4 Outcomes	5 Impacts
What financial, human, and material resources are needed to support learners with disabilities within your project? What knowledge and technical capacity do your staff and partners have that can help support learners with disabilities?	Are all activities designed to be inclusive of learners with disabilities? Are additional activities needed to ensure inclusion of learners with certain types of disabilities? How are persons or organizations of persons with disabilities supporting interventions?	What are the expected direct results of disability-inclusion activities (inclusive curriculum developed, number of teachers trained, accessibility improved, new employment, etc.)?	What short- to mid-term changes do you expect for learners with disabilities based on your interventions? How will learners will disabilities benefit from participation in your interventions?	What long-term changes do you expect for learners with disabilities based on your interventions? Are resources available to help sustain your interventions to support learners with disabilities?

Author: Inclusive Development Partners, 2024

Several USAID standard indicators require implementers to disaggregate data on disability status and inclusive education (USAID, 2023c). When a USAID standard indicator does not capture an output or an outcome related to the Outcome Areas relevant to a project's theory of change, the activity may develop a custom indicator or use one of USAID's supplemental education indicators. For example, a custom indicator might include the number of employers who have successfully integrated individuals with disabilities. If a project's design includes disability-specific goals and outcomes for inclusion, as stated by USAID and/or the implementer, the MEL team is responsible for identifying and planning to measure progress and ensure disability inclusion in a project's CLA practices. This will allow the project to assess its influence on disability inclusion and adapt programming as needed based on learning from the data.

Exhibit 5. An Example of a Disability-Inclusive Project Goal and Indicator: Basic Education

Intermediate Result (IR): To increase the number of learners participating in extracurricular activities by 30% by the end of the project.
Sub-IR: To increase the number of learners with disabilities who participate in extracurricular activities by 30% by the end of the project.
Standard indicator: ES. 1-3: Number of learners in primary schools and/or equivalent non-school-based settings reached with USG education assistance.   ● *ES. 1-3g: Number of learners with disabilities*
Measurement tool: A survey for all staff within the learning space to assess participation in extracurricular activities.[5] The staff will disaggregate data based on gender and disability,[6] according to learning space records.

Exhibit 6. An Example of a Disability-Inclusive Project Goal and Indicator: YWFD

IR: To increase the number of youths completing YWFD activities by 30% by the end of the project.
Sub-IR: To increase the number of learners with disabilities who complete YWFD activities by 30% by the end of the project.
Standard indicator: EG. 6-3: Number of individuals who complete USG-assisted workforce development programs.   ● *EG. 6-3i: With a disability*
Measurement tool: Implementing partner enrollment and retention records and training participant records. The staff will disaggregate data based on gender and disability, according to records.

Exhibit 7. An Example of a Disability-Inclusive Project Goal and Indicator: Higher Education

IR: To increase the number of individuals from underrepresented populations participating in higher education degrees or courses from regional or in-country higher education institutions.
Sub-IR: To increase the number of learners with disabilities who are able to participate in regional or in-country higher education opportunities because of USG scholarship or financial assistance by 15%.
Standard indicator: ES. 2-2: Number of individuals attending higher education institutions with USG scholarship or financial assistance.
Measurement tool: Official reports and records of enrollment, as well as scholarship or financial assistance records from implementing partner(s) and official higher education institutions. Disaggregated by: ● *ES. 2-2e: Number of learners with a disability*

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[5] Extracurricular activities include weekly after-school clubs focusing on arts, sports, and academic enrichment in different subjects (math, natural sciences, social sciences, or humanities). Learners select the activity they will attend on a voluntary basis throughout the semester.

[6] The term "disability" is defined in section 2.

Disability Prevalence

Understanding disability prevalence (the proportion or percentage of learners with disabilities within a population) is crucial for developing policies, allocating resources, and providing appropriate support and accommodations for learners with disabilities. Prevalence data on disability is also important for determining sample sizes for various data collection activities (see Annex E for more on disability-inclusive sampling considerations). By using surveys, census data, or other research methods, projects can use validated tools or existing data to estimate prevalence within their intervention group and disaggregate project data. Ethical principles must be considered when utilizing disability prevalence data in education programming to ensure a "do-no-harm" approach and unintentional exclusion. Quantifying incidence of disability within a given population is not dependent on diagnostic screening at the learning space. Screening and identification should only be done by qualified professionals and with validated tools. The Washington Group on Disability Statistics has developed several validated tools to support measuring and analyzing disability data. Common census tools for children include the Child Functioning Module (CFM) as part of UNICEF's Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS) administered to the mother or primary care provider or the Child Functioning Module Teacher Version (CFM-TV) (Washington Group on Disability Statistics, 2019; UNICEF, 2020).[7] See section 2.6 of this document for guidance on cost considerations related to screening and USAID's (2018a) _How-To Note: Collecting Data on Disability in Education Programs_ for additional resources and information.

2.4.1   Measuring Outcome Areas for Disability-Inclusive Education Programming

An inclusive learning environment will prioritize the engagement and participation of all learners. Activity design and local policies and practices will influence the enabling factors supporting disability inclusion within education programming. Understanding these enabling factors can support MEL staff in identifying the best approach to measure interventions. The sections below provide a purpose and explanation of why measuring the outcome area matters. Each section is based on the Outcome Areas for Disability-Inclusive Education Programming graphic in Exhibit 3 and has illustrative examples of common project activities and data sources MEL staff can use to measure disability-inclusive education.

1. **Enrollment, retention, and progression**
   o **Purpose:** To assess the extent to which a project has successfully enrolled and retained learners with disabilities, their progression to higher levels of education, and, if possible, post-education outcomes. Measuring enrollment, retention, and progression is critical to understanding the removal of barriers and the effectiveness of interventions to support learners with disabilities.
   o **Example activities to measure in disability-inclusive education programming:**
      ▪ Awareness-raising campaigns with caregivers, employers, and community actors on disability inclusion within learning spaces.

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[7] See School-to-School International (STS) for All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development's (2023) _Final Study Report on the Validity of the Child Functioning Module-Teacher Version_ to review the final study on the validity of this tool in Nepal.

- Mapping of referral networks, supports, services, and strategies available to support the participation of learners with disabilities in education, training, and the workforce. Mapping activities should be completed with the support of OPDs.
    - o **Examples of data sources:**
        - Disability prevalence data[8] to track the enrollment, retention, and grade-level progression of learners with disabilities in education and workforce development programming. See USAID's (2018a) guidance in the *How-To Note: Collecting Data on Disability in Education* for additional information.
        - Education Information Management System (EMIS) data on learners with disabilities.

2. **Inclusiveness of the physical environment**
    - o **Purpose:** To conduct a comprehensive assessment of the physical environment to identify barriers and improvements needed to improve physical access. Measuring the inclusiveness of the physical environment supports the development of strategies and interventions that will create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all learners, faculty, teachers, and staff, regardless of their disability status.
    - o **Example activities to measure in disability-inclusive education programming:**
        - Site visits to learning and work spaces or training and workshop event spaces to ensure sites are accessible and inclusive for learners with disabilities.
        - Completion of program and site visit checklists to assess infrastructure accessibility of learning spaces[9] (e.g., ramps; hallways; lighting; signage; water, sanitation, and hygiene [WASH] facilities; etc.).
        - Provision of assistive devices for learners with disabilities.
    - o **Example of data sources:**
        - Accessibility checklists (standalone or within broader learning spaces and classroom inventory tools or work placement evaluations)[10] for pre-planning project events and during monitoring visits to learning spaces, including work sites. See UNICEF's (2016) *Making Schools Accessible to Children with Disabilities* for further guidance on school accessibility checklists.

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[8] Ethical principles must be considered when utilizing disability prevalence data in education programming to ensure a "do-no-harm" approach and unintentional exclusion. Quantifying the incidence of disability within a given population is not dependent on diagnostic screening and identification, which should only be done by qualified professionals and with validated tools.

[9] Any school construction or infrastructure upgrades must comply with the *USAID Policy on Standards for Accessibility for the Disabled in USAID-Financed Construction*, which promotes the universal design of buildings that are accessible and usable by everyone, including people with disabilities.

[10] See UNICEF's (2016) *Making Schools Accessible to Children with Disabilities* at for an example of a school accessibility checklist.

3. **Inclusiveness of the learning environment**
    o   **Purpose:** To assess enabling factors of the learning environment, including instructional practices, teaching and learning materials, social environments, and actor collaboration. Measuring the inclusiveness of the learning environment aims to identify non-physical aspects of learning spaces that support learner needs and the development of strategies and interventions that will create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all learners, faculty, teachers, and staff regardless of their abilities or disabilities.
    o   **Example activities to measure in disability-inclusive education programming:**
        ▪   Developing and implementing inclusive curriculum, learning activities, and educator training materials, including Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and disability-inclusive pedagogies.
        ▪   Coaching and mentoring activities between general educators and special educators within or across learning spaces.
        ▪   The accessibility and inclusivity of developed or existing teaching and learning materials (e.g., in which forms they are provided and how inclusive the content is).
    o   **Example of data sources:**
        ▪   Data from quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method tools, such as observation and monitoring tools or interviews within formal and informal learning spaces, to assess instructional practices, experiences, and individual learner plans (e.g., individual education plans, transition plans, or career plans).
        ▪   USAID's (2023c) checklist on accessibility of materials from the *Guidance for Promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Educational Materials*.
        ▪   Assessment tools—including landscape assessments; knowledge, attitude, and practice surveys; and social network analyses—to measure existing perspectives and changes over time, practices, connections, needs, barriers, and opportunities.

4. **Learning outcomes**
    o   **Purpose:** To assess what learners with disabilities know, have learned—such as foundational skills, employability skills, technical or vocational skills, etc.—or can apply as a result of receiving project support. Measuring learning outcomes helps assess knowledge and skill gains critical to a learner's long-term success and informs future investments that will strengthen systems, local capacity, and the sustainability of efforts.
    o   **Example activities to measure in disability-inclusive education programming:**
        ▪   Formative and summative assessments across subjects, including literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy, use Universal Design for Assessment (UDA)[11] principles or are designed in alternative formats, including large print, braille, or sign language.

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[11] UDA principles aim to maximize the number of learners who can express what they know through the same assessment instrument by removing unnecessary barriers. UDA considers details related to the presentation of assessment content, the timing, the physical space, and learner comfort, among other factors.

- Self-reflection activities on foundational skills, soft skills, and technical/vocational training skills completed by project actors on learner progress.
- Learner observations, content-relevant assessments, or scenario-based assessment activities to evaluate skill gain and progression.

- **Examples of data sources:**
  - Data from assessment tools designed with UDA principles, Early Grade Reading and Mathematics Assessments (EGRAs and EGMAs), or the Receptive and Expressive Language Module (RELM) disaggregated by disability status.
  - Data from assessment tools designed especially for learners with sensory disabilities, such as those who are blind or deaf (and need braille or sign language assessments).
  - Formative assessments used by educators in the learning space at regular intervals to gauge learning progress and whether learning supports are meeting learner needs, especially for those with disabilities.
  - Disability-disaggregated data from scenario-based tools, skill-based assessments, on-the-job training evaluations, and/or certification assessments to measure employability and technical/vocational skill gains.

5. **Social inclusion**
   - **Purpose:** To assess how a project supports greater social inclusion of learners with disabilities within and outside the learning environment. It measures how well learners with disabilities are integrated into educational, vocational, and community activities alongside their peers without disabilities. Measuring social inclusion is important in understanding a learner's broader network and environment, ultimately influencing their long-term success and inclusion within their communities.
   - **Example activities to measure in disability-inclusive education programming:**
     - The accessibility and inclusivity of extracurricular activities, such as community events, after-school programs, sports, social clubs, and mentorship, supported through the program during or outside of the learning space.
     - Experiential learning opportunities (job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships, etc.) driven by individual preferences and needs.
     - Sensitization and awareness raising within community engagement activities with community learners, employers, or groups such as parent-teacher associations and school management committees.
   - **Data sources and collection process:**
     - Data from quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method tools such as surveys, observations, interviews, or focus group discussions with a wide range of actors, including learners with disabilities, caregivers, employers, and educators, to understand perceptions of disability-inclusive education.

2.4.2   Process of Developing Disability-Specific M&E Measures for Education Activities

Now that we know what to measure and how to measure it, it is important to ensure consistency and accountability for strengthening disability-inclusive education efforts across the project. Planning for disability-inclusive measurement typically includes selecting or developing M&E indicators (standard or custom) and should follow the approach outlined in the proceeding paragraphs and subsections.

The project team should **identify disability-specific priorities** concurrently as the program goals and objectives are defined and comply with the principles of SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) design. Projects can achieve this by collaborating with learners or youth with disabilities, disability advocates, and representatives from local communities to identify the key priorities and challenges related to disability-inclusive education.

When selecting indicators for measuring project outputs and outcomes, USAID and implementers should include disability-inclusive indicators that are relevant and useful to the project. The following table presents USAID's standard and supplemental education and YWFD indicators relevant to disability-inclusive programming across the education continuum. The table presents standard disaggregates and provides potential additional disaggregates related to the existing indicators when standard disaggregates do not exist. The standard and supplemental indicators are listed in alignment with the most relevant Outcome Areas (Exhibit 3), but some indicators are cross-cutting.

Exhibit 8. USAID Indicators Relevant to Measuring Disability-Inclusive Education Programming

Standard and Supplemental USAID Indicators
① Enrollment, retention, and progression
ES. 1-3: Number of learners in primary schools or equivalent non-school-based settings reached with USG education assistance   • *ES. 1-3g: Number of learners with disabilities*
ES.1-4: Number of learners in secondary schools or equivalent non-school-based settings reached with USG education assistance   • *ES. 1-4l: Number of learners with disabilities*
ES. 1-6: Number of educators who complete professional development activities with USG assistance   This indicator does not have a standard disaggregation criterion for disability prevalence, but consider adding the following additional disaggregate: • *Number of educators with disabilities*
ES. 1-12: Number of education administrators and officials who complete professional development activities with USG assistance   This indicator does not have a standard disaggregation criterion for disability prevalence, but consider adding the following additional disaggregate: • *Number of education administrators and officials with disabilities*

Standard and Supplemental USAID Indicators
ES. 1-46: Percentage of individuals who transition to further education or training following participation in USG-assisted programs   ● *ES. 1-46w: Percentage with a disability*
ES. 1-53: Number of learners in pre-primary schools or equivalent non-school-based settings reached with USG education assistance   ● *ES. 1-53f: Number of learners with disabilities*
ES. 1-56 Number of learners with improved access to education through USG-assisted programs   ● *ES. 1-56j: Number of learners with disabilities*

ES 1-59: Education system strengthened through USG-assisted policy reform
 	
This indicator does not have a standard disaggregation criterion related to strengthening disability inclusion within education systems, but consider adding the following additional disaggregates:
    ● *Number of national disability-specific education standards, curriculum, instructional delivery, finance, assessments, or policies and sector plans supported*
    ● *Number of subnational disability-specific education standards, curriculum, instructional delivery, finance, assessments, or policies and sector plans supported*
    ● *Number of national disability-inclusive education standards, curriculum, instructional delivery, finance, assessments, or policies and sector plans supported*
    ● *Number of subnational disability-inclusive education standards, curriculum, instructional delivery, finance, assessments, or policies and sector plans supported*

ES. 2-2: Number of individuals attending higher education institutions with USG scholarship or financial assistance   ● *ES. 2-2e: Number of learners with a disability*
ES. 2-52: Number of individuals affiliated with higher education institutions receiving capacity development support with USG assistance   ● *ES. 2-52s: Number of individuals with a disability*
ES. 2-55: Number of learners reached by USG-assisted higher education interventions   ● *ES. 2-55h: Number of learners with a disability*
Supp-16: Education data systems strengthened through USG assistance This indicator does not have a standard disaggregation related to disability, but consider the following additional disaggregates across all school levels: ● *Number of education data systems strengthened to include or enhance data on learners with disabilities*
EG. 6-3: Number of individuals who complete USG-assisted workforce development programs   ● *EG. 6-3i: With a disability*
② **Inclusive physical environment**
ES. 1-14: Number of classrooms built or repaired with USG assistance This indicator does not have a standard disaggregation criterion for disability inclusion, but consider the following additional disaggregate: ● *Number of classroom environments built or repaired for physical accessibility to support learners with disabilities, including improved WASH facilities, ramps, seating, etc.*

Standard and Supplemental USAID Indicators
ES. 1.51: Number of learning environments supported by USG assistance that have improved safety, according to locally defined criteria This indicator does not have a standard disaggregation criterion for disability inclusion, but consider the following additional disaggregate: ● *The number of learning environments that have improved safety for learners with disabilities, including improved WASH facilities, lighting, ramps, signage, braille, etc.*
Supp-8: Number of schools built or upgraded with USG assistance in compliance with accessibility standards It is recommended that implementers select the disaggregate(s) that align with the programmatic school level (pre-primary, primary, secondary). Implementers may also consider the following additional disaggregates: ● *Number of non-formal learning or training centers built* ● *Number of non-formal learning or training centers upgraded*
Supp-24: Number of physical spaces built, repaired, or refurbished for higher education with USG assistance This indicator does not have a standard disaggregation criterion for disability inclusion, but consider the following custom disaggregate: ● *The number of spaces built, repaired, or refurbished for physical accessibility to support learners with disabilities, including improved WASH facilities, ramps, seating, etc., or the provision of assistive technology such as computers, braillers, screen readers, etc.*
(3) Inclusive learning environment
ES. 1-6: Number of educators who complete professional development activities with USG assistance ● *ES. 1-6g: Number of educators trained in disability-inclusive education content*
ES. 1-10: Number of primary or secondary textbooks and other teaching and learning materials provided with USG assistance ● *ES. 1-10a: Materials that are disability-inclusive*
ES. 1-12: Number of education administrators and officials who complete professional development activities with USG assistance ● *ES. 1-12d: Trained in disability-inclusive education content*
Supp-7: Number of parents of community members trained to support children's education with USG assistance This indicator does not have a standard disaggregation criterion related to disability inclusion, but consider the following custom disaggregates: ● *Number of parent-teacher associations trained to support disability-inclusive education* ● *Number of organizations of persons with disabilities trained to support disability-inclusive education* ● *Number of community organizations (not including OPDs) trained to support disability-inclusive education*

Standard and Supplemental USAID Indicators
Supp-9: Percent of learners with improved social and emotional skills, as locally defined, following the participation in USG-assisted programs   ● *Number of females with a disability with improved social and emotional skills (numerator)*   ● *Number of females with a disability with improved social and emotional skills (denominator)*   ● *Number of males with a disability with improved social and emotional skills (numerator)*   ● *Number of males with a disability with improved social and emotional skills (denominator)*
Supp-10: Percent of educators providing quality classroom instruction with USG support   This indicator does not have a standard disaggregation criterion for disability-inclusive instruction, but consider the following additional disaggregates for all school levels: ● *Number of educators providing classroom instruction, with USG support, that meets locally established standards for quality disability-inclusive education (numerator)*   ● *Number of educators providing classroom instruction with USG support (denominator)*
Supp-20: Number of parent-teacher associations or community-based school governance structures engaged in primary or secondary education supported with USG assistance   This indicator does not have a standard disaggregation criterion related to disability inclusion, but consider the following custom disaggregate: ● *Number of parent-teacher associations or community-based school governance structures in primary or secondary education that support learners with disabilities.*
Supp-22: Percent of learners targeted for USG assistance who have the appropriate variety of reading materials in the language of instruction with inclusive representation of diverse populations   This indicator does not have a standard disaggregation related to disability or disability-inclusive materials, but consider the following additional disaggregates across all pre-primary and primary school levels: ● *Number of learners with a disability targeted for USG assistance with the appropriate variety of reading materials (numerator)*   ● *Number of learners with a disability targeted for USG assistance (denominator)*
Supp-23: Percent of learners regularly participating in distance learning programming funded with USG education assistance   ● *Number of female learners with a disability regularly participating in distance learning programming (numerator)*   ● *Number of female learners with a disability in target beneficiary group with access to distance learning programming (denominator)*   ● *Number of male learners with a disability regularly participating in distance learning programming (numerator)*   ● *Number of male learners with a disability in target beneficiary group with access to distance learning programming (denominator)*
(4) **Learning outcomes**
ES. 1-1-1: Average early learning skills score for pre-primary learners targeted for USG assistance   ● *ES. 1.1-1e: With a disability*

Standard and Supplemental USAID Indicators
ES.1-1: Percentage of learners targeted for USG assistance who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading skills   ● *ES. 1.1z: With a disability* Please note that this indicator should be used for any basic education activity that supports both learners with and without disabilities in programming in general education settings. The topline disability disaggregates for ES. 1-1 and ES. 1-47 may be the same.
ES. 1-47: Percentage of learners with a disability targeted for USG assistance who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading   ● *ES. 1-47a: Number of learners with a disability who attain minimum grade-level proficiency in reading* Please note that this indicator should be used for any basic education activity that explicitly supports learners with disabilities in programming. The topline disability disaggregates for ES. 1-1 and ES. 1-47 may be the same; however, this indicator will allow for more intersectional M&E of learners.
ES. 1-60: Percentage of learners targeted for USG assistance who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in math skills   ● *ES. 1-60z: With a disability*
Supp-9: Percent of learners targeted for USG assistance who have improved social and emotional skills, as locally defined, following the participation in USG-assisted programs   ● *With a disability*

Supp-13: Percent of individuals with improved math skills following participation in USG-assisted programs
   ● *Number of females with a disability with improved skills (numerator)*
   ● *Number of females with a disability who participate in the activity (denominator)*
   ● *Number of males with a disability with improved skills (numerator)*
   ● *Number of males with a disability who participate in the activity (denominator)*
 	
Please note that this indicator should be used in non-primary school equivalent programming (formal or non-formal).

Supp-14: Percent of individuals (age 10 and older) with improved digital literacy skills following participation in USG-assisted programs
   ● *Number of females with a disability with improved skills (numerator)*
   ● *Number of females with a disability who participate in the activity (denominator)*
   ● *Number of males with a disability with improved skills (numerator)*
   ● *Number of males with a disability who participate in the activity (denominator)*

Supp-21: Percent of individuals with improved reading skills following participation in USG-assisted programs
   ● *Number of females with a disability with improved skills (numerator)*
   ● *Number of females with a disability who participate in the activity (denominator)*
   ● *Number of males with a disability with improved skills (numerator)*
   ● *Number of males with a disability who participate in the activity (denominator)*
 	
Please note that this indicator should be used in non-primary school equivalent programming (formal or non-formal).

Standard and Supplemental USAID Indicators
(5) **Social inclusion**
EG. 6-12: Percentage of individuals with new employment following participation in USG-assisted workforce development programs • *EG. 6-12w: Percentage of individuals with a disability*
EG. 6-13: Percentage of individuals with improved soft skills following participation in USG-assisted workforce development programs • *EG. 6-13y: Percentage of individuals with a disability* Implementing partners can also refer to the YOUTH-1 standard indicator for programming for individuals aged 10–29, which has its disaggregation requirements.
EG. 6-16: Percentage of individuals with improved perceived quality of employment following participation in USG-assisted workforce development programs. • *EG. 6-16s: Percentage of individuals with a disability*
Supp-12: Percent of individuals who pass a context-relevant assessment in a technical, vocational, or professional skill set following participation in USG-assisted programs • *Number of females with a disability who pass (numerator)* • *Number of females who participate in the activity (denominator)* • *Number of males with a disability who pass (numerator)* • *Number of males who participate in the activity (denominator)* Please note that this indicator can be used in YWFD programming, education administrators or teacher training, or higher education learning institutions.

2.5 Measuring Disability-Inclusive Education Through Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) Practices

As noted, disability-inclusive MEL is an emerging area of practice. As such, projects must be open to new partnerships and innovative approaches to contribute to a robust evidence base for what works and does not. By aligning activities with CLA practices, projects can delve more broadly, deeply, and flexibly into disability-inclusive education to achieve these objectives.

2.5.1 Collaborating

To effectively measure disability-inclusive education, projects must involve local actors and organizations closely tied to the local disability community.

- Externally, OPDs, Ministry of Education departments or units responsible for inclusive or special education, YWFD agencies and organizations, higher education institutions, inclusive employment support agencies and organizations, and educators who have experience working with learners with disabilities will be critical partners in carrying out measurement activities related to disability-inclusive education.
- Internally, while inclusion is the responsibility of all staff, if the project (or a sub-partner) has staff explicitly responsible for technical leadership or support related to inclusion (whether specific to disability or not), these staff should work closely with the MEL team and connect team members

to others who should have a role in the work. As always, it is essential to note that learners and their caregivers can also contribute to their learning plans.

Whenever possible, the learning and adapting processes below should involve collaboration among various contributors. In addition to USAID staff, general education specialists, and MEL experts, a disability-inclusive MEL team may collaborate with:

- **Inclusive education specialists** who contribute their expertise in education project design, implementation, and evaluation to ensure the indicators are relevant, measurable, and achievable.
- **Disability advocates** who provide insights into the specific needs and perspectives of individuals with disabilities, ensuring that the planned measures are inclusive and sensitive to the diverse experiences of learners with disabilities.
- **Representatives from communities** who offer valuable perspectives on the context and priorities of the communities, ensuring that the measures are culturally appropriate and relevant to the local policy context.

2.5.2   Learning

During implementation, USAID expects project teams to continually strive to learn what is and is not working and why by routinely examining and reflecting on formally collected data and staff and collaborators' experiences. This learning should inform adaptations to programming.

In addition to the standard and supplemental indicators that support disability-inclusive education (as listed in Exhibit 8), there are many worthwhile questions related to disability inclusion that a MEL team can consider and present to project staff to consider during quarterly review meetings or pause-and-reflect sessions. Many of these questions require engaging diverse program actors to gain their feedback. Exhibit 9 provides some examples of questions that can guide learning.

Exhibit 9. Sample Learning Questions

Questions to Guide Learning
- Which project activities engage with OPDs, and what benefits or challenges have arisen from this engagement?   - How are project activities or events being made accessible for people with disabilities (location, materials, presentation content, etc.), and what has been the response to these efforts?   - How and to what extent is the perspective on disability and inclusion shifting among project staff due to project activities?   - How and to what extent is the perspective on disability and inclusion shifting among educators or employers (when relevant) due to project activities?   - Are we finding that educators are increasingly able to demonstrate inclusive teaching practices? Why or why not? What do educators say?   - Are we finding that learners with disabilities have access to appropriate assistive technology and support services? If not, how can we support increased access?   - Are learners with disabilities able to access assessments developed with UDA principles? If not, why and how can we better enable learners to express what they have learned?

Questions to Guide Learning

- Are learners with disabilities transitioning from basic education to YWFD or vocational training programs or higher education? If yes, what factors (physical, financial, systemic, conceptual, interpersonal support, etc.) contribute to a successful transition? If no, what barriers (physical, financial, systemic, conceptual, etc.) prevent transition to the workforce or higher education?
- Are learners with disabilities learning the soft and hard skills necessary to engage in meaningful employment and community participation?

2.5.3   Adapting

Engaging in intentional learning efforts will reveal opportunities to adapt implementation based on a better understanding of the context and what approaches to disability-inclusive education are working or not. For example, in situations where learners with disabilities continue to experience social isolation and exclusion despite interventions aimed at increasing social inclusion, teams should examine the causes and collaboratively determine the next steps to improve the current approach or find a new one. If, through observation and listening to feedback, project staff learn that educators are struggling to apply inclusive strategies in lessons, staff can analyze the available MEL data and additional information gathered, as needed, to find possible reasons and help the project consider additional approaches to understanding the root causes that may be at play. Having planned and routine processes for learning and adapting throughout implementation will increase the opportunities for a project to have a positive and measurable impact on disability-inclusive education.

2.6   Budgeting for Disability-Inclusive Education in MEL

Disability-inclusive education often requires additional resources to ensure equity, which is critical to account for in the initial project budget. Evaluations do not always consider budgets and spending decisions, but these choices directly impact implementation. Inclusive budgeting includes allocating funds to remove barriers, promote participation, increase awareness and capacities, and provide focused activities and adapted materials for learners with disabilities. This may also involve budgeting for alternative learning assessments, vocational skill development assessments, and career exploration activities developed for learners with disabilities for whom the project's broader assessment tools are not appropriate or accessible. Using a checklist on inclusive budgeting can assist in assessing a budget's inclusiveness and adjusting whenever possible (see Annex A).

MEL staff can inform donors and project staff of the unique budgeting needs and processes related to disability-inclusive education activities. MEL staff can also advocate for cost measurement in disability-inclusive education activities. For additional guidance on general costing practice, see USAID's (n.d.) *Education Cost Measurement Toolkit*. Building off USAID's general guidance, for disability inclusion within MEL activities, the following aspects should be considered during the budgeting process:

- **Labor**: Seek staff with specific expertise in the areas of programming related to disability-inclusive education, including hiring people with disabilities themselves and ensuring that any accommodations they need are provided. Budgeting for labor could also include partnering with technical experts from local universities, OPDs, and international firms and/or

hiring inclusive education staff with a specific mandate to ensure inclusion across project activities.

- **Sampling**: Collect data with prevalence tools to establish disability prevalence and/or location, which may be needed before drawing a sample of learners with disabilities for MEL-related data collection. Additionally, as a subpopulation of learners, the overall sample of learners with disabilities will be smaller than that of learners without disabilities, and these learners may be more geographically dispersed across a large number of learning spaces, which has cost implications. See Annex E for guidance on sample design and selection considerations when collecting data on learners with disabilities.

- **Preparatory work**: Allocate funds for consultations, observations, needs assessments, policy analyses, and general preparatory work to gain an accurate understanding of the context for developing tools to equitably assess learning among learners with disabilities.

- **Pilot testing of disability data collection tools**: Pilot testing and implementing data collection tools related to disability can include collecting general prevalence data or more specific activities, such as universal screening and identification of disability. Developing and validating tools and screening protocols in new contexts requires significant time and financial resources.   More details can be found in USAID's (2024a) *Tools and Considerations for School-Based Universal Disability Screenings*.

- **Alternative assessments**: In addition to budgeting for large-scale learning assessments aligned with UDA to include as many learners as possible, allocate funds for developing and conducting alternative learning assessment tools designed for and accessible to learners with disabilities for whom the project's broader assessment tools are not appropriate. Alternative learning assessments specifically for YWFD can include skill-based practicum or hands-on work assessments in a simulated or real work environment. This process is distinct from the larger assessment effort and should include all aspects of the assessment cycle. In addition to the sampling considerations noted above, different inputs and personnel will be needed (e.g., braille printing, sign language interpretation, sighted guides for workshop participants, or assessors who are blind). See Annex C for more on assessments.

- **Data collection**: Collect data and information from staff, caregivers, employers, and community members who are educators or caregivers for learners with disabilities. In addition to typical costs related to equipment (tablets and accessories for electronic data collection) and payment and travel costs for data collection teams, some of the abovementioned inputs required for tool development also apply to data collection. If data collection teams include persons with disabilities, their reasonable accommodation needs must be paid for. Data collection may also take more time or require a larger team for fieldwork due to the geographic dispersion of learners with disabilities in the country.

- **Accessible training**: Provide accessible training modalities and locations for data collection personnel, particularly for those with or working with learners with disabilities. This may include hiring OPD members or individuals with disabilities who will need sign language interpretation, materials in braille, or other assistive devices.

3. Conclusion

The extensive learning from the four-and-a-half-year Multi-Country Study on Inclusive Education (MCSIE) informed this guide to enhance disability-inclusive education programming through inclusive MEL practices. With insights drawn from research across Cambodia, Malawi, and Nepal, this guide offers a framework for USAID staff and implementing partners to embed disability inclusion across all stages of education programming. By prioritizing proactive planning, engaging diverse stakeholders, and leveraging inclusive methodologies, the guide underscores the importance of collaborative efforts in achieving equitable education outcomes for learners with disabilities. It champions a twin-track approach that not only integrates disability considerations into general education initiatives but also addresses the unique needs of learners with disabilities through specific interventions. With intentional forethought and planning, collective clarity on the desired outcomes, and concrete methods for measuring progress and adjusting implementation as new learning emerges, we can ensure educational environments are accessible, inclusive, and conducive to the development of all learners, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Additional Resources

This guide is a starting point for MEL staff and supplements existing publications on M&E from USAID, such as the [USAID Education Disability Measurement Toolkit](). Additional resources to support disability-inclusive education within MEL efforts are available in the annexes of this document.

Annexes

Annex A. Inclusive Budgeting Checklist

Exhibit 10. Inclusive Budgeting Checklist for MEL Teams

Cost Considerations	✔
Labor: ● Hire persons with disabilities (for MEL team or short-term project activities); include the cost of accommodations when needed ● Hire staff or consultants with specific expertise in the areas of MEL related to disability-inclusive education (including from local universities, OPDs, and international firms)	
Sampling: ● Collect data with screening tools to establish disability prevalence and/or location, which may be needed before drawing a sample of learners with disabilities for MEL-related data collection ● Plan for field costs related to a more geographically dispersed sample across a large number of learning spaces	
Preparatory work: ● Allocate funds for consultations, observations, needs assessments, policy analyses, and general preparatory work to gain an accurate understanding of the context for developing tools to equitably assess learning among learners with disabilities	
Pilot testing: ● Allocate time (project labor hours) and funds for developing or adapting tools ● Test and validate new tools (whether prevalence/screening tools or learning assessments) before collecting data at the project scale	

Universal Design for Assessment (UDA):
● Ensure that assessments designed for general education settings are as inclusive as possible and follow principles of UDA, which may necessitate more time and costs during tool development, such as:
   o Hiring a local artist to develop image-based answer options
   o Including special educators along with general educators in tool development workshops	

Alternative assessments: ● Allocate funds for developing and conducting alternative learning assessment tools that are designed for and accessible by learners with disabilities for whom the project's broader assessment tools are not appropriate ● Include local artists, braille printing, sign language interpretation, sighted guides, and other accommodations as needed	

Cost Considerations	✔
Data collection: • Provide for collecting data and information from staff, caregivers, and community members who are educators or caregivers for learners with disabilities • Include tablets and accessories for electronic data collection • Allow for payment and travel costs for data collection teams • Plan for accommodation needs for assessors/data collectors with disabilities (interpreters, guides, braille materials) for both training and data collection • Plan for longer data collection periods or larger teams for fieldwork due to the geographic dispersion of learners with disabilities in the country	

See also USAID's (2023a) *Financing Disability-Inclusive Education White Paper*.

Annex B. Checklist for Consulting Local OPDs

1. **Have you found multiple organizations led by people with disabilities?**
   - Be sure that the organizations are led by people who themselves have disabilities. Although organizations of parents, families, and professionals have valuable insights, they cannot replace the perspectives of people with disabilities.
   - If people with intellectual or cognitive disabilities do not yet lead a local organization, then consult parent organizations that actively create opportunities for self-advocates with intellectual or cognitive disabilities to be leaders.
   - Ensure to include organizations representing a wide range of disability communities: for example, people with mobility disabilities; people with intellectual, cognitive, or developmental disabilities; people with sensory disabilities; people with psychosocial disabilities (also sometimes referred to as mental health disabilities); and people with specific areas of learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.
   - In some countries, local OPDs might not yet represent the full range of disability types. This mainly tends to impact cognitive, learning, or psychiatric disabilities. Be proactive in considering which disabilities might be under-represented and seek alternative means to listen to their perspectives.
     - For example, representative organizations from other countries will lack knowledge of the local context but might have other valuable insights about the needs of people who share their disability.
     - A local organization of parents and families, although no substitute for organizations led by people with disabilities, will have a better understanding of the local context.
     - Fostering dialogue among these and other stakeholders might produce deeper, more nuanced insights than any entity could produce alone.
   - Be attentive to including people with multiple intersecting marginalized or vulnerable identities. For example, include women and girls with disabilities, indigenous peoples with disabilities, communities displaced by conflict or other humanitarian emergencies, etc.
   - To find national and local organizations led by people with disabilities, begin with global-level umbrella organizations such as the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and Disabled People's International (DPI).
     - The [IDA is a federation of multiple global-level organizations](#) representing people with disabilities. Each of these is an umbrella organization for many national-level organizations.
     - [DPI is also an umbrella organization](#) for many national-level organizations led by people with disabilities.
     - National-level organizations are usually familiar with local-level organizations in their country.
     - If the country does not seem to have a national-level organization, consult with regional leaders or leaders in neighboring countries. They might be aware of smaller or more local organizations not yet eligible to join a global federation.

2. **Are you providing accessibility, reasonable accommodations, and other resources that people with disabilities need to participate fully in expressing their experiences, insights, and expertise with you?** For example:
   - Providing sign language interpreters.
   - Printing materials in braille or audio formats and providing information in easy-to-read formats.
   - Providing agenda or printed material ahead of time to give participants time to process and prepare.
   - Holding meetings in buildings with ramps and wide entrances that can accommodate wheelchair users, etc.
   - Asking OPDs what support they need and how to procure relevant services or resources well before events or deliverable deadlines.

3. **Do the relevant national and local level OPDs have the capacity to continue providing consultation services throughout all stages of the project cycle, from national or regional strategy planning through project closeout and learning?**
   - Some OPDs have deep experience engaging with various governmental and non-governmental stakeholders and providing enriching knowledge and guidance.
   - However, other OPDs may have had fewer opportunities to gain experience in tasks such as reviewing or writing policies, designing and implementing projects, or even basic administrative tasks like managing a budget or running a meeting. Consider how project activities can support and expand OPD capacity rather than strain them. Expanding OPD capacity can enable OPDs to evolve into stronger partners who can better provide consultation in future projects.
   - Some OPDs may need capacity-strengthening support to provide ongoing consultation services. This can include training and other support to develop knowledge and skills relevant to maintaining their organization and providing consultation. Many OPDs may also need funding support to be actively engaged in providing guidance and expertise.

Annex C. Considerations for Learning Outcomes Assessments

Learning assessments are a standard activity within nearly all donor-funded education programs and provide important data on learners' knowledge and skills. Typically, projects administer a baseline learning assessment before beginning implementation activities to understand the current status of, for example, literacy acquisition among a sample of learners in the population of interest. Then, midline and endline learning assessments can measure learning gains that have occurred throughout the life of the project. Related tools are sometimes administered simultaneously, including language or mathematics assessments, learner questionnaires, educator and instructional leader questionnaires, and classroom observation protocols. Although learners with disabilities should be included in these measurements, how the data is collected depends on the context. Different forms of assessments are available to evaluate all learners' literacy skills, including general education assessments, assessments with accommodations, and alternative assessments.

Universal Design and Accommodations

First, implementers should design and administrate tools in general education following Universal Design for Assessment (UDA) principles to maximize the number of learners who can express what they know through the same assessment instrument. UDA principles remove unnecessary barriers. UDA considers details related to the presentation of assessment content, the timing, the physical space, and learner comfort, among other factors. Implementers should build UDA principles into tool designs that do not alter the measured constructs. Many learners who struggle for a variety of reasons but may not have a diagnosed disability, as well as some learners who do have a disability, will benefit from UDA. Universally designed assessments can be further accommodated for some learner needs (e.g., font size, audio, or electronic versions of instruments).

Still, alternative assessments may be needed, which are not necessarily based on the academic standards for a grade level but rather are assessment tasks explicitly prepared for the learner's group (e.g., learners who are blind, learners who are deaf) and are attuned to the context, access to the curriculum being delivered, and expected learning outcomes. For example, suppose a proposed accommodation to the assessment alters the object of measurement (i.e, foundational literacy in Chichewa as defined by the Malawi curriculum and teaching and learning materials and practices). In that case, the project must consider developing an alternative assessment.

Meeting Learners Where They Are At To Measure Learning Outcomes

In some cases, students with more intensive support needs may benefit from a curriculum tailored to their individual learning needs. This may require changes to learners' assessments to align with the curriculum being assessed. MEL teams should ensure that assessment design is informed by the real experiences of educators and students in the classroom while also aligning with the curriculum taught in the specific learning space. Aligning assessments with the curriculum taught helps ensure accurate monitoring of student progress toward learning outcomes.

Alternative Assessments

Alternative assessments allow for the inclusion of learners who cannot participate in general education or employment assessments even with all possible accommodations and/or modifications (e.g., extra time for tests/assignments, scribing of answers, use of assistive technology, preferential seating, chunking of information, frequent breaks, direct assessments, and human resources).

In some cases, to include all learners, alternative tools and methods can help ensure that all subpopulations of learners with disabilities can participate in assessments. While many of the same skills can be included in these measures, the standards used to guide content development, the content itself (vocabulary and number of items, for example), the administration procedures, the language of the assessment, and the sample design are some elements that will need to be different to provide a fair and equitable assessment for these learners.

Learners who are deaf, for example, will need to be assessed in sign language (if that is their primary language) with content that aligns with what they are learning and administration procedures that are consistent with teaching and learning practices used in these classrooms. Similarly, learners who are blind will need an assessment in braille (if this is the medium of instruction used for them) with properly aligned content and not a simple translation of a tool designed for general education learners. Learners who are blind or have low vision will also be unable to access image-based content, such as items that measure oral language skills. Additionally, some learners with multiple or complex disabilities may require an assessment designed individually for their needs.

Developing appropriate learning assessments for specific disability populations is an emerging practice area. Because teaching and learning opportunities for these learners vary widely from country to country, the preliminary work needed to inform and guide tool development may differ from that of a more typical learning assessment in an education project, particularly related to identifying appropriate vocabulary and aligning content with reasonable standards that account for the realities of teaching and learning. Educators who are deaf or blind themselves or who do not have a disability but have training and experience working with these learner populations, as well as OPD members, should be included in tool development, pilot testing, and data collection. They should also be engaged to validate the findings. Additionally, it is essential to include a psychometrician in alternative assessment development and analysis.

Considerations for Measuring Youth Workforce Development (YWFD) Skill Development

In YWFD, learners will encounter assessments of soft skills (general personal qualities, behaviors, attitudes, and competencies) and hard skills (concrete, measurable skills and abilities) to measure their work readiness. USAID's (2018a) *How-to Note: Measuring Skills for Youth Workforce Development* identifies five skills related to youth work outcomes: 1) soft skills, 2) literacy, 3) math, 4) digital literacy, and 5) technical/vocational/professional skills. Standards outlined in the previous section on alternative assessments should be considered when assessing literacy and numeracy. When measuring digital literacy for individual learners with disabilities, the type of assessment will vary depending on the skills being measured and can be performance-based, knowledge-based, or self-assessment (USAID, 2022a). Several

commercially available assessment resources exist and vary in cost but may not explicitly be geared toward learners with disabilities. When assessing digital literacy for learners with disabilities, it is critical to ensure accessibility and measure skills adequately. This may require reasonable accommodations including but not limited to screen enlargement, screen reading, or talk-to-text software; color contrast or amplified audio; untimed or quiet assessment environments; personal reader/sign language interpreter or typist; or multi-day assessments. It will be important to consider an individual's personalized accommodation need and project or assessment standards to ensure accurate and reliable measurement of digital literacy skills for learners with disabilities.

When assessing soft skills and technical/vocational/professional skills, various assessments can be utilized to measure learning outcomes and skill progression. Learners with disabilities may or may not require reasonable accommodations to participate in assessments. To measure soft skills, USAID recommends YWFD activities use self-reporting or self-assessments but also encourages the use of direct assessment methods, including "scenario-based questions, observation of the skill being performed, or completion of an assigned task that requires the application of certain soft skills" (USAID, 2019). Skill-based assessments, training programs or on-the-job training evaluations, apprenticeships, and certification assessments can be used to measure hard skills. General work-based learning experiences, such as job shadowing, internships, volunteering, and technical and vocational education and training courses, can help measure both soft and hard skills. Because of the potential for individualization, cultural bias, and subjectivity when using direct assessments and work-based learning experiences, it is important to define standards and rubrics to evaluate a learner objectively. Direct assessments and work-based learning experiences provide alternative environments for learners with disabilities to display soft and hard skills and their skill progression and can provide insightful data if measured consistently across learners. For more detailed information on assessment tools, please see USAID's (2018a) *How-to Note: Measuring Skills for Youth Workforce Development*.

Considerations for Higher Education Learning Outcomes (HELOs)

HELOs are learning outcomes that result from learners engaging with specific or general opportunities related to knowledge, skills, or attitudes. Unlike USAID's current higher education indicators, HELO indicators do not have direct, observable links to HELOs. Instead, HELO indicators are unobservable constructs and require assessment tools to measure them. For example, a current higher education indicator could measure an observable output like the number of learners reached by USG-assisted higher education interventions (ES. 2-55). On the other hand, a HELO indicator could measure something unobservable that needs to be assessed, such as the number of learners with improved critical thinking skills (Coates & Solorio, 2024, p. 2).

HELOs measure three types of competence: cognitive knowledge; skills and performances; and behaviors, perspectives, and attitudes. These outcomes are assessed at the student level, not at the institutional level or in comparison between institutions. Regarding HELOs and disability-inclusive education, the table below (Coates & Solorio, 2024, p. 6) can incorporate disability inclusion considerations by disaggregating by disability in the HELO data, as well as ensuring that disability is considered when designing HELOs at the onset of programming.

Exhibit 11. Data Considerations for Measuring HELOs

Data Considerations	Maximizing Resources When Considering What HELOS to Measure and How to Measure Them
Availability of relevant data on HELOs and solutions	• Look for existing data that could be used, such as those from student assessments, program accreditations, or licensing exams. • Identify general or discipline-/field-specific measurement solutions. • Draw on local expertise to develop bespoke resources. • Take complete account of stakeholder and third-party interests relating to assessment products, experiences, data, or services. • Use one of the many assessment solutions available off the shelf or readily adapted by a wide range of experts with a background in education, psychology, economics, or health.
Type of data collection	• Consider the most authentic and accurate means to collect data given the program contexts and student perspectives, including observation, testing, surveys, etc. • Ensure that people, systems, and protocols are coordinated to ensure relevant standards and outcomes. • Seek expert advice to ensure that data collection is technically and practically feasible.
Scope and representativeness of data	• Ensure that program goals clearly specify the scope of what the assessment results are meant to represent. • Consider how available data can be aggregated or disaggregated to address evaluation needs. • Check whether data are required from all members of a population or if a random or non-random sample will suffice.
Human resources and infrastructure required	• Re-skill/reorient people to work on measurement from existing management or academic roles. • Develop promotional materials that emphasize to stakeholders that student learning outcomes are among higher education's most cherished contributions. • Apply best practices and approaches used in case studies that present evidence of successful change to help assure stakeholders that HELO information is feasible, prudent, and helpful. • Give ample allowance in the budget and schedule for costly data security, confidentiality, and storage constraints. • Collaborate with colleagues from different activities, implementing partners, higher education institutions, and other local partners to design, adapt, and implement solutions. Collaboration can include close partnership, relying upon existing local resources, and/or capacity strengthening. • Give ample allowance in the budget for appropriate data storage (i.e., database use or development, management, and maintenance).

Avoiding Comparisons

Notably, while a suite of learning assessment tools developed by a project may measure similar skills, the data collected via a literacy assessment in braille, for example, should not be combined with or compared to data from a sign language learning assessment or to data from a tool administered in general education classrooms. Learning outcome data can be reported by disability type as long as it is clear that the tools and, in some cases, the standards are different. At all times, developing and administrating a fair assessment for all learners should guide the work.
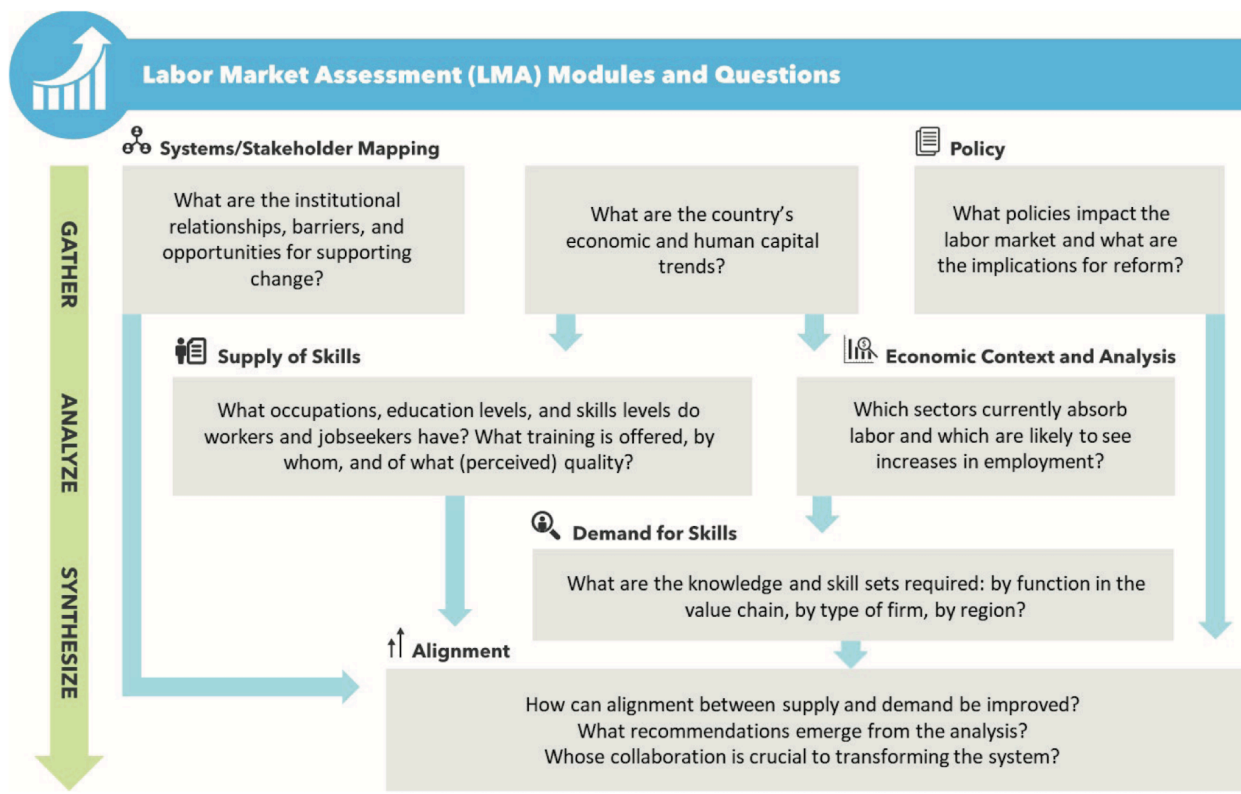
Annex D. Conducting Labor Market Assessments

It is important to consider education outcomes within the broader context of adult society and the labor market. This is especially crucial to understanding HELOs and YWFD outcomes. However, adult living, community engagement, and employment skills develop during basic education. Using labor market assessment (LMA) data can help inform activity design and implementation in programming across the education continuum. Exhibit 12 provides thematic guiding questions for LMAs (USAID, 2018b).

Exhibit 12. LMA Guiding Questions

Theme	Question
Economic Context	Which sectors currently absorb labor, and which are likely to see increases in employment?
Demand for Skills	What skill sets are required: by function in the value chain, by type of firm, by region?
Supply of Skills	What occupations, education levels, and skills levels are possessed by the workforce? What types of training are offered by which institutions?
Systems/Stakeholders	What are the institutional relationships, barriers, and opportunities for supporting change?
Policy	What policies impact the labor market, and what are the implications for reform?
Alignment	What are target population characteristics and dynamics (by segment)? What are the entry points for youth and other groups? How can alignment be improved through systems change (and policy reform)?

This can also be observed in Exhibit 13 on the following page.

Exhibit 13. USAID LMA Modules and Questions

Labor Market Assessment (LMA) Modules and Questions

GATHER / ANALYZE / SYNTHESIZE

Systems/Stakeholder Mapping
What are the institutional relationships, barriers, and opportunities for supporting change?

What are the country's economic and human capital trends?

Policy
What policies impact the labor market and what are the implications for reform?

Supply of Skills
What occupations, education levels, and skills levels do workers and jobseekers have? What training is offered, by whom, and of what (perceived) quality?

Economic Context and Analysis
Which sectors currently absorb labor and which are likely to see increases in employment?

Demand for Skills
What are the knowledge and skill sets required: by function in the value chain, by type of firm, by region?

Alignment
How can alignment between supply and demand be improved? What recommendations emerge from the analysis? Whose collaboration is crucial to transforming the system?

Source: USAID, 2018e, p. 9

When considering disability-inclusive education programming, the LMA questions can be adapted to specifically focus on persons with disabilities. For example, LMA questions can be adapted as follows:

Economic Context and Analysis
Which sectors currently absorb labor _for persons with disabilities,_ and which are likely to see increases in employment?

Demand for Skills
What skill sets are required: by function in the value chain, by type of firm, by region? _How are learners with disabilities being prepared in basic education, higher education, and/or YWFD programs to meet the skill demand of the current and future economy?_

Supply of Skills
What occupations, education levels, and skills levels are possessed by the workforce? _Compared to the general population, what occupations, education levels, and skill levels are possessed by persons with disabilities? Specific to persons with disabilities, what types of training are offered by which institutions?_

Systems/ Stakeholder Mapping

What are the institutional relationships, barriers, and opportunities for supporting change _to support the meaningful and inclusive employment for persons with disabilities_?

Policy

What policies impact the labor market _for persons with disabilities,_ and what are the implications of reform?

Alignment

What are employment characteristics and dynamics of _persons with disabilities_ (by segment)? What are the entry points for youth and _youth with disabilities_? How can alignment be improved through systems change (and policy reform)?

The caveat here is that persons with disabilities should be included in LMAs using a twin-track approach, meaning that the focus should be on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the general labor market (as opposed to segregated or sheltered employment). However, an LMA with a focus on disability inclusion should also pay attention to the specific and unique needs and outcomes of persons with disabilities in meaningful employment. These specific and unique needs could include simple considerations such as a flexible working schedule or work-from-home availability, computer software that provides accessibility, or the availability of safe and comfortable physical working conditions. More complex considerations could include government policies and resources that support inclusive employment, the availability of specialized resources such as sign-language interpreters or guide animals, and the training of all employees to provide an inclusive workplace.

See Youth Power 2's (n.d.) _Key Approaches to Labor Market Assessment: An Interactive Guide_ for guidance on the tools and methodologies for conducting an LMA.

Annex E. Sampling Methods and Determining Sample Size

One of the challenges when evaluating disability-inclusive education is that the relatively small number of learners with disabilities within the program can make it challenging to measure progress toward indicator goals, particularly if measurement needs to be sample-based (versus census). Generally, a sample size should be large enough to adequately represent the diversity of the focus population of learners with disabilities and provide reliable and representative data while also being feasible within the available resources and constraints. The responses to the following considerations are important when determining the sample size for disability-inclusion indicators.

1. **What is the disability prevalence within the focus community?** The size of the focus community population and the prevalence of disability among the focus community population are significant factors in determining the sample size. For example, if the prevalence of disability is assessed as 10 percent within the population, the expectation is that 10 percent of the (potential) learner population will have some type of disability. However, given that disability can frequently be underreported and data are not considered reliable, the benchmark should assume 10–15 percent of individuals with disabilities. Use this estimate to inform budgeting and planning related to sample size and data collection, and consider potential accommodation needs.

2. **What is the representation of learners with disabilities across the education continuum?** The prevalence of learners with disabilities in mainstream basic education, segregated special schools and training centers, higher education, and workforce development centers can be assessed to determine their representation within formal and informal systems. This could also include the representation of persons with disabilities in the labor market to better understand the socio-economic context of the transition from educational settings to adult society. This information will guide the sampling strategy, ensuring that the sample adequately reflects the distribution of learners with disabilities across different educational continuum settings. However, when considering this information, the project team needs to be aware of the ways disability is defined in the local context and the methods used for assessing and reporting it. In some cases, prevalence data within systems will not exist, and the project may need to plan to collect this data to guide other project planning and sampling efforts. See section 2.4 of the guide.

3. **What is the estimated percentage of youth with disabilities that are "not in education, employment, or training" (NEET)?** The percentage of youth with disabilities who are out of school or NEET should be estimated to determine whether the sample should mainly focus on education institutions, households, or both. If a significant proportion of learners with disabilities are not enrolled in education or training or are unemployed, household surveys may be necessary to capture the reasons for non-inclusion and the potential interventions to address these reasons. Moreover, household surveys should be planned for and conducted whenever the project timeframe and budget allow, as they represent an excellent opportunity to learn about the situation of persons with disabilities in the community and the barriers to inclusion they face.

4. **Do the indicators require further disaggregation and stratification?** Depending on the indicators' requirements for other types of disaggregation and intersectional approaches toward disability, the sample of learners with disabilities may need to be further disaggregated by other variables (i.e., gender, socio-economic status, type of disability) to identify potential disparities and inequalities in disability-inclusive education programming. This involves stratifying the sample to ensure adequate representation of different sub-groups of learners with disabilities. In line with this, whenever possible, the sample should encompass learners with different types of disabilities to capture the diversity of experiences and needs. This may require a convenient sampling approach.

5. **What types of statistical methods will be used**? The choice of statistical methods used to analyze the data can also impact the sample size requirements. Complex statistical analyses typically require larger sample sizes to ensure reliable results, thus increasing statistical power and reducing the risk of missing a true difference. In addition, the level of precision needed or the degree of accuracy to which the sample estimates represent the population parameters will influence the sample size because higher precision requires a larger sample size. Considering the overall smaller percentage of learners with disabilities compared to other groups of learners, **oversampling of learners with disabilities** can contribute to overcoming some of the challenges of their limited representation in the overall population/focus group. In some cases, such as when sampling is stratified but not proportional to the population, applying weights during data analysis will be necessary to extrapolate to the larger population.

6. **How "easy to reach" is the disability population?** Depending on the context, individuals with disabilities can be "difficult to reach" for data collection efforts due to internal or external barriers and challenges, which the evaluation team should consider and plan for. These are not reasons to avoid collecting data among the disability population but should factor into planning and design. OPD members can be valuable partners when considering how to plan for the following possibilities:
    - *Barriers to access.* Individuals may be hard to locate or reach physically, or language, culture, or assumption-based barriers may exist.
    - *Resistance to being surveyed.* Individuals may fear, anticipate stigma, or have cultural reasons to resist being surveyed.
    - *Caregiver concerns.* Parents or caregivers of learners with disabilities may have concerns about allowing engagement with their child, particularly if they have experienced mistreatment connected to their disability.
    - *Lack of formal record keeping.* This makes it difficult to estimate the total population and gather demographic information.
    - *Lack of resources.* The cost and resources required to gather data from these populations may be too high.
    - *Conflict.* Conflict can render data collection dangerous and difficult and lead to geographical displacement.

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