



Gender-responsive and disability-inclusive education for all

Summary and recommendations

July 2021

Leonard Cheshire, Sightsavers, GPE, the World Bank's IEI, GCE-US and the UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) hosted a Global Education Summit side event, "Gender-responsive and disability-inclusive quality education for all" on 21st July 2021.

The purpose of the event was to showcase examples of education models and finance mechanisms that are supporting girls with disabilities in particular to realise quality education.

The speakers (see full list below) and presentations highlighted some of the barriers and opportunities to education for girls with disabilities, outlining critical next steps to ensure their inclusion in education planning.

We also heard how gender and disability inclusion can be integrated into existing and new education financing mechanisms. The event closed with recommendations for key stakeholders to take forward at the Global Education Summit, which are summarised below.

Event summary

- Despite some promising progress, there is still a long way to go to ensure girls with disabilities are gaining the same level of quality education as boys with disabilities, and their non-disabled peers. The Covid-19 pandemic, combined with existing social and economic barriers that both girls and children with disabilities face means **we need to urgently redouble efforts to get girls with disabilities in particular back to school.**

- We have the means and knowledge to support girls with disabilities in particular to return safely to school, and continue their education following the Covid-19 pandemic. As illustrated by colleagues from [Leonard Cheshire](#) and [Sightsavers](#), **there are proven models of inclusive education that are enabling children to gain a quality education.**
- There are existing and new opportunities (for example the [Girls' Education Accelerator](#)) to provide the funding needed to support education systems and schools to deliver more gender-responsive and disability-inclusive education.
- By leveraging these funding opportunities to scale up proven success stories in inclusive education, we could make much more rapid progress towards the already off-track SDG 4 (quality education for all) and SDG5 (gender equality).
- Youth activists, and youth-led organizations, networks and OPDs have a critical role to play in policy and decision-making. We heard examples of how youth-led and grassroots organizations are working to transform community attitudes towards education for learners with disabilities, tackle gender norms, bridge the digital divide, and raise awareness around the barriers and opportunities towards more gender-responsive and inclusive education.
- We have a **critical opportunity to take action for gender-responsive and disability-inclusive education now.** We call on the Heads of State, donor agencies, ministries of education and all other key stakeholders joining the Global Education Summit to listen to our recommendations and take action to ensure girls with disabilities are not left behind in efforts to reach SDG4 and SDG5 by 2030.

Recommendations

None of this can be addressed without considering **intersectionality and data.**

1. We want to see a **fully-funded Global Partnership for Education**, to help us achieve SDG4 or SDG5. With this funding, GPE must demonstrate a strengthened commitment to equity and inclusion when it comes to funding. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, we recommend urgent action and funding to tackle the digital divide, especially for learners with disabilities.
2. Covid-19 back-to-school plans and education recovery strategies must **prioritise disability-inclusive and gender-responsive education.** This includes greater investment in the training, development and recruitment of qualified teachers and educational support staff, especially female teachers.
3. When developing and implementing education funding packages and strategies, we recommend **meaningful partnership with, and funding for, youth with disabilities, and youth-led OPDs.**

4. We recommend a **stronger consideration for the ways in which gender norms influence learners' experiences of education**. For example, the different experiences of boys with disabilities compared to girls, and for children with complex disabilities and diverse learning needs.
5. **Collect, analyse, report and increase funding for data that is disaggregated by gender and disability**. Quality, consistent and standardised data will help us understand what prevents boys and girls with disabilities from accessing education, and what can be done to overcome these barriers.
6. As a cross-cutting recommendation, **we demand that GPE partner with community-based actors, including CSOs, OPDs, religious leaders, parents, young activists and youth-led OPDs and networks**. Young people should always have a seat at the table. This is their future, and they must be involved in decision-making processes.

Event speakers (in order of appearance)

1. Charlotte McClain-Nhlapo, Global Disability Advisor of the World Bank Group, World Bank, United States
2. Sarah Musau, Leonard Cheshire Youth Advocate, Kenya
3. Helen Grant, UK Prime Minister's Special Envoy on Girls' Education
4. Dr Elyas Abdi, Director General, State Department for Early Learning and Basic Education, Kenya
5. Martin Okiyo, Inclusive Education Technical Advisor, Leonard Cheshire Kenya, Kenya
6. Tiangay Gondoe, Programme Manager, Sightsavers
7. Gertrude Oforiwa Fefoame, Gender and Disability Rights Advocate, UNCRPD
8. Shrutilata Singh, youth advocate, Commonwealth Children and Youth Disability Network (CCYDN)
9. Daniela Gordon, young activist, Interamerican Institute of Disability and Inclusive Development (iiDi)
10. Jorge U. Colin, Education Specialist at the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)
11. Jennifer Rigg, Executive Director, GCE-US
12. Elaine Green, Head of Influencing, Campaigns and Public Affairs, Leonard Cheshire
13. Antara Ganguli, Head of the UNGEI Secretariat

Resources

- [Full recording and transcript](#)
- UNGEI and Leonard Cheshire [video](#) shared: “Girls With Disabilities Have an Equal Right to Education”, developed with VSO, the Commonwealth Children and Youth Disability Network (CCYDN), Sightsavers, and Light for the World
- UNGEI and Leonard Cheshire’s advocacy brief, [“Leave No Girl With Disabilities Behind”](#) , developed with the CCYDN, Sightsavers, and Humanity & Inclusion
- Leonard Cheshire’s policy document, [“Every Girl’s Right: Leonard Cheshire’s holistic approach to ensuring every girl receives a quality education”](#)
- [Sightsavers’ research and policy brief](#) on promoting inclusive education for girls and boys in Central and West Africa
- [Learn more](#) about the Global Partnership for Education Girls’ Education Accelerator
- To express interest in joining the Inclusive Education and Early Childhood Community of Practice, which focuses on knowledge sharing and advocacy for funding of disability inclusive education and early childhood, please fill out [this form](#).