

The bedrock of inclusion: why investing in the education workforce is critical to the delivery of SDG4

ETHIOPIA RESEARCH SUMMARY

March 2021

This document summarises key findings research carried out in Ethiopia, as part of a multi-country study undertaken on behalf of [ActionAid](#), [Education International](#), and [Light for the World](#). The research explores the current state of investment in the education workforce for disability-inclusive education and investigates what is realistically required for putting inclusive education into practice. Full reports can be accessed [here](#).

The scale of the challenge for inclusive education

In 2019 Ethiopia was making the fastest progress towards the 2030 goal for primary completion of all sub-Saharan African countries. However, more efforts are needed to bring the many out of school children with disabilities into mainstream education.

- Of the estimated five million children with disabilities in Ethiopia around 369,683 (7.3%) are enrolled in school.ⁱ
- This is still significantly below the Government's targets to enroll 75% of children with disabilities at primary school level and 45% at secondary level by 2020.¹
- Only 42% of those children with disabilities enrolled in primary school are girls.
- There are wide regional variations from 30% of primary enrolments in the Southern Nations region to 0% in the Somali region.ⁱⁱ

Recent government efforts to improve the capacity of the Education Management Information System (EMIS) have resulted in better data on children with disabilities - by level of schooling, sex and region.² However:

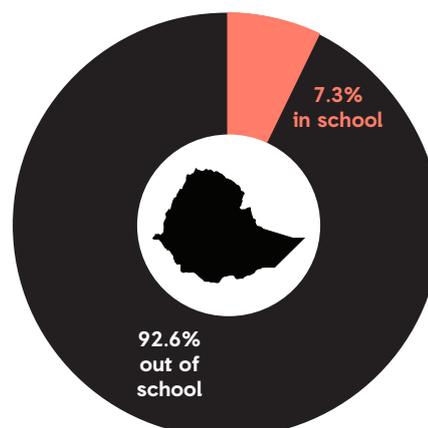
- Figures are based on estimates made in the fifth Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESDP V), which were

extrapolated from the World Health Organization global guideline of 15% of any population's children having disabilities.ⁱⁱⁱ

- In future more credible baseline of the total numbers of children with disabilities will be essential.

On a positive note, the Ethiopian Government is piloting efforts to use the Washington Group questions to identify children with disabilities, which will ensure more credible and robust data for policy planning and monitoring.^{iv}

Children with disabilities in/out of school.



1. Federal Ministry of Education, ESDP V 2015-20 committed to scaling up to 75% by the year 2020; to meet the target in 2018 this should have reached 61%.
2. Ethiopia was the only country of these five studies for which this level of detail could be obtained.

Policy commitments have not yet translated into school-level action

Over the last decade, the Government of Ethiopia has made significant movement towards inclusive education:

- The ESDP V (2015-2020),³ commits to *'inclusive education'*, embedding a number of core elements of the Special Needs / Inclusive Education Strategy (SN/IES) from 2012.^v
- The SN/IES set out the direction from segregated education to inclusive education and more special classes or units have emerged to support children with disabilities to transition into mainstream education.
- Generally, children who attend special classes are placed in inclusive classes after they complete the first cycle (grade 1-4).

High pupil-teacher numbers are a challenge to inclusive education

The Government has made significant strides to address chronic teacher shortages:

- average pupil-teacher ratios in primary schools were reduced from a high of 67:1 in 2000 to 39:1 in 2018.^{vi}
- Government's own target of 50:1 (and the UNESCO recommended maximum of 40:1) has largely been met, although regional disparities (from 24:1 in Addis-Ababa to 46:1 in Oromia and 104:1 in Somali region) persist.

In 2016 UNESCO estimated that Ethiopia:

- Had enough teachers to achieve universal secondary education between 2020 and 2030, but
- Needed to recruit an estimated 7.4% (roughly 37,200) more primary school teachers per year⁴ by 2030 to address demand from a growing primary-school age population.^{viii}

Nevertheless, the challenge of low pay still needs to be addressed, especially at entry level:



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- Low salaries in relation to the cost of living and compared to similar professions have led to high levels of dissatisfaction and turnover amongst teachers.^{ix}
- Entry-level monthly salaries for teachers were ETB 2,404 (US\$ 70.95) at primary and ETB 3,137 (US\$ 92.59) at secondary level.⁵

Teacher-training on inclusive education will also be crucial to equip teachers with the skills necessary to respond to a diversity of learning needs while managing the large classes that are a frequent reality in the Ethiopian context.

- The Government has already taken positive steps. In 2013 only around 50% of Grade 1-4 teachers were qualified to national standards, but by 2018 it was on track to meet the target of 100% of teachers qualified by 2020.⁶
- However, regional disparities persist. In two of the most remote rural regions of Ethiopia the percentage of trained primary teachers in 2014 was 1%, compared with 43% in Addis Ababa.^x

Ethiopia is making progress to train and retain a workforce to support inclusion

Ethiopia has made sustained efforts in recent years to ensure that all teachers have some training in special

3. This is based on the Gregorian calendar (Ethiopian calendar is 2008-12)

4. Author's estimate based on current total numbers of primary school teachers as per the 2018/19 Education Statistics Abstract (i.e. 502,738) and the UNESCO recommended increase of 7.4% per year

5. As per information in the revised salary scale implementation guidelines for teachers and other staff endorsed by the Ministry of Education: July 2020, the initial salary for primary school teachers is ETB 2404 and ETB 3137 for secondary school teachers. US\$ calculated using the average exchange rate for 2020

6. The ratio was 48% for male teachers and 63% for female teachers in the 2013 baseline. For grade 1-4 to meet the national standard, there is a diploma level course which must be completed. Latest data shows this will be met by 2002. Taken from: Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (2019) Ministry of Education. Education Statistics Annual Abstract

needs / inclusive education and to better record their numbers:

- In 2018, a total of 3,225 primary school teachers (i.e. just 1% of the total education workforce) took the degree-level special needs education qualification.
- However, all in-service training now includes a common element of inclusive/special needs education. In 2013, an estimated 70% of primary level teachers held the required special needs education qualification.
- Further, almost 100,000 primary teachers and around 17,000 secondary teachers had either completed, or were in the process of completing, relevant diploma and degree-upgrading summer programmes.^{xi}

However, Regional Education Bureaus have difficulties recruiting special needs education teachers, as the role is not included in the public service standard and many end up working as regular teachers.^{xii}

The education system must be aligned behind inclusive education

To support greater inclusion in mainstream schools, Ethiopia has established:

- Resource-centres for the identification, screening and provision of services for children with disabilities and to assist teachers to embed inclusive education in schools and bring all children into the mainstream system.
- A cadre of itinerant teachers who play a vital role in supporting inclusive education, to support screening processes, implement children's Individual Education Plans, and make referrals for additional support.

In practice, however:

- Itinerant teachers struggle to fulfil their role, with low numbers in relation to the workload, and lack of compensation for travel between schools.
- Although some Regional Education Boards use a proportion of funds⁷ to provide financial incentives to special needs teachers, there are no additional incentives offered at national level.

- Training and recruitment are well-designed, however the structures are not scalable due to weak government follow-up and monitoring, lack of clarity on roles, low accountability and insufficient financing.^{xiii}
- The Master Plan noted the need to review incentives for special needs and inclusive education teachers and support staff as a strategic priority, in order to retain them over the long-term.^{xiv}
- In rural areas, community-based rehabilitation workers also provide support to teachers and assist families and children with enrolment in schools, but these efforts are not always clearly integrated into formal structures.^{xv}
- There is need for improved guidance and training for school management and inspectors.⁸

Financing for inclusive education is very low, and credible costings must be developed

The ESDP V warns that *“very small amounts continue to be assigned to non-typical education, which includes special, adult and alternative education”*,^{xvi} although it is not possible to analyse the budget for total spending on inclusive education.

Approximately ETB 55 million (US\$ 1.7 million)⁹ was allocated for teacher and curriculum development for inclusive education, including training of special needs teachers, over the course of the five-year ESDP V period. This amounts to around just 0.01% of the total budget for ESDP V.¹⁰ Better costing models for inclusive education are needed, based on a clear overview of actual needs and more credible data on disability.

Ethiopia plans to research the cost-effectiveness of inclusive education. The study will analyse inequalities in education and gather evidence to develop a comprehensive, cost-effective strategy to develop learning and teaching resources for special needs education.^{xvii}

Resources are insufficient to deliver inclusive education.

Fully responding to these needs and transforming the workforce for system-wide inclusive education, will require a huge scale-up of financing and substantial increases to public budgets. This can be supported by

7. The General Education Quality Improvement Programme for Equity (GEQIP-E)

8. Based on information from stakeholder interviews

9. This was converted from ESDP V using a 2020 conversion rate and as such is only a crude conversion to current rates.

10. Based on authors own calculations

applying ActionAid’s “4S education financing framework” and increasing the share, size, sensitivity and scrutiny of the public budget to ensure adequate resources to meet SDG4 are being allocated and spent.

SHARE: Ethiopia allocates a good proportion of its budget and GDP to education

- In 2017, Ethiopia dedicated 27% of its budget to education, the second highest proportional share of any country in the world.^{xviii}
- This share has increased from 16% in 2000 and exceeds the recommended benchmark of 15-20% outlined in the SDG4 Framework for action, and the regional average of 16.6%.^{xix}
- Sustained investment in education goals has been credited as part of Ethiopia’s success in expanding school enrolment while maintaining quality.
- Ethiopia has also managed to secure significant resources from donor partners to boost its domestic spending and was the twelfth largest recipient of overseas development assistance in 2017.^{xx}

SIZE: Insufficient revenue collection prevents Ethiopia from allocating sufficient domestic resources to inclusive education

The case of Ethiopia demonstrates that countries need to focus not only on education spending, but also on the overall amount of revenue available.

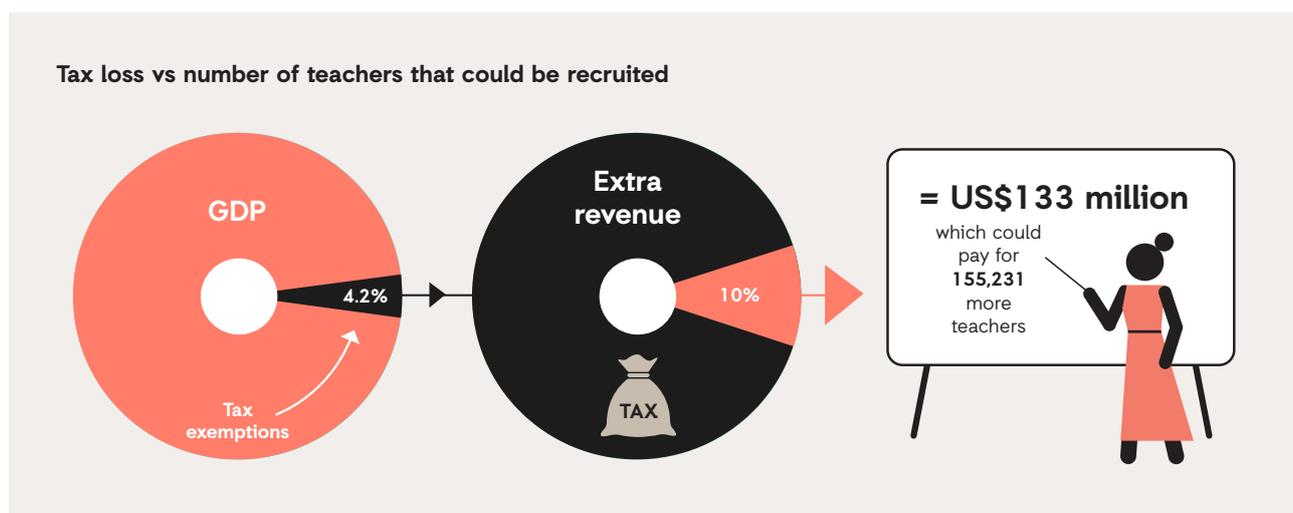
- Ethiopia’s very low tax-to-GDP ratio of^{xxi} 10.7%^{xxii} lags behind the sub-Saharan Africa average of 17.2% .
- Considering that tax-to-GDP ratios lower than 15% are deemed insufficient to finance even the most basic state functions^{xxiv} it is critical for the government to address this situation.
- The IMF has argued that Ethiopia should aim to raise more domestic revenue by eliminating some corporate tax incentives, a strategy which would allow the country to rapidly raise new funds.^{xxv}
- One estimate suggested that eliminating tax exemptions, which amounted to 4.2% of GDP, and allocating 10% of this to basic education, would have made an additional US\$ 133 million available.^{xxvi}
- At current rates, that would cover the annual salaries of an additional 155,231 entry-level teachers at primary level, or 118,960 at secondary level .¹¹

This issue is increasingly important with debt servicing currently absorbing 12% of all government revenue and set to rise to 20% in the next few years. This is above the level that the IMF describes as being “at moderate risk”.¹²

SENSITIVE: Budgets need to address equity to support inclusion

Ethiopia has made a number of attempts to address inequities in education through their financing models.

- The decentralised spending formulae used by national government to transfer funds to the regions



11. This estimate, for advocacy purposes, is based on entry-level salaries for teachers and other staff outlined in the revised salary scale implementation guidelines endorsed by the Ministry of Education in July 2020, and using the average US\$ to ETB exchange rate for 2020.
 12. Based on calculations by ActionAid (2020), Who Cares For the Future: finance gender-responsive public services! The IMF recommends that countries aim for at least “moderate” level of debt risk with a capacity to absorb shocks which, using their figures, would mean between 9% and 15% of government revenue. AAI took the median of this to identify which countries are “at risk”.

- now include provisions for estimates of disability.
- Ethiopia’s General Education Quality Improvement Programme (GEQIP) has recently introduced new funds for disability.
- From 2015, all regions received an additional 1% of their total allocation to support mainstream school facilities and resources for children with special educational needs. This was increased to 4% in 2018. While still low in comparison to the scale of the problem, this represents a welcome increase.^{xxvii}

As the GEQIP moved into its third phase of implementation (2018-2020) it placed an even greater focus on equity, including for those with special needs or disabilities. Among other things, it promotes the inclusion of children with special needs in education by providing supplementary grants to transform 687 schools to

inclusive education resource centres.^{xxviii} Although it is too early to see the outcomes of this investment, the focus on equity demonstrates Ethiopia’s commitment to children with disabilities.^{xxix}

SCRUTINY: Budget allocations to inclusion are difficult to analyse

Ethiopia needs to improve its ability to match financing to needs, and better understand the spending needed to transform the workforce for inclusive education. ESDP V does not allocate sufficient funding to special needs/ inclusive education and is compounded by lack of clarity regarding the amounts and disbursement of these funds. This is a problem for monitoring investments in inclusive education and ensuring accountability.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ethiopia has made impressive gains in education in the last two decades, with some of the highest enrolment rates and fastest progress towards the 2030 target for primary completion in sub-Saharan Africa. The Government should be commended on the progress made to embed its commitment to inclusive education, but it must work harder to reach its own goal of achieving a 75% enrolment ratio for children with disabilities,^{xxx} and set new ambitious goals, monitoring implementation and adapting plans as it rolls-out a new sector development plan in 2020. This will require more teachers trained in inclusive methodologies, supported by a system aligned to delivering on a bold vision for inclusive education. **As such the research recommends that the Government of Ethiopia:**

- 1. Continue to embed inclusive education into policy planning, budgeting and monitoring.**
- 2. Ensure more robust and accurate data to improve planning and budgeting for inclusive education and monitoring change.**
- 3. Improve alignment of federal, Woreda and district level systems behind inclusive education.**
- 4. Address high pupil-teacher ratios which prevent teachers from practicing inclusion in the classrooms.**
- 5. Develop a workforce that can practice inclusion, including a focus on transforming training to equip teachers to practice inclusion.**
- 6. Support teachers through improving the resource centre cluster system of inclusive education delivery.**
- 7. Carry out credible costings for supporting inclusive education, which include education workforce development.**
- 8. Raise significant new funds to transform the education system, and the teaching force in particular, for inclusion.** In Ethiopia this requires:
 - **Maintaining the share of the budget at current high levels of over 20%.** This is a required frontloading of the investments needed to meet the 2030 education targets, particularly in the workforce capacity to deliver it. Pressure from debt servicing must be managed so that it

does not erode these investments. This in turn will require the IMF to ensure its advice to the country does not counter their commitment to social spending.

- **Increasing the size of domestic revenue, and the overall government budget.** This can be done by adopting measures to build more progressive tax systems and increase the tax-to-GDP ratio, e.g. by stopping the allocation of harmful corporate tax incentives and tackling tax evasion and avoidance.
- **Improve the sensitivity of the budget to support inclusion.** Monitor the disbursement of GEQIP-E school grant top-ups for children with special educational needs, to see if this is adequate, and raise allocations where necessary. Guidance on the use of the special needs education grant, based on empirical evidence and child rights principles, should be provided.
- **Enable greater scrutiny of future allocations and expenditure by making education budgets publicly available.** The Ethiopian Government should improve transparency to increase monitoring and accountability at every level and ensure that budget allocations are properly targeted, arrive in full and on time, and are effectively spent.

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