



Quality education for all Final Report

September 2026



AGA KHAN FOUNDATION



Sightsavers

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Suggested reference

Muuo SW, de Kadt J, Kairanya L, Odol C, Otieno E, Stapleton V & Schmidt E (2026). Quality education for all: Final report. Nairobi: Sightsavers.

List of abbreviations

BEQI	Brief Early Childhood Quality Inventory
CI	Co-investigator
EARC	Education assessment resource centre
ECCE	Early childhood care and education
ECD	Early childhood development
ECDE	Early childhood development and education
FGD	Focus group discussion
IDI	In-depth interview
KISE	Kenya Institute of Special Education
LMIC	Low- and middle-income countries
MECP	Madrasa Early Childhood Programme
OPD	Organisation for people with disabilities
PAW	Participatory action workshop

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Ministry of Education in Kenya and the County governments of Homa Bay and Mombasa for their support in conducting this study. We are very grateful to all teachers who participated in the research and the school administration that supported their participation.

We acknowledge efforts from the different partners that were instrumental in the execution of this work — including Schools2030, the Aga Khan Foundation and the Madrassa Early Childhood Programme (MECP). We especially recognise ECD Measure for providing the BEQI toolkit, availing the different updated versions, supporting the different training sessions, providing data when it was needed, and reviewing this report.

In addition, we are grateful to individuals within the programme teams who provided administrative and logistics support, without which the field activities would have been very difficult. In Homa Bay, we thank the Sightsavers team, including Festus Kang'alya. In Nairobi, we thank Benedict Mutethya, Martha Mukulu, Anne Adede and Flora Mureithi. We also appreciate Silvia Marucelli, Muge Kalender-Senturk and Isack Matho for supporting with finance and donor relations. We also acknowledge research assistance support from George Maina at the Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE).

We recognise the guidance and support study steering committee members, specifically:

- Fred Haga, Head of Directorate, Special Needs Education, Ministry of Education.
- Daniel Adera, Deputy Director, Quality Assurance and Standards, Ministry of Education, Homa Bay County.
- Masibo Kituyu, County Director, Ministry of Education, Mombasa.
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- Joseph Goga, Director, Early Years Education, County Government of Homa Bay.
- Jacob Omoro, Secretary General, Homa Bay County Disability Forum.
- Hudson Karume, Chief Executive Office, Vision of the Blind.
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The team would like to thank Jacob's Foundation, which funded this research under the Schools2030 research grants programme.

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Executive summary

Background

Inclusive, high-quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) is essential for school readiness, lifelong learning, and wellbeing, yet nearly 60 per cent of children in low-income countries — particularly girls, children with disabilities, and those in poverty or rural areas — do not have access. In Kenya, despite legal and policy commitments, implementation of disability-inclusive ECCE remains constrained. Learning environment assessment tools that explicitly address disability inclusion offer a key opportunity to strengthen equitable, high-quality ECCE delivery.

The brief early childhood quality inventory (BEQI) toolkit is one such tool being implemented within Schools2030, a 10-country programme focused on teacher agency. This toolkit includes a classroom observation tool, a teacher self-assessment tool, and personalised feedback delivered to teachers via WhatsApp. However, while the standard toolkit addresses key aspects of quality of early learning environments, it does not explicitly consider disability inclusion or provide targeted guidance for supporting children with disabilities or additional needs.

In 2024, Sightsavers and the Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) embarked on a two-year participatory action research study to strengthen the BEQI toolkit to support children with disabilities and additional needs in pre-schools in Mombasa and Homa Bay counties in Kenya. The specific objectives were to:

1. Understand how the BEQI toolkit could best support pre-primary teachers in identifying and responding to disability-inclusion needs.
2. Collaboratively develop and pilot an adapted BEQI toolkit with enhanced disability-inclusion focus.
3. Describe experiences of Kenyan pre-primary schoolteachers in using the enhanced BEQI tool and guidance and assess how the enhanced tools support teachers in adapting teaching practices and learning environments for greater disability inclusion.
4. Identify what would be required for broader adoption of the adapted BEQI toolkit in Kenya, in support of disability-inclusive ECCE.

Methods

This was a participatory action research study in Homa Bay and Mombasa counties in Kenya that was organised in two phases:

Phase one took place from May 2024 to April 2025, and involved:

1. A review of the BEQI toolkit by inclusive education specialists in Sightsavers, generating recommendations for adjustments to the toolkit to strengthen its inclusion of children with disabilities or additional needs.
2. Data collection comprising focus group discussions (FGDs) with teachers and BEQI enumerators, documentary photography with teachers, and in-depth Interviews (IDIs) with government education stakeholders, representatives of organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs), and parents of young children with disabilities or additional needs in Homa Bay and Mombasa.
3. A participatory action workshop (PAW 1) where researchers and study participants collaboratively discussed and validated research findings, including proposed adjustments to the BEQI toolkit. The study team then developed these adjustments into a package for piloting in phase two of the study.

The pilot package included the following components, which were implemented in addition to the standard BEQI toolkit and training:

1. Disability awareness and inclusion training for BEQI enumerators, alongside standard BEQI reliability training.
2. Observable characteristics handout provided to enumerators and teachers to support recognition of children who might have disabilities or additional needs.
3. Inclusion of additional questions in the BEQI observation form:
 - a. Number of boys and girls with disabilities or additional needs and types.
 - b. Open text field to record disability-related observations not covered by the standard form.
4. Disability focused self-reflection tool for teachers exploring inclusion needs of two children, to be completed alongside the standard self-assessment questionnaire.
5. Inclusion tips sent to teachers together with the standard BEQI feedback, after observation.

Phase two ran from May to November 2025 and involved:

1. A pilot of the BEQI toolkit, with adjustments to strengthen support for children with additional needs for 29 pre-school teachers.
2. Data collection, comprising FGDs with teachers and BEQI enumerators.
3. Another participatory workshop (PAW 2) where study findings were reviewed and validated.

All FGDs and IDIs were audio-recorded. Audio files were translated and transcribed verbatim as well as checked for quality. Thematic analysis of qualitative data was conducted using NVIVO version 15.

Key findings and discussion

The study found that participating teachers acknowledged the presence of children with disabilities or additional needs in their classrooms. These children were receiving some support — from teachers, school administration, County and National government, OPDs, NGOs and other education system stakeholders. Despite this, several challenges remained — including stigma and discrimination, late or delayed identification of difficulties or additional needs, and limited access to assessment and support.

Through piloting an adapted disability-inclusive BEQI toolkit, the study demonstrated that disability inclusion could be integrated into existing assessment tools without requiring a fundamental redesign. Experiences of teachers and enumerators with the adapted disability-inclusive BEQI toolkit were positive. The observable characteristics handout received particularly positive feedback from teachers and enumerators. Most teachers also had positive experiences with the observation process and the feedback received. Enumerators valued the training on inclusion of children with disabilities or additional needs and were able to record information about inclusion and exclusion in classrooms they observed. However, the open-ended self-reflection tool for teachers did not perform as expected, with participants preferring close-ended tools or discussions with appropriately experienced and trained enumerators.

Finally, the study found that teachers had greater trust in the observation process when enumerators were embedded in the education system and had teaching experience themselves. Further work to test additional edits to the observation tool will be valuable, as will work to refine self-reflection and feedback processes. Research to assess the impact of the use of the adapted BEQI toolkit on inclusive teaching practices would be important.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Disability inclusive early childhood care and education

Inclusive and quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) are vital for promoting school readiness, foundational learning, and lifelong wellbeing. Yet almost 60 per cent of children in low-income countries do not have access to early care and learning opportunities — with girls, children in poverty, those in rural areas, and children with disabilities, among those most affected (1). The situation is worsened by challenges with teacher shortages and quality, lack of information, cultural barriers, inadequate resources, and poor infrastructure, among others (2). Significant gaps still need bridging — especially in access, equity and quality of early childhood care and education (1).

Contextualised measurement tools are vital to the success of programmes that aim to improve access to quality ECCE. When measurement tools are robustly adapted to the programme's setting, they enable stakeholders to set specific, measurable objectives and track progress toward achieving them. Two key types of measurement tools are critical: those that assess children's development and early learning, and learning environment assessment tools which measure the quality of ECCE centres and classrooms. The latter provide insight into physical and infrastructural conditions, but also into the quality of teaching, and the socio-emotional learning environment. Data generated by such tools can be useful for teachers, schools and local officials in identifying areas of strength, but also key areas for improvement or investment (3).

Disability is defined as a long-term impairment or health condition that, in interaction with the environment, limits participation in society on an equal basis with others, and must be clinically diagnosed (4). In most low-income contexts, early identification and diagnosis of disability is extremely constrained, and many children do not have access to these services. Additionally, literature shows that it can be premature to diagnose some disabilities in early childhood since development is ongoing and uneven (5). Consequently, many children without a diagnosed disability still have additional needs — for example, delayed milestones or challenges in motor, sensory, cognitive, communication or emotional domains — and require additional support and accommodations to enable them to participate equitably in education. In this report we refer to children with disabilities or additional needs, to cover both groups of children.

Young children with disabilities or additional needs face substantial risks of sub-optimal early childhood development (ECD), requiring targeted support to ensure equitable access to lifelong learning opportunities, especially in low and middle income countries (6). These children stand to gain significantly from early learning opportunities, enabling them to build the foundational skills for school readiness and improve their prospects for later educational and economic outcomes, thereby enhancing social equity (1). If standardised learning environment assessment tools collect information on disability inclusion, they have the potential to contribute to increasingly inclusive ECCE.

1.2 Kenyan context

The Kenyan government is committed to providing quality education to all children, including those with disabilities (7). It ratified and/or endorsed several international rights and development instruments — including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1995 (8), the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006 (9), the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 (10), and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children in 1990 (11).

At local level, the Constitution guarantees the right to access educational institutions and facilities for all children with disabilities (12) while the National Special Needs Education Policy Framework of 2009 recommends inclusive education as an appropriate means through which learners with disabilities can access education (13). More recently, the Persons with Disability Act 2025 mandates inclusive education by requiring schools to integrate learners with disabilities, guaranteeing free, compulsory basic education, and promoting affirmative action in enrolment at all levels. It enforces the provision of individualised support, assistive devices, accessible infrastructure, and specialised teacher training (14).

Kenya's education system mandates two years of free pre-primary schooling (Pre-primary 1 and Pre-primary 2) for children aged four to five years, often integrated into existing public primary schools as part of the national curriculum. Under the Constitution of Kenya (2010), early childhood development education (ECDE) is a devolved function, placing responsibility on the 47 County governments rather than the national government (12). Counties manage pre-primary education, recruit teachers, and build infrastructure, with the goal of bringing services closer to communities and boosting enrolment. In principle, children with disabilities or additional needs are entitled to attend mainstream pre-schools, but in practice implementation of disability-inclusive ECCE remains a substantial challenge. Other key challenges include poor attitudes towards inclusive education by some key stakeholders, a lack of resources to adequately tailor provision to ensure equal access for all learners, an inflexible curriculum, and a lack of training of teachers on appropriate pedagogical techniques for supporting children with disabilities in an inclusive setting (15, 16)

Learning environment assessments for ECCE offer an opportunity to generate data on educational quality and resourcing needs, while also providing teachers with individualised feedback to support them in strengthening their teaching practice. Tools which explicitly consider disability inclusion can play an important role in strengthening delivery of equitable and inclusive education for children with disabilities.

1.3 Schools 2030 programme and the BEQI tool

Schools2030 is a global movement, led by the Aga Khan Foundation, dedicated to improving quality teaching and holistic learning, and building resilient education systems across the world (17). Kenya is one of 10 countries participating in this 10-year programme which began in 2020. Schools2030 supports teachers to design and implement low-cost and scalable education micro-innovations to inform and transform education systems to improve holistic learning outcomes for the most marginalised learners worldwide.

Using the principles of human-centred design, Schools2030 works directly with teachers to assess holistic learning levels and environment, and design, test and iterate a micro-innovation to support improved learning outcomes. It also involves showcasing these innovations, drawing on assessment data and other evidence of ‘what works’ to improve holistic learning in the most marginalised communities (18).

As part of the assessment step, Schools2030 makes use of learning environment assessment tools. For classrooms at pre-school level, this is the Brief early childhood quality inventory (BEQI) toolkit, developed by ECD Measure (19) (20). The BEQI toolkit was designed as a universal quality assessment tool, applicable across diverse early childhood settings, and well-suited for adaptation and contextualisation. The toolkit focuses on four evidence-based domains which are essential for high-quality early education:

1. Play-based learning.
2. Learning through conversations.
3. Promoting strong relationships.
4. Safe and stimulating environments.

This toolkit, which is adapted to each specific context of use, includes:

- A structured classroom observation tool, completed by a trained observer during a 90-minute classroom observation.
- A multiple-choice self-assessment tool completed by teachers to support reflection on their teaching practices and identification of priority areas for strengthening practice.
- Individualised feedback messages for teachers, based on the classroom observation and delivered by WhatsApp shortly after the observation.

The contextualised version of the BEQI toolkit used by the Schools2030 programme in Kenya did not explicitly record the presence of children with disabilities or additional needs in classrooms during observation or provide teachers with disability-inclusion feedback. However, the toolkit’s existing emphasis on inclusion and equity, and its use within an equity-oriented programme, provided an ideal opportunity for further adaptation to address disability inclusion.

In 2024, Sightsavers and the Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) embarked on a two-year participatory action research study to strengthen the BEQI toolkit to support children with disabilities and additional needs in pre-schools in Mombasa and Homa Bay counties in Kenya.

2.0 Study objectives

The study's main objective was to strengthen the BEQI toolkit to provide greater support to teachers in ensuring disability-inclusive pre-school learning environments.

The specific objectives were to:

1. Understand how the BEQI toolkit could best support pre-school teachers in identifying and responding to disability-inclusion needs.
2. Collaboratively develop and pilot an adapted BEQI toolkit with an enhanced disability-inclusion focus.
3. Describe experiences of Kenyan pre-school teachers in using the enhanced BEQI tool and guidance and assess how the enhanced tools support teachers in adapting teaching practices and learning environments for greater disability inclusion.
4. Identify what would be required for broader adoption of the adapted BEQI-toolkit in Kenya, in support of disability-inclusive ECCE.

3.0 Methods

3.1 Study design and location

This was a two-phase participatory action research study that took place in Homa Bay and Mombasa counties in Kenya.

The two sites were selected based on the presence of existing relationships and collaborations in these areas. Sightsavers has been implementing a range of development programmes and research projects in health, education and disability inclusion in Homa Bay for a number of years (21, 22). On the other hand, Mombasa is where the Schools2030 programme has been working and implementing learning environment tools in schools since 2021 (23). Both programmes have developed partnerships with pre-schools and relevant government ministries and stakeholders in the respective counties.

The study was organised in two phases:

Phase one took place from July 2024 to April 2025, and involved:

1. A review of the BEQI toolkit by inclusive education specialists in Sightsavers, generating recommendations for adjustments to the toolkit to strengthen its inclusion of children with disabilities or additional needs.
2. Data collection comprising focus group discussions (FGDs) with teachers and BEQI enumerators, documentary photography with teachers and in-depth interviews (IDIs) with government education stakeholders, representatives of organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs), and parents of young children with disabilities or additional needs in Homa Bay and Mombasa.
3. A participatory action workshop (PAW 1) took place in which researchers and study participants collaboratively discussed and validated research findings, including proposed adjustments to the BEQI toolkit. The study team then developed these adjustments into a package for piloting in phase two of the study.

Phase two ran from May to November 2025, and involved:

1. A pilot of the BEQI toolkit, with adjustments to strengthen support for children with additional needs for 29 pre-school teachers.
2. Data collection, comprising FGDs with teachers and BEQI enumerators.
3. A final step of another participatory workshop (PAW 2), where study findings were reviewed and validated by participants.

3.2 Study population and sampling

Study participants included pre-school teachers (including teachers-in-charge and heads of institutions), BEQI enumerators, education stakeholders, and parents of pre-school children with disabilities or additional needs. Sampling processes and sample sizes were as follows:

Pre-school teachers in Mombasa were purposively selected from mainstream public pre-schools by the research team, in consultation with the Schools2030 country team (MECP, AKF, ECD Measure). They were selected based on previous participation in Schools2030 activities, availability and willingness to participate. In Homa Bay, the team selected 12 pre-school teachers from six public mainstream pre-schools that were previously part of a disability-inclusive ECDE intervention project between 2021 and 2023 (22).

BEQI enumerators in Mombasa were purposively selected, with support from MECP, from the pool of BEQI enumerators that had been trained and had previously conducted teacher observations. In Homa Bay, enumerators for phase two were identified in collaboration with the County government based on the roles and experience within the County Department of Education.

Education stakeholders included National and County government officials in the areas of education and special needs education, representatives from organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs), heads of institutions and ECD teachers-in-charge. They were selected based on their roles and experience with working with schools, communities and young children with disabilities or additional needs.

Parents of young children with disabilities or additional needs were selected with support from pre-school teachers. These were parents who were willing and able to provide information about their children's experiences within their learning environments.

Table one below provides a summary of the number of participants involved in the two study sites in the two phases of data collection.

Table one: Number of research participants by phase, data collection technique and County

	Data collection technique	Research participant	Homa Bay	Mombasa
Phase one	FGDs	Teachers	12	14
		BEQI enumerators	N/A	5
	Documentary photography	Teachers	12	6
	In-depth interviews	Education stakeholders	6	6
		Parents	3	3
Phase two	BEQI observations	Teachers	17	12
	FGDs	Teachers	17	12
		BEQI enumerators	7	7

3.3 Data collection and analysis

3.3.1 Phase one data collection

Data was collected through semi-structured FGD and IDI guides, covering participants' experiences with inclusion of children with additional needs in mainstream public pre-schools. More specifically, it covered positive experiences of engaging with additional needs, challenges faced and recommendations for improvement. It also looked into experiences in identifying and responding to disability-inclusion needs. In Mombasa, the guides had questions on participant experiences with the BEQI toolkit and opportunities to strengthen disability-inclusion in the BEQI. Teachers additionally took photos of learning environments, using tablets, illustrating both strengths and challenges.

Phase one activities culminated in the first participatory action workshop (PAW 1), held in Mombasa County, where researchers and study participants collaboratively discussed and validated these research findings and proposed adjustments to the BEQI toolkit and data collection processes. Proposed adjustments to the BEQI toolkit were developed into the package for piloting in phase two.

3.3.2 Phase two pilot description

The pilot package agreed with stakeholders included the following components, in addition to the standard BEQI toolkit:

1. Disability awareness and inclusion training for BEQI enumerators, alongside standard BEQI reliability training.
2. Observable characteristics handout (see appendix two) provided to enumerators and teachers to support recognition of children who might have additional needs.
3. Inclusion of two additional questions in the BEQI observation form (see appendix one):
 - a. Number of boys and girls with disabilities or additional needs and types.
 - b. Open text field to record disability-related observations not covered by the standard form.
4. Disability-focused self-reflection tool (see appendix three) for teachers — exploring the inclusion needs of two children in the class, to be completed alongside the standard self-assessment questionnaire.
5. Inclusion tips (see appendix four) sent to teachers after observation, together with the standard BEQI feedback.

Implementation of the pilot involved 29 teachers.

3.3.3 Phase two data collection

In Homa Bay, enumerators were recruited through the County Department of Education and participated in the full BEQI reliability training as they had not previously conducted BEQI observations. This process was completed as a group via the BEQI online training platform, led by members of the study team. Enumerators were certified as BEQI reliable before conduction observations. In Mombasa, experienced enumerators were recruited through the

Schools2030 programme and were consequently already BEQI reliable. They therefore only completed the disability inclusion training.

In both sites, before each observation, enumerators discussed the process with teachers and obtained background information on the class, including the number of girls and boys with disabilities or additional needs. Following the observation, enumerators asked teachers to complete the disability-focused self-reflection questionnaire and the BEQI self-assessment. Observation data was electronically captured on the same day, and both standard individual feedback and inclusion tips were sent to each teacher. Semi-structured FGDs were then conducted to explore the experiences of teachers and enumerators with the BEQI pilot process, and to obtain their recommendations for improvement.

Preliminary findings were validated with participants, and further input obtained, at a second participatory action workshop held in Homa Bay County.

3.3.4 Data management and analysis

All FGDs and IDIs were audio-recorded. Audio files were translated and transcribed verbatim, as well as checked for quality. Thematic analysis of qualitative data was conducted using NVIVO version 15.

3.3.5 Ethics

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Strathmore University Science and Ethics Committee in Kenya, with reference number SU-ISERC2300/24. A research licence (NACOSTI/P/24/38444) to conduct the study was also obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Authorisation to carry out research activities within schools was obtained from the Ministry and County Departments of Education and school management. Prior to data collection, a written informed consent form was obtained from each participant. Throughout data collection and workshops, care was taken to support participants with disabilities and manage potential risks related to safeguarding, protection of confidentiality, voluntary participation and minimising demands on participants' time.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Existing support mechanisms and persistent challenges for children with disabilities or additional needs

4.1.1 Existing support for children with disabilities or additional needs

All participating teachers acknowledged the presence of children with disabilities or additional needs in their classrooms. Teachers described teaching children with a wide range of difficulties, including difficulties with movement, seeing, hearing, communication, learning or remembering, as well as behaviour and health challenges, including seizures. Several teachers described teaching children with multiple types of difficulties.

Study participants agreed that children with disabilities or additional needs in the participating schools were receiving some support, directly from teachers as well as other education system stakeholders. Within schools, teachers recognised the importance of building strong relationships with these children, including through finding ways to overcome communication challenges and celebrating their success. Teachers countered stigma by supporting positive relationships between children with disabilities or additional needs and their peers, working to support children's acceptance in their families and, in some cases, even contributing to stigma reduction efforts in the broader community.

“One of the things that I or my colleagues, as teachers, have done; one, when a learner comes and we realise that the learner has a problem, we show love to this learner.”

Teacher, Homa Bay

In the classroom, teachers frequently adapted learning expectations and teaching methods in response to individual children's needs. Teachers made adjustments within the classroom — for example, through seating arrangements, accessible materials and differentiated content — to improve children's inclusion and participation in learning.

“Once I learnt I have a child with sight problem, I do rub the board to make sure that I have the activity to be done at that time because, if I have so many activities on the board, she gets confused. So, I make sure the board is clean, I have one activity at a time, to assist the one with the sight [difficulties]. And again, I always make sure she sits at the front.”

Teacher, Mombasa

Teachers reported paying close attention to children to ensure their safety and wellbeing while at school. Several teachers emphasised the importance of communicating and collaborating with parents or caregivers to understand and meet children's learning needs, and sometimes to encourage the parent to take the child for functional educational or diagnostic assessment or healthcare. Parents appreciated good communication with teachers and schools, and teachers were able to learn strategies to support children from parents.

School administration played an important role in addressing challenges with inaccessible or hazardous physical infrastructure or difficult terrain. In some cases, they were reported to encourage and support enrolment of children with disabilities or additional needs, or even exempted children from paying for the school feeding programme.

Support from County government included provision of bursaries for children with additional needs, provision of funds to schools to purchase resources for these children and, in some instances, provision of transport. Education assessment resource centres (EARCs) were noted to support with functional educational assessment. At this stage, this is meant to guide on the appropriate interventions as learners with disabilities or additional needs learn alongside their peers. The OPDs played a central role in advocacy in communities, particularly around stigma and discrimination, and in locating young children with disabilities or additional needs in the community and ensuring they were enrolled in schools. They also provided inclusion support and guidance to teachers and education stakeholders. Support from non-governmental organisations included training and awareness building, support with learning materials and assessment tools, and provision of assistive devices for children.

“In our school we have collaborated with an NGO and at least one child has been given a wheelchair.”

Teacher, Homa Bay

4.1.2 Persistent challenges in inclusive pre-schools

While recognising the support noted above, participants also described a number of persistent challenges which limited enrolment of children with additional needs in pre-school, or negatively impacted their inclusion, participation and learning.

Disability stigma and discrimination had multiple harmful implications for children due to experiences of teasing or bullying hostility as narrated by one parent.

“Another challenge, which also made me feel bad, was what people were saying about him...that my child had difficulty in speech. And the other children would laugh at him.”

Parent, Mombasa

Families, and especially parents of children with additional needs, were reported to experience hostility and alienation from the community.

“Mockery or mockingly, a parent will come and tell you, you’ve given birth to a child with a disability. That is a cursed family.”

Education stakeholder, Homa Bay

As a result, participants reported that some children with additional needs were hidden at home rather than being enrolled in school. In other cases, parents of school-going children reacted negatively to teachers who raised concern that a child was experiencing difficulties or had additional needs. Data showed that negative beliefs about children with additional needs made some teachers less willing to support children’s inclusion and learning.

Late or delayed identification of difficulties or additional needs, and limited access to assessment and support, negatively impacted children's health and wellbeing, and constrained teachers' efforts. In many cases, parents lacked information about child development, were in denial about their child's challenges, or simply did not know how to seek support or care. This resulted in lost opportunities for early assessment and intervention. In some cases, when teachers became aware that a child needed additional support and reached out to his/her parents to discuss this, some parents were unwilling to engage. Lack of information, disability stigma, certain traditional or religious beliefs, and concerns about cost, were believed to contribute to this. Some teachers described challenges in accessing EARC services, although this was described as now having improved.

"I advised the mother to take the child to the hospital, but she said she doesn't have money, I told her to go to [name of health facility] because it is free for children under five years old. She took her there once and they came with that conclusion that she has convulsion disorder. Then after that she refused to go to the hospital, she said she is going to church for prayers. Until now she has not taken that child to the hospital."

Teacher, Homa Bay

Lack of training and support in inclusive education for pre-school teachers meant teachers were not always able to recognise children's difficulties or struggled to identify strategies to respond to children's support needs. Teachers and education stakeholders highlighted the need for additional training, alongside more individualised support (coaching, mentoring, communities of practice) to support teachers in meeting the needs of individual children. Recognising the needs of children who needed additional support, but who did not have a visible disability, was a particular challenge.

"Most of our teachers, especially in ECD, they lack capacity to support learners with disability...Most of them are not having that adequate training on special needs that can equip them with adequate skills that they can use to support these learners with special needs."

OPD representative, Mombasa

Limited institutionalisation of inclusive education policy and support meant that support for inclusion of children with additional needs was often dependent on the goodwill of individual office holders, impacting sustainability. Institutionalisation was recognised as crucial to ensuring regular and adequate resource allocation, and continuity of services.

"The facilities are poor. The resources are not forthcoming. I interact a lot with them and I know that the disbursement that is supposed to be given to the special needs does not come forth. The support is very little."

Education stakeholder, Mombasa

Inaccessible physical infrastructure and limited resources for inclusive education

posed further barriers to children's full participation. Some classrooms were cramped and crowded, with uneven floors, inadequate doorway width, poor lighting and excessive noise from other sources, while schools lacked level and even outdoor spaces, and safe and accessible playgrounds and toilets. Limited financial support to schools for inclusion of children with additional needs impacted leadership capacity and motivation to address these challenges. Additionally, limited availability of adapted or accessible play and learning materials or playground equipment was viewed as a constraint. Children also often lacked access to assistive devices. Large class sizes, driven by resource challenges, further exacerbated challenges in meeting the inclusion needs of all children.

"Another thing is on play, learning and teaching materials and equipment. They are inadequate...In pre-school most learning surrounds play. Most of the learners learn through play and if we don't have adequate, not just adequate but adaptable, inclusive play materials then their learning is being hampered."

Education stakeholder, Homa Bay

Participants also highlighted the additional costs and financial challenges often faced by parents of children with disabilities or additional needs. In the absence of financial support for education, they struggled to pay school fees, buy uniforms, purchase or repair assistive devices such as wheelchairs, or even provide basic necessities for their children.

"I also lacked money to pay his school fees so he stayed home for a long time as we worked on his speech development."

Parent, Mombasa



Figure one: School outdoor compound in Homa Bay with hazardous boulders ¹



Figure two: Rough, uneven cement floor in a pre-school classroom in Mombasa

¹ Additional data from the documentary photography component of the study are available [CIES-2025-teacher-perspectives-poster-presentation-accessible](#).

4.1.3 Proposed adjustment to BEQI toolkit for phase two pilot

Regular, sector-wide use of disability-inclusive learning environment assessments was identified as a gap in both counties. In Homa Bay, the County government quality assurance and standards team had previously developed a disability-inclusive version of their existing school assessment tool with support from Sightsavers, but this had not moved into widespread use. However, while this tool provided insight into infrastructure and school-level challenges, it did not provide much insight into disability inclusive learning environments, including teaching practices, within individual classrooms.

In Mombasa, the BEQI toolkit was in use through the Schools2030 programme. Teachers and enumerators were broadly positive about the toolkit but saw opportunities for it to engage more deeply with inclusion of children with disabilities or additional needs. The technical review of the BEQI tool itself highlighted that the tool was implicitly inclusive, with some questions referring to 'all children'. However, children with disabilities or additional needs were not explicitly mentioned, and classroom observations were not generating data on whether these children were present, or on whether their learning and inclusion needs were being met.

Building on BEQI's adaptable design, the tool and associated resources are intentionally built for contextual customisation. The following package of disability-inclusive extensions were developed for piloting during phase two of the study.

4.1.4 Observable characteristics handout

During study inception and planning, it became clear that, while most teachers had some disability training and had broad familiarity with inclusive education, linking this knowledge to the realities of the children in their classrooms was challenging. Teachers were able to better identify children who needed additional support when they had visible difficulties or a diagnosed disability which had been shared with them. However, most teachers were also aware of other children in their classrooms who were struggling, sometimes termed 'time takers', but many lacked tools and the necessary vocabulary to support them in linking the observable characteristics of these children to specific functional difficulties and support or inclusion needs.

During phase one data collection, teachers were provided with a short handout describing observable characteristics of children who might need additional support, to facilitate the discussion of their experiences teaching children with disabilities or additional needs. Teachers found this resource very helpful for identifying and describing children's difficulties at school, and also for identifying strategies to better support children's inclusion and learning. This tool was therefore further refined for use in the pilot, to support teachers in identifying and meeting the needs of children with additional needs, and to support BEQI enumerators in collecting information from teachers about children with disabilities or additional needs in the classroom. This tool, incorporating adjustments emerging from the pilot process, is attached to this report as appendix two.

4.1.5 Disability and inclusion training for enumerators

In order for BEQI classroom observations to generate information about inclusion of children with disabilities or additional needs, it was necessary for enumerators to understand the

principles of disability inclusion, for the presence of children with disabilities or additional needs to be documented, and for their inclusion to be considered.

While BEQI enumerators were rigorously trained and tested in reliable observations, they did not always have prior training, understanding or experience with disability inclusion.

Enumerators agreed that accurately scoring several items in the BEQI tool would require them to consider the inclusion of children with disabilities or additional needs but did not feel that this was something they consistently considered. Consequently, an **orientation to disability and disability inclusive ECDE** was developed and included as part of the enumerator training for the study, and discussion on how to recognise inclusion or exclusion was integrated into the standard reliability training.

4.1.6. Adjustments to the BEQI classroom observation tool

A technical review of the classroom observation tool made a number of recommendations for adjustments to enhance disability inclusion:

- Recording the number of girls and boys with disabilities or additional needs, and the type of disability or additional need.
- For questions asking about 'half the children', introduction of sub-questions asking specifically about the item in relation to children with disabilities or additional needs.
- Introducing questions about the availability of specific adapted or disability-inclusive learning materials (for example, braille or audio books).
- Adjust questions about the physical environment to also explicitly consider whether the environment was accessible to children with disabilities or additional needs.

To protect the reliability and comparability of the validated BEQI tool, a subset of recommended changes was tested in this pilot, with further potential adjustments recommended for future validation work.

In this pilot, information about the number of children with disabilities or additional needs, and types of disabilities or needs was incorporated. Additionally, an open-ended question was included for enumerators to record any other inclusion-related information from each observation. The BEQI classroom observation tool, incorporating the adjustments used in the pilot, is attached to this report as appendix one.

4.1.7 Teacher self-reflection questionnaire

Teachers reported valuing the standard BEQI self-assessment process and felt that it would be useful to also reflect on inclusion of children with disabilities or additional needs. A separate, **open-ended self-reflection questionnaire** was developed, which prompted teachers to reflect on the needs of two specific children in their classroom, how these were currently being met, and to identify three priority actions to support greater inclusion. A version of this form, incorporating revisions resulting from the pilot process, is attached to this report as appendix three.

4.1.8 Inclusion tips

Following BEQI observations, teachers receive personalised feedback sent to them by WhatsApp. Teachers found this helpful and felt that additional feedback on inclusion of children with additional needs would also be useful but emphasised the importance of

receiving feedback immediately after observation. For the purposes of the pilot, it was not feasible to rapidly prepare and send individualised inclusion feedback, and so a series of standardised inclusion tips (see appendix four), tailored to different types of disabilities or additional needs, was prepared for sharing with teachers together with the existing personalised feedback over WhatsApp.

4.2 Experiences of piloting the adapted inclusive BEQI toolkit

The overall experiences of teachers and enumerators with the adapted disability-inclusive BEQI toolkit were positive. Teachers were particularly appreciative of the observable characteristics handout, and most teachers had positive experiences in relation to the observation process and the feedback received. Enumerators valued the training on inclusion of children with disabilities or additional needs and were able to record information about inclusion and exclusion in the classrooms they observed.

The balance of this report provides additional information on findings from the pilot process that hold particular relevance to inclusion for children with additional needs. However, before presenting this detail, it is useful to highlight that one aspect of implementation — enumerator recruitment — varied across the two study contexts, and that this influenced teacher experiences of some aspects of the pilot process.

In Mombasa, where the BEQI toolkit was already in use through the Schools2030 programme, the study team drew on the cohort of trained, BEQI-reliable enumerators who had been supporting these observations (prior to this study). These enumerators had a wide range of backgrounds, and varying levels of experience in pre-school education. They did not have existing or formal relationships with the schools or teachers observed. These factors made it more challenging for many teachers to accept the credibility of the observation process, especially in relation to identification of areas of growth and development.

In Homa Bay, where BEQI had not previously been used, the study team, in consultation with local stakeholders, recruited and trained enumerators from within County government structures. These enumerators had no previous exposure to the BEQI toolkit, meaning that a full orientation and BEQI reliability training needed to be provided. Due to their roles in County government, all enumerators had strong experience with pre-school education, and pre-existing, formal relationships with schools and sometimes teachers. A few teachers in Homa Bay expressed more anticipatory anxiety about classroom observations due to the status of the enumerators but appeared to have a more positive experience with the process as a whole, and in particular around the credibility of the observation process and feedback generated.

4.2.1 Observable characteristics handout

The observable characteristics tool was distributed to teachers in advance of the BEQI observation and discussed with them by an enumerator or team member. The tool lists a range of difficulties or needs that a child may experience and provides teachers with concrete examples of how these difficulties or needs may reflect in an ECDE classroom.

Overall, teachers found the observable characteristics handout valuable for identifying children with potential disabilities or additional needs in their classrooms. It was felt to be clear and easy to use, and particularly helpful for identifying less visible difficulties, for example behavioural or cognitive challenges. Emphasis of the idea that children could have more than one type of difficulty was also appreciated. Teachers felt that, by making children's difficulties clearer, it also helped them to identify ways to better support and include children. Teachers felt comfortable and able to use the tool to share information with BEQI enumerators about children with disabilities or additional needs who were present in the classroom during observations.

"I realised that there are some learners that have been struggling with normal grouping, and when you talk to their parents...they say their children are just okay. But, after going through this, I realised that surely, I have some learners who need more attention and maybe close help."

Teacher, Homa Bay, FGD

However, some teachers found it challenging to work out whether a particular child might have cognitive or behavioural difficulties and felt that some health conditions were not adequately captured by the tool. Teachers would also have appreciated more training or guidance on how they could use the tool. There was also some concern that the tool might be encouraging teachers to focus on categorising children's difficulties. While this might be useful for teachers in identifying strategies to meet children's needs, it could also increase risks of stigma and discrimination related to labelling of children. Identification and mitigation of any risks of this type will be critical.

Participants saw value in the use of the tool for BEQI classroom observations, and to support inclusive classrooms more generally. Teachers were keen to share the tool with colleagues to increase awareness of challenges children might be facing. Some teachers also felt that sharing the tool with parents when speaking to them about a child's challenges might help parents in accepting that their child needed additional support. They proposed that use of the tool during admissions processes could also potentially support earlier identification of challenges. Participants emphasised the importance of accompanying the tool with training in order to maximise benefits and reduce risk.

4.2.2 Enumerator training

BEQI reliability training

Enumerators found the observation practice sessions, conducted in pairs in study schools, particularly helpful. The practice helped them to cement learning and gain confidence in observation, including obtaining information on children with disabilities or additional needs from teachers, and identifying instances of inclusion or exclusion. The opportunity to discuss observations and compare responses was particularly valuable.

"If we answer differently, we can discuss, 'So why did you get this at the very beginning?' So, it helps us in understanding what you've trained."

Enumerator, Homa Bay, FGD

Orientation to disability inclusion and disability inclusive ECDE

In both counties, enumerators participated in disability inclusion and awareness training led by the study team. The training provided them with background and understanding about the rights of children with disabilities or additional needs to participate in inclusive mainstream ECDE, how disability or additional needs might present in pre-school children, and to help them recognise examples of inclusion or exclusion in relation to specific questions in the BEQI classroom observation tool.

Enumerators spoke positively about this training and said that it improved and broadened their understanding of children with disabilities or additional needs — particularly when these might be less visible, for example behavioural, cognitive or medical. They also described having a better understanding of inclusion and felt more equipped to engage with children with disabilities.

“For me, I had a different idea of what special needs and disability is. For me, a disability was something I could see. For example, my whole idea of it was physical. I see a child whose hand is handicapped, and that was disability for me. I see a child who cannot see, that was disability for me. I didn’t have the knowledge of behavioural and cognitive as being a disability. Through this training, I got to understand that being a teacher in class, there are some kids who not only don’t want to learn like the others, or don’t want to be like the others in class, but it’s a disability and we should accept them the way they are.”

Enumerator, Mombasa, FGD

Enumerators would have liked a longer training, to allow greater depth of coverage and suggested incorporating children with additional needs in training content — for example, videos showing classrooms with children with additional needs.

4.2.3 Adjustments to the BEQI classroom observation tool

We piloted two specific adjustments to the BEQI classroom observation tool:

1. Numbers of children with disabilities or additional needs present in the classroom, and types of additional needs.
2. Open text field to record any information on inclusion that was not captured by standard observation questions.

Recording information on children with disabilities or additional needs

Following engagement with partners and the BEQI tool designers, we implemented collection of this information as follows:

- Enumerators were advised to obtain this information from the class teacher at the start of the observation process. If teachers were unsure of this information, or which children to include, they were encouraged to consult the observable characteristics sheet. There was no requirement or expectation that a child should have a formal diagnosis.
- Enumerators recorded the number of girls and boys with disabilities or additional needs present in the classroom on the day of the observation.
- Enumerators then selected, separately for boys and girls, the domains of disability or difficulties experienced by the children present in the classroom. Available options were

seeing, hearing, speech and language, behaviour, cognitive or learning, medical and other.

- Finally, enumerators used an open-text field to record any brief additional notes from the teacher about the children with disabilities or additional needs who were present in the classroom. This was to allow assessment of whether the available categories were comprehensive and used appropriately.

Feedback from teachers and enumerators

Both enumerators and teachers felt that the process of obtaining and recording the information about children with disabilities and additional needs present in the classroom during the observation was fairly smooth. All teachers reported being asked for this information and providing it to the enumerators, although there was one classroom in Mombasa where the teacher was not able to provide the information until after the observation. There was initially some confusion about whether the process of recording this information formed part of the 90 minutes of observation, which it did not.

The exact process followed by individual teachers in providing this information varied somewhat. Enumerators reported that some teachers consulted existing records, while others had prepared a list of children specifically for the enumerator, and others referred to the observable characteristics document. All teachers identified one or more child with a disability or additional needs. One enumerator, in Mombasa, expressed concern that, in one classroom, one child with additional needs had not been reported by the teacher.

“She [the teacher] was telling me the behaviour, and together we were looking at that.... We were checking the form.”

Enumerator, Mombasa, FGD

Teachers explained that providing the information to enumerators was relatively straightforward, because they knew the children in their class well. In Homa Bay, teachers elaborated that, in addition to their knowledge of children, they drew on records in admissions books and information shared by teachers. A few discussed children with the enumerator before deciding how many to record.

“It was actually easy for me because I already knew the learners in my class. So and so maybe has a certain disability, so and so...so, it was just easy.”

Teacher, Mombasa, FGD

“I can say that we never had to check the books for their names. We have those learners in class...These are just our own. We know them. Because we do meet them on a daily basis. They are not written in a book. As a teacher, I own those learners. That is why we own the class. I have my class and she has her class. She knows about the learners well. So, when I was being asked about the learners who had disabilities or challenges on that day, I was just naming them.”

Teacher, Homa Bay, FGD

In Mombasa, one observation was conducted in a special needs school, where all 37 children in the class had disabilities. In this context, recording the disability information was time-consuming and burdensome. The enumerator also found the BEQI classroom observation tool as a whole very challenging to use in this context.

Enumerators reported that, while obtaining the information on children with disabilities in the classroom was generally straightforward, it was sometimes quite challenging to keep track of the different children during observations, particularly in larger classrooms, or those with several children with disabilities or additional needs. In one school in Homa Bay, the teacher was noted to put the children with disabilities or additional needs in a line to make it easier for the enumerator.

“They wanted to see them, so I just called them. The challenge that I have is, when I was trying to call them; because my enumerators wanted to see them, everybody wanted to be in the line. And also, when visitors come and you are calling a few to go next to the visitors and leaving the rest...it forced them to just queue there as I picked the ones who had challenges. But it was tricky...a big challenge when the enumerators wanted the names and wanted to see them.”

Teacher, Homa Bay, FGD

One teacher from Mombasa described how she discussed the children in her class with the enumerator and helped the enumerator understand which children these were.

“So, she said, ‘You’re just going to show me a way that will help me identify the learner who is hyperactive in class, or the learner who is a time taker in class.’ So, for me, like when I’m teaching in class, and I say, for instance, ‘Learner A, sit down, sit properly, just keep quiet...’ now my enumerator will be able to identify the learner.”

Teacher, Mombasa, FGD

These experiences highlight a need for caution around how enumerators ask for information on children with disabilities or additional needs, and seek to identify them during observations, to ensure these processes do not contribute to stigma or prejudice.

Review of data provided by teachers during classroom observations

The information presented in this section is intended to provide a brief description of the classrooms in which observations were conducted, and the data generated in these classrooms by the tool. This data is not generalisable to other schools, or the counties more broadly, and cannot be used as an estimate of disability prevalence.

A total of 17 observations were conducted in Homa Bay, including five observations which formed part of the reliability training. 12 observations were conducted in Mombasa. The mean class size was 30 in Homa Bay, and 34 in Mombasa. In Homa Bay, teachers reported a mean of 4.7 children with disabilities or additional needs in each class, with numbers ranging from two to 12. In Mombasa, excluding the observation in the special school, the mean was 3.6, with a range of one to eight. In both counties, slightly higher numbers of boys with disabilities or additional needs were reported. There did not appear to be any systematic difference between numbers reported in PP1 and PP2 classes.

In both counties, teachers reported children having cognitive and learning difficulties more frequently than any other domain. Children with cognitive or learning difficulties were reported in over half of the classrooms observed. In Homa Bay, seeing difficulty was the second most frequent challenge, reported in 10 classrooms, followed by speech and language difficulty, reported in eight classrooms. In Mombasa, seeing and behavioural

challenges were jointly the second most frequent, reported in five classrooms each. This was followed by speech and language difficulties, reported in four classrooms. Physical difficulty was reported the least frequently (in only one classroom in each County).

Information captured in the more detailed text description of individual children with disabilities or additional needs was entirely consistent with the number of girls and boys entered by enumerators across all the classrooms observed. Generally, text-based descriptions of difficulties were well-aligned to the selection of domains from the multi-select tools. However, there were three instances across the 29 classrooms where enumerators appeared to have forgotten to select the relevant option in the multi-select list — one each for children with medical, behavioural and physical difficulties.

Open-ended question for additional inclusion information

Enumerators in both counties used the open-ended question to describe additional information about inclusion during observations. In Homa Bay, most information focused on challenges with physical infrastructure and accessibility, as the question came directly after the questions about the physical learning environment. In Mombasa, enumerators were therefore encouraged to record any information about inclusion, and information was more broadly descriptive.

Enumerators who used the field more broadly typically described examples of inclusive practice, rather than exclusion. Several enumerators described quite specific interventions being made by teachers — for example, placing a child with visual difficulties near the blackboard, using high contrast colours, and providing flashcards, or helping a child with speech difficulties to repeat sounds. However, in a few cases the field was used to document examples of exclusion — for example, teachers providing books to all children except those with disabilities or additional needs or leaving these children unattended at the back of the classroom. Enumerators explained that they did not feel like the standard observation questions adequately covered these examples and appreciated the opportunity to record them.

4.2.4 Additional disability-related feedback on BEQI classroom observation tool and process

Observation process

Enumerators described varying levels of inclusion across the different classrooms observed, mentioning both teacher practices as well as the attitudes of other learners. One enumerator noted that they had seen much less inclusion when observing a very large class with over 70 children and felt that a large class size made it much harder to ensure an inclusive learning environment. Other enumerators noted that it was also harder to keep track of individual children with disabilities or additional needs in larger classes, and that this could make it harder to provide accurate feedback on inclusion.

In Mombasa, two enumerators described some interruption to observations due to children with disabilities or additional needs. In one classroom, a child who was unable to stay still was running around the class throughout the observation and constantly trying to attract the teacher's attention, while in another classroom a child kept talking to the enumerator until instructed by the teacher to stop. These experiences highlight the importance of ensuring

enumerators have a good understanding of disability inclusion principles and, ideally, some guidance on how to manage these types of challenges appropriately.

Enumerator recommendations on the BEQI observation tool

Enumerators would have appreciated a clear way to record particular instances of exclusion witnessed during observation. They felt that recording specific instances of exclusion — whether related to disability or on some other basis — was important to ensuring teachers received clear feedback and understood the importance of addressing exclusion. While Q27 asks whether the educator engages all children equitably, simply recording ‘no’ to this question would not provide the teacher with specific feedback.

In addition to disability-related exclusion, enumerators described examples of exclusion such as a child being made to stand during the full observation period because her parents had not provided the school with a chair for her, a single child not being provided with a pencil and book when all others were, and no attempts being made to engage with two children who did not speak the language of instruction. These examples highlight broader value to ensuring that enumerators are able to document specific concerns identified during classroom observations.

The use of the term ‘equitably’ in Q27 also caused some difficulty, with some enumerators misunderstanding the question as being about equal or equivalent treatment of children; consequently raising concern that the question did not account for the fact that children with disabilities or additional needs might require differentiated instruction. In fact, the term ‘equitably’ had been used specifically to recognise the need for differentiated instruction as a core component of inclusive education. This finding therefore highlights a need to strengthen enumerator training and guidance around this question, or to explore alternative phrasing.

“She [teacher] left them [children with disabilities] doing their business, leaving them behind. But she treated them equally.”

Enumerator, Mombasa, FGD

Enumerators felt that it would be helpful for the tool to include a specific question about whether all children’s learning needs were met. While Q40 allowed enumerators to record whether a child was left alone, out of sight of an adult, it did not cover instances in which children or their learning needs were being ignored while they were in sight of the educator.

“I think you can put it in a way that, when you can talk of ‘Is any child left alone during the learning process?’ Because talking of ‘out of sight’, the teacher is there, the child can be left alone, or the teacher is there still. So we say no, but a child is like that.”

Enumerator, Homa Bay, FGD

Finally, enumerators in Homa Bay felt that it would be more useful to have a dedicated space to record inclusion feedback on each individual child with a disability or additional needs, which could then be shared with the teacher to support them in strengthening their use of inclusive practices.

Review of data from inclusion-oriented questions in the classroom observations

The information presented in this section provides an overview of the extent to which various practices which are significant to inclusion were observed in the classrooms participating in

the study. This data is not generalisable to other schools and cannot be used to assess or describe teaching practices more broadly.

Table two on the next page presents BEQI classroom observation results for a selection of those practices most closely aligned with inclusion. For each of these questions, we present the number and percentages of classrooms where the particular practice was observed during the 90-minute observation period.

This data was broadly consistent with participant descriptions of inclusion practices and experiences in phase one of the study. The large majority of teachers were observed to engage all children equitably, to consistently reengage children who were distracted, and to consistently provide comfort to children. Children in most classrooms had access to a suitable writing surface and adequate space in the classroom for free play. While more than half of classrooms included materials demonstrating respect for diversity, a smaller proportion of teachers were observed to integrate a respect for diversity, suggesting this as an area where teachers may benefit from additional guidance and support.

There were a small number of observations during which teachers punished children physically, had negative verbal engagements or left children out of sight. Despite small numbers, the potentially severe impact of these practices suggests a need for ongoing attention to these issues.

Table two: Number of classrooms where practices significant for disability inclusion were observed

Question	Classrooms (n=28)*
Q27: Does the educator engage all children equitably?	26 (93%)
Q28: Does the educator integrate a respect for diversity?	13 (46%)
Q36: Does the educator consistently use strategies to reengage children when they are distracted from learning?	26 (93%)
Q37: Does the educator consistently respond or provide comfort to all children?	26 (93%)
Q38: Does the educator punish any child physically?	2 (7%)
Q39: Does the educator have negative verbal interactions with a child?	2 (7%)
Q40: Is any child left alone, out of sight of an adult?	4 (14%)
Q41: Is the indoor learning space enough for all children to engage in indoor free play?	18 (64%)
Q42: Do all children have access to a writing surface that is appropriately sized and has enough space to do their work?	23 (82%)
Q45: Are there classroom materials that demonstrate respect for diversity?	17 (61%)

* The observation conducted in the special school in Mombasa is excluded from this table, due to the difficulties encountered with tool use in that context

4.2.5 Teacher self-reflection tool

Feedback on the self-reflection tool

Although teachers saw some value in the tool, they struggled with the length, detail and amount of writing required to complete it. Most teachers received and completed the self-reflection tool on the day of the observation, at the end of the school day. The lack of time to properly reflect on the questions asked, and the expectation that teachers complete it while observers waited, added to the pressure teachers felt and was not well-aligned with the nature of the questions, which asked teachers to reflect thoughtfully about individual children and provide written responses.

“For me, this paper...it was supposed to...we were supposed to be given time to think. You know, you can’t rush in to writing things.”

Teacher, Mombasa, FGD

“Yes, I think it was like we ambushed them. They were teaching, we were doing observations, and then later on we told them to fill this in. So probably next time, as I was saying, I think it’s the same thing, we should give them more time for self-reflection.”

Enumerator, Homa Bay, FGD

Teachers reported spending from 20 to 90 minutes on completing the tool and expressed concerns about regularly completing a tool of that length. Participants shared various strategies to reduce the time required, including conversion to a multiple-choice format, or allowing for audio-recorded responses.

Additionally, teachers in both counties felt like the tool needed to be accompanied by some additional guidance, and some felt they would need training on the tool to complete it effectively. A particular area of challenge where teachers requested guidance was on how to approach choosing the two children to focus on in completing the tool. One teacher expressed frustration that she could only include two children, as this left other children out.

Teachers described using a variety of strategies to select children, including choosing the two facing the most difficulties, or two with very different needs. Some teachers saw little value in completing the form for two different children with similar needs, as they felt the same strategies would apply to both, while another teacher reported describing two children with similar difficulties, but who needed very different support.

Asking jointly about inclusion in numeracy, literacy and play activities caused challenges, as the specific activities are very different. This question also asked teachers about both inclusion and barriers, further complicating the process of responding. Similarly, the question which asked about both safety and accessibility of the environment, and barriers, was hard to answer, especially because it covered both indoor and outdoor spaces. Finally, a few participants found the question about communication with parents or caregivers unclear.

In Homa Bay, enumerators expressed concern that some teachers did not accurately document challenges with safety and bullying at school, as well as limitations in participation due to concern that the forms would be seen by supervisory staff and County officials.

Teachers and stakeholders agreed that children’s names should not be used on the forms and preferred to use initials. Stakeholders advised that the wording of the form should be adjusted to remove specific mention of disability — to reduce the risk of labelling, stigmatisation or breaking confidentiality.

During the validation workshop, and subsequent stakeholder conversations, three different objectives were identified regarding the self-reflection tool. The first was to support teachers in critically reflecting on their practice of disability inclusion and identifying avenues to develop this. However, this is something that is challenging for teachers to do under time pressure, or in isolation, suggesting that a form to complete as part of an observation process might not be an optimal way to achieve this. A second was to generate data for programmatic and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) purposes, raising questions about the value of a tool requiring open-ended responses. The third was to identify specific strategies to support individual children, with the observation that teachers should already be recording these strategies in a child’s individualised education plan (IEP).

Review of data recorded using the tool

Data from completed forms demonstrated that, with only two exceptions, teachers completed the form about two different children. Teachers clearly identified children's specific challenges and learning needs and often drew on the language from the observable characteristics handout, particularly in Mombasa. Most teachers were able to provide three strategies they were already using to support each child, as well as three priorities for the future (with a small number of teachers including a larger number of priorities). However, there was often considerable overlap between strategies already in place, and those identified as future priorities.

Responses to the questions highlighted by participants as challenging or confusing were often limited and only partial, confirming the need to adjust these questions. Very few teachers described any challenges relating to bullying or any other wellbeing risks at school, particularly in Mombasa. In Homa Bay, many teachers focused on explaining how they addressed instances of teasing or unkindness. As teasing or bullying by peers is very common, it seems possible that teachers felt uncomfortable disclosing this type of challenge. Alternatively, they may not have been aware of it.

4.2.6 Observation feedback and inclusion tips

Teachers in both counties were broadly appreciative of the standard BEQI feedback and the inclusion tips and appreciated receiving both within a couple of days of their observation. However, particularly in Homa Bay, some teachers did not have smartphone or internet bundles, posing challenges in ensuring feedback reached them in a timely and appropriately confidential way. Some teachers expressed a preference for receiving feedback and tips in hardcopy, while email delivery was suggested as a way to ensure all teachers could confidentially receive electronic feedback.

"It was only sent to our phones, the feedback. But I think it would be better to have a hardcopy of it for record keeping. Because the phones might get lost and the information might get lost with it."

Teacher, Homa Bay, FGD

Teachers appreciated the inclusion tips that were sent, which offered strategies to support learners with different disabilities or needs. In Homa Bay, teachers only received tips relevant to children present during the observation. However, based on feedback received, in Mombasa all teachers were sent the full set of tips.

"It was very good. Like, in my class, I had speech, and I had visual [a child with speech difficulties and a child with visual difficulties]. From the feedback, I now have the strategies...the teaching strategies for learners with speech and I also have strategies for learners with visual."

Teacher, Homa Bay, FGD

While teachers appreciated the content of the inclusion tips, they noted that the language and terms used were not fully consistent with the information in the observable characteristics handout, which was confusing. Participants recommended that consistency between materials be improved.

In Homa Bay, where enumerators had expertise in ECDE, they wished to provide teachers with in-person feedback on the inclusion of individual children with disabilities, directly after the observation. They felt that in-person feedback would provide an opportunity for proper discussion and problem-solving, thereby helping teachers to improve their inclusive practices.

“Even in our normal routine assessment work, after assessments we sit with them, discuss, and share experiences. I feel it’s also important here.”

Enumerator, Homa Bay, FGD

5.0 Discussion

The pilot was broadly successful and demonstrated that (1) disability considerations could be integrated into the BEQI toolkit, without requiring wholesale tool redesign, and (2) that participants felt that use of the adapted BEQI toolkit could support greater awareness and consideration of children with disabilities or additional needs among teachers, enumerators and stakeholders.

The participatory nature of the study was valuable, as consistent engagement with a range of stakeholders created buy-in for the objectives of the study and ensured that the piloted adaptations were acceptable to participants. The inclusion of parents of young children with disabilities or additional needs, and representatives of OPDs, ensured that the perspectives of these groups shaped activities. Engagement of County officials, school leadership and teachers in study processes resulted in recognition of the value of the BEQI toolkit and the importance of inclusion for children with disabilities and additional needs. Study activities generated interest in integrating use of the disability-inclusive BEQI toolkit in education system quality assurance processes.

The study demonstrated agreement on the importance of collecting information about children with disabilities or additional needs during classroom observations. However, teachers may not always recognise that children may have additional needs or a possible disability. Providing teachers and enumerators with a simple handout describing observable characteristics of young children who may have disabilities or additional needs can support collection of this information during observations. Teachers also found this tool helpful in thinking about children who were struggling, and in identifying ways to support children, or in recognising a need to provide onward referrals for assessment or other support. In order to minimise risk of the tool being used inappropriately, for example to label children, the tool should be accompanied by training on disability awareness and inclusion if possible.

Provision of disability awareness and inclusion training to enumerators was helpful for them in collecting information about the presence of children with disabilities or additional needs during observations. It was also helpful to them in recognising instances of inclusion or exclusion in the classroom, and in considering the inclusion of these children when conducting observations. Such training could be more fully integrated into standard BEQI reliability training to ensure consistent delivery to enumerators, and consistent collection of disability data.

Incorporation of an open-text field proved valuable in allowing enumerators to identify specific instances or examples of inclusion or exclusion not fully captured by standard observation questions. Several enumerators recorded instances of exclusion that did not relate to disability, highlighting that the value of having a field of this type could go well beyond disability inclusion.

Teachers valued the inclusion tips shared with feedback following observations during this study. However, these tips were not individualised and tailored to individual teacher needs. Some additional modifications to the observation tool would support the collection of more specific data on a teacher's inclusive practices. These modifications would need to be tested prior to implementation, and would require additional validation work, but would provide valuable insight. In turn, they would also support the provision of more detailed individual feedback to teachers. Alternatively, if observations are conducted by appropriately trained enumerators within County education systems, the enumerators would be able to provide detailed individual inclusion feedback to teachers.

The teacher self-reflection questionnaire piloted in this study did not work well. The questionnaire was time-consuming for teachers to complete and completing it during the observation process meant that teachers did not have enough time or space to properly reflect on their teaching practice. Finally, aspects of the questionnaire risked duplicating processes already covered in IEPs. An underlying challenge was that the tool was attempting to serve three different purposes (teacher reflection, generation of monitoring data, and refining support to individual children), which were not compatible. The pilot findings suggest that it would be more useful to approach these objectives separately.

Teachers and enumerators felt that individualised feedback discussions with an appropriately trained and experienced enumerator would be most effective in supporting teacher reflection. A close-ended version of the questionnaire, included with this report as appendix three, could be used to generate monitoring data if needed, and teachers could be encouraged to develop or refine individualised education plans (IEP) for children with disabilities or additional needs.

Integration of inclusive learning environment assessment into education system quality assurance processes

Enumerators in Homa Bay reflected on the value of participating in the BEQI observations from the perspective of their roles in County government quality assurance systems. They felt that the BEQI provided much more detailed focus on individual classrooms and teaching practices than the standard assessment tool they used. The tool helped them identify gaps in key practices, including providing children with free choice, open-ended questions and asking children to share experiences. Additionally, the tool was useful in highlighting resourcing gaps, such as story books and other learning materials.

Teachers in both counties expressed a strong preference that enumerators should have a strong background in ECCE and ideally should have experience of teaching. Teachers were much more receptive to feedback from individuals with this background. In Homa Bay, integrating the observations in County quality assurance processes was clearly valuable in adding to the perceived legitimacy of the enumerators and the feedback received. Integrating BEQI observations in County quality assurance processes also provides opportunities for enumerators to support teachers in self-reflection on the basis of a developmental feedback conversation.

The study also brought out the necessity of developing more integrated approaches for supporting children with disabilities or additional needs once identified, as well as supporting teachers experiencing challenges while working with such children in their classrooms. These could either be by identifying and sensitising teachers and school administrators on how to link children and their caregivers with EARCs for functional assessments, or health facilities for medical diagnoses or additional support. It also showed that additional awareness on disability inclusion is needed for teachers, education stakeholders and the community at large in both counties.

6.0 Limitations

This was a small study in two counties in Kenya, including a total of 29 teachers, and was based on a version of the BEQI toolkit already contextualised for use in this context. Consequently, not all findings will necessarily generalise to other contexts or countries. Additionally, the study did not compare experiences against a control condition using an unadapted BEQI toolkit, and the study did not assess impact on teacher practices or learning environments. Future work will be helpful in exploring feasibility and performance of adjustments in other contexts. Additionally, experimental work would provide an opportunity to assess the impact of an increased emphasis on disability inclusion in the toolkit.

During the pilot, not all proposed adjustments to the BEQI observation tool could be tested because of concerns around potential impacts on tool validity, particularly in light of the need to use the data generated for ongoing programmatic purposes. Further work to test and validate the incorporation of a broader range of disability-oriented questions would be valuable.

The study did not identify a clear solution to the integration of disability inclusion-oriented teacher self-reflection into the BEQI toolkit. Further work is recommended to test the alternative strategies proposed.

7.0 Recommendations

Below is a summary of recommendations from the study aimed at different stakeholders:

1. Schools2030 and ECD Measure

- Explore opportunities for integrating aspects of the adapted BEQI into ongoing programmatic work in Kenya (for example, the disability awareness and inclusion training, the observable characteristics handout, the adapted observation tool, and the inclusion tips).
- Consider opportunities for further contextualisation and integration of adapted BEQI components in ongoing Schools2030 work in other countries, and for other future projects more broadly.
- Over time, increase the emphasis on disability inclusion in enumerator materials, for example working to gradually incorporate training videos of classrooms which include children with disabilities.

2. Teachers and school administrators

- Continue to identify gaps in disability inclusion and strategies to enhance inclusion — for example, through using the adapted BEQI toolkit.
- Develop opportunities to share knowledge internally on identification and support for children with disabilities — for example, by using the observable characteristics handout and inclusion tips.
- Build support for reflection on inclusive teaching practices and mechanisms for obtaining support from school administration, County governments and EARCs.
- Strengthen targeted individualised support for children with disabilities and additional needs — for example, through use of IEPs, appropriate referrals to EARCs, and linkages to clinical or social services if needed.

3. Government and disability stakeholders

- Continue to strengthen policy framework and resourcing for delivery of high-quality disability inclusive ECDE for all young children.
- Provide ongoing support for pre-service and in-service disability awareness and inclusion training to teachers, and national and County government officials, including quality assurance and standards teams — drawing from existing materials such as the enumerator disability awareness and inclusion training, where appropriate.
- Enhance systems and resources to ensure children with disabilities and additional needs are appropriately identified and supported in education, including through access to adapted learning materials, assistive devices, IEPs, and linkage to clinical and social services.
- Explore integration of disability inclusive learning environment assessments into County quality assurance systems, with provision of individualised feedback to teachers.

4. For future research

- Explore feasibility and performance of adapted BEQI toolkit components in other contexts, including through S2030 programmes in other countries.

- Experimental work to assess the impact of disability-inclusive adaptations to the BEQI toolkit on teacher practices and inclusive learning environments.
- Testing and validation work to support potential integration of a broader range of disability-oriented questions in the BEQI observation tool.
- Further work into alternative strategies to support meaningful teacher self-reflection on disability inclusion in the context of the BEQI toolkit, and into mechanisms to deliver individualised disability-inclusion focused feedback to teachers following observations.

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9.0 Appendix

Appendix one: Brief Early Childhood Quality Inventory (BEQI) Classroom Observation – v5



Brief early childhood quality inventory (BEQI) v5.0

S2030 Kenya classroom observation

The Brief Early Childhood Quality Inventory (BEQI) was developed by **ECD Measure** as an adaptable tool that helps measure the quality of early childhood settings for children from birth to age five. Using the BEQI tool requires enumerators to complete a reliability training. If you are interested in reliability training, technical assistance, and access to an online BEQI tool and web portal, please reach out to info@ecdmeasure.org.

Introduction

Hello! My name is _____ and I am working with [PROGRAM NAME]. We are gathering information on pre-primary classrooms in Kenya. This will help us to better understand similarities and differences in schools. With your permission, I would like to spend time in your classroom to observe and understand what a typical day in your program looks like. You do not have to do anything special today because I am here; please just follow your planned activities for the day. While you are teaching, I will sit in a place that is out of the way so that I do not interfere with you or the children. Afterwards you will be asked to fill out a self-assessment as you reflect on your teaching practices.

Please be assured we are not evaluating you or the school but are gathering information we think will be useful for promoting early child development. Participation is voluntary and you may choose to withdraw your consent to participate at any time. We anticipate no personal risks or benefits. Our goal is that this data collection will benefit Kenya to support more effective quality enhancement for early childhood educators in the future.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

If you have additional follow-up questions about this research, you can contact [XXX] at [program/ministry name] office.

Do you agree to participate in this study?

Consent provided: ____Yes ____No



Brief Early Childhood Quality Inventory (BEQI)

Classroom observation

I. Basic observation information (fill in prior to observation)

a.	Enumerator Name/ ID number	
b.	School Name / ID number	
c.	Region/District/County	
d.	Type of school	☐ Public/Government; ☐ Community; ☐ Non-profit; ☐ Privately Owned; ☐ Other _____
e.	Level of Pre-primary	☐ PP1 ☐ PP2
f.	Date of Visit	
g.	Educator (Teacher) Name / ID number	
h.	Observation start time	
i.	Observation end time	

II. Basic classroom information

Number of children present (to be counted at beginning of observation):

j.	Number of boys present	
k.	Number of girls present	
l.	Total number of children present [Confirm total matches total boys + girls]	
m.	Number of boys present with additional needs or possible disabilities [Encourage teacher to reference any notes/records, or use the observable characteristics list]	
n.	Please indicate types of additional need or possible disability, for all boys present [multi-select list] [Confirm you've included type of additional need or possible disability for each boy included in the number in m]	☐ Physical ☐ Seeing ☐ Hearing ☐ Speech and language ☐ Behaviour ☐ Cognitive or learning ☐ Medical ☐ Other
o.	Number of girls present with additional needs or possible disabilities [Encourage teacher to reference any notes/records, or use the observable characteristics list]	

p.	Please indicate types of additional need or possible disability, for all girls present [Confirm you've included type of additional need or possible disability for each girl included in the number in o]	☐ Physical ☐ Seeing ☐ Hearing ☐ Speech and language ☐ Behaviour ☐ Cognitive or learning ☐ Medical ☐ Other
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Number of adults present in the classroom and working with children:

r.	Number of lead educators (teachers) present	
s.	Number of assistants present	
t.	Number of other adults present	
u.	If other, list role:	

A	Play-based learning	Yes	No
1	Do at least half of the children have some choice in how to carry out an activity? Children get to choose which materials to use or how they use materials, such as drawing or building what they want; choosing between activities; or choosing between play areas. This may be observed through instructions from the educator (such as the educator asking children what they want to do) or child behaviour while completing tasks (such as drawing different things, moving from one learning centre to another, etc).		
2	Do at least half of the children have free choice/open play time? Children freely choose their activities and materials during “free choice” time without being given specific educator-directed tasks to complete. Open play time needs to happen inside the classroom, rather than outside during recess. If this item is scored as ‘yes’, then the item above (#1) must also be scored as ‘yes’.		
3	Does the educator or assistant engage or participate with children during free choice/open play time? If you do not observe any free choice/open play time (#2), score as ‘no.’ When children have free choice/open play time, educator or assistant engages with at least one child by playing with them, asking questions about what they are doing, etc.		
4	Do children read or look at storybooks on their own ? At least one child reads or looks at storybooks by themselves, without an adult. This can be during free play (such as at a book centre,) during transitions (children look at books on the rug while waiting,) or when suggested by educator.		
5	Do children engage in pretend/imaginary/fantasy play?		

	At least one child engages in any pretend/imitation activity, such as playing “house,” shopping, dolls, dress-up, cars, acting out a story, pretending a block is a car, etc.		
6	Do children work/do activities in pairs (2 children) or small groups (groups that include 10 or less children)?		
7	Do children work/do activities one-on-one with educator or assistant?		
8	Does the educator use pictures or objects to teach a concept? Educator uses tangible materials, pictures, or objects to explain or teach.		
9	Do at least half of the children engage with concrete materials to learn a concept during activities or lessons? If educator is leading an activity/lesson, most children hold or interact with materials to help them learn. For example, during a math activity, most children use bottle caps for counting. This is not looking at the general use of materials during free choice/open play time but rather observing the use of materials when the educator is teaching children a concept.		

Do children engage with the following materials?		Materials not present	Materials present but children do not use	Materials present and at least one child uses the material
10	Writing materials (Pencils, pens, crayons, chalk)			
11	Art materials (Paper, crayons, markers, paints, clay, sand, scissors, tape, glue, stamps, natural materials)			
12	Pretend play materials (Dolls, stuffed animals, dress up clothes, masks, pretend food, pots, and spoons)			
13	Blocks (Wooden/plastic blocks, interlocking pieces)			
14	Math materials (Items for counting, sorting, patterns, comparison of shapes/sizes, etc. including bottle			

	caps, dice, beads, rocks, and other manipulatives)			
15	How many complete books are in the room?	No books	15-24 books	
	Books must have pictures and some text; they must be in good repair without torn or missing pages. Children may or may not have access to these books.	1-14 books	25+ books	

B	Learning through conversations	Yes	No
16	When children are playing, does the educator try to teach them things or add information to what they are doing? If you do not observe any free choice/open play time (#2), score as 'no.' When children are playing, educator finds "teachable moments" with at least one child to add in information such as talking about the shape of the blocks, sorting crayons, asking them to find letters, counting, comparing sizes of objects, making predictions, etc.		
17	Does the educator read a storybook?		
18	During a storybook read, does the educator point out new vocabulary, ask questions, or talk about things beyond just reading the words in the book? If there is no storybook read, score this as 'no'. When educator is reading a storybook, watch to see if he/she pauses reading to talk about things like the characters or events in the story. This could include defining or pointing out new vocabulary words in the story or asking questions about the story.		
19	Does the educator tell a story to children? Educator verbally tells a story (either a real story or made up) without using a book.		
20	Does the educator share songs, rhymes, or chants with children? Children sing, rhyme, or chant with educator. Music activities that do not include singing, rhyming, or chanting (such as only playing musical instruments) do not count and would be scored as 'no'.		
21	Does the educator define words and/or verbally label items?		

	Educator defines new words, explains what something means, or verbally states the name of items.		
22	Does the educator ask at least two open-ended questions? Open-ended questions have no correct answer and have any type of free-form answer, such as asking the child “What do you think would happen if...?” Or “tell me what you did yesterday.” To score ‘yes’ educator must provide children with the opportunity to respond. Simply asking questions without giving the child time to think or respond does not count.		
23	Does the educator ask questions or use other strategies to check at least half of the children’s understanding? Educator asks questions or uses other strategies to effectively determine that most children grasp what they are learning about (for example, “everyone tell me a word that starts with the letter ‘b’” or “count out eight bottle caps”). This does not include rote questions or choral responses in which the educator asks a question to the group and children recite a memorised response or all respond in unison.		
24	Does the educator provide opportunities for children to generate ideas, share opinions, or ask questions? Educator provides opportunities for children to describe what they are thinking about, ask their own questions, seek clarity, or share their thoughts/ideas (for example, educator asks children to share their favourite part of the story.)		
25	Does the educator engage at least two children in a back-and-forth discussion? Educator asks or responds to questions with 2 children for at least 2 turns (for example, educator asks a question, child responds, educator responds, child responds), such as talking about what happened in a story or having a conversation.		
26	Does the educator connect classroom concepts to real-life or everyday experiences? Educator relates a lesson, play, concept, or learning objective to things the child experiences in his/her life, such as going to the doctor, eating rice for dinner, places children have visited, etc.		

C	Promoting strong relationships	Yes	No
27	Does the educator engage all children equitably? Educator gives all children equitable attention and opportunities, regardless of abilities, needs or developmental levels, gender, faiths, cultural backgrounds, personalities. The educator does not favour specific child(ren), treat any child(ren) more harshly, or exclude particular children from activities.		
28	Does the educator integrate a respect for diversity? Educator intentionally promotes diversity either through an activity, during play, or conversation. Examples include the following: educator implements a diversity activity to talk about how we are alike and different; discusses differences in culture, talks about holidays or celebrations around the world; encourages children to share parts of their own culture with the class, etc.		
29	Does the educator help children make socially acceptable choices? Educator promotes a feeling of community by encouraging socially acceptable choices such as sharing, listening to others, cleaning up after themselves, helping a friend in need, etc. For example, educator sees two children sharing blocks to build a house and says, “You are being a good friend when you share the blocks.” Choral, group responses like “everyone clap for your friend” does not count.		
30	Does the educator get on children's level (on the floor, sitting, at the same height) at least half the time?		
31	Does the educator invite children to share personal experiences? Educator invites children to share their personal experience about themselves, their families, or communities. For example, a child in the classroom has a new baby sister and educator invites the child to share about the new baby or educator invites children to share about what they did over the weekend.		
32	Does the educator talk about feelings or emotions? Educator asks or talks to at least one child about how they are feeling, reads books, or leads a discussion/activity about feelings.		
33	Does the educator provide individualised feedback to at least two children to support their learning? This item is focused on feedback related to the child's learning. Educator makes specific comments about what the child has done that gives the child information about their performance on a task or activity, either about the correctness or how it can be improved. The		

	interaction includes details and meaningful information (not just praise or a single comment, such as “good job”). For example, educator gives specific praise such as “you wrote your name neatly” or provides specific support, “you skipped the number five, let’s go back and slowly count the blocks again.”		
34	Does the educator acknowledge children’s positive behaviour using specific descriptions? Educator acknowledges children’s behaviour that meets expectations and is specific about their expected behaviour. For example, “You are taking turns playing with the ball” (instead of only saying “good job”). You only need to observe the educator do this once to score as ‘yes’.		
35	Does the educator redirect misbehaviour by focusing on the expected behaviour? When a child misbehaves, educator redirects to more appropriate behaviour (rather than focusing on misbehaviour). For example, when children are talking at the same time, educator reminds everyone to wait their turn to speak and listen to others. Simply focusing on the negative behaviour such as, “do not draw on the table” does not count. Educator must focus on the expected behaviour such as, “remember, we only draw on paper”. You only need to observe the educator do this once to score as ‘yes’. If children are well behaved during the observation, score as ‘yes’. If educator’s methods are ineffective at redirecting misbehaviour and children continue with the misbehaviour, score as ‘no’.		
36	Does educator consistently use strategies to reengage children when they are distracted from learning? Throughout the observation, educator reengages children who are distracted, uninterested or not engaged in the activity/lesson. Educator uses strategies or methods to gain children’s attention, actively reengage them, or change the activity. If all children are actively engaged during the full observation, score as ‘yes’. If educator’s methods are ineffective at reengaging children, score as ‘no’. If educator is inconsistent in reengaging children (for example, does it once but not later when needed), score as ‘no’.		
37	Does the educator consistently respond or provide comfort to all children? Throughout the observation, educator gives comfort and responds to all children. For example, when a child is crying because she misses her parent, educator gives her a hug and helps her find an activity.		

	If educator is inconsistent in responding or providing comfort (for example, does it once but not later when needed), score as 'no'. If no children are observed needing comfort, score as 'yes'.		
38	Does the educator punish any child physically ? Educator physically punishes any child (pinching, striking, pushing, pulling hair, grabbing, etc).		
39	Does the educator have negative verbal interactions with a child ? May include threats, scolding, humiliation, etc.		
40	Is any child left alone, out of sight of an adult ? A child going to the bathroom or leaving the room to wash their hands independently does not count towards scoring for this item.		

D	Stimulating and safe environments	Yes	No
41	Is the indoor learning space enough for all children to engage in indoor free play?		
42	Do all children have access to a writing surface that is appropriately sized and has enough space to do their work?		
43	Do children have access to materials that are organised into at least two learning/play areas/corners by type? For example: books are sorted together in one area, blocks kept together, fantasy/dramatic play toys stored in a different area, etc.		
44	Are there written labels in the classroom? For example: labels on learning stations, materials, areas of the room, pieces of furniture, etc.		
45	Are there classroom materials that demonstrate respect for diversity ? For example: dolls with different skin tones, dramatic play materials that represent different cultures, books that show diversity, materials in different languages, etc.		
46	Is there an outdoor area with adequate space for play ?		
47	Is there useable outdoor equipment for gross motor activities? For example: swings, slides, balls, jump ropes, etc.		
48	Do children have access to a sanitary water source for drinking?		
49	Is there soap ?		
50	Do children wash their hands with soap after toileting?		

	If there is no soap, score as 'no'.		
51	Do children have access to toilet facilities ?		
52	Are the toilet facilities sanitary (clean)?		
	If there are no toilet facilities, score as 'no'.		
53	Are buildings and grounds clean and safe for children?		
	(If no, please indicate dangerous conditions observed)		
	Broken windows or doors		
	Broken or uneven floors		
	Leaking roof or holes in ceiling		
	Broken chairs or furniture		
	Inadequate light indoors		
	Inadequate ventilation indoors		
	Sharp, dangerous, or rusting play materials		
	Unsafe school grounds (open holes, litter, dangerous materials)		
	No fencing/walls around school premise		
	Other safety hazards		
54	Please list the other things you have noticed about the inclusion of children with special needs or disabilities during this observation:		

Appendix two: Observable characteristics in young children that might suggest disabilities or additional needs

This resource is intended to help teachers recognise when a young child may have additional needs or a disability. Some disabilities are clearly observable, such as a physical disability. Others can be 'invisible', and more difficult to identify. The characteristics and behaviours listed below will help teachers identify children who might have a less visible disability, or who might have another kind of additional need.

We have listed observable characteristics under a number of headings. A child may display characteristics from several headings.

It is important to emphasise that **young children will develop at different rates** and will achieve developmental milestones at different times. Characteristics described here could suggest a possible disability or additional need or may suggest that a child has some developmental delays.

This resource is **not for diagnosis** of disabilities or conditions. Diagnosis can only be done by qualified professionals.

Where to seek support: Education assessment and resource services (EARCs) are available in most cases at every Sub-county. The curriculum support officers – SNE (CSO-SNE) who work at the EARCs are trained to provide guidance and support for learners with disabilities. It is helpful to reach out to the nearest CSO SNE when in need of support.

Some important definitions

Children with disabilities

Children with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006).

Inclusive education

An approach where learners and trainees with disabilities are provided with appropriate educational interventions within regular institutions of learning with reasonable accommodations and support (Sector policy for learners and trainees with disabilities, 2018).

Children with additional needs

Children who require extra support to fully access learning and development, and to participate in early childhood settings due to differences in their physical, cognitive, emotional, social or health development (UNESCO, 2017).

Observable characteristics in young children that might suggest disabilities or additional needs

Type of difficulty	Examples of what teachers may observe
Physical	
Difficulty controlling movement or using their body in the same way as most children.	Child might be 'clumsy' — banging into other children, tripping or falling often.
Physical function is limited and impacts their daily life.	Child might not be able to walk well or use other parts of their body.
Balance and posture are unstable.	Child might struggle to sit up straight or has to hold on to something for support.
Challenges with fine motor skills (small movements).	Child struggles to hold or sort small objects, cannot do up buttons on clothing.
Challenges with gross motor skills (large movements).	Child struggles to walk in a straight line, jump, climb.
Vision	
Difficulty seeing.	Child might screw up their eyes, hold pictures very far or very close to their eyes. They might not seem to see at all. They might complain about headaches. They might knock themselves on objects and appear 'clumsy'.
Hearing	
Difficulty hearing.	Child does not follow instructions, asks for things to be repeated, does not respond to their own name. Child may give inappropriate responses to questions.
	Child might tilt their head towards the source of sound.
	Child might have difficulty with speech, pronouncing words, responding to instructions.
Speech and language	
Difficulty with speech.	Poor speech, child chooses not to speak or does not speak.
Child has unclear speech (diction, how they talk).	Child might have difficulty pronouncing words.

Child is unclear in expressing themselves (using language).	Child is not using whole sentences, not able to name simple objects, might have a limited vocabulary.
Child has difficulty in understanding simple language.	Child seems to have difficulty understanding simple instructions or everyday language.
Behaviours	
Challenges in understanding social situations.	Child might not understand how to take turns, how to talk to an adult or how to play with their peers. They might have trouble following rules.
Difficulty interacting with peers, limited interest in playing with others.	Child might prefer to play alone, fight or show aggression to peers.
Difficulty staying focused on tasks and completing them.	Child might lose interest in a task very quickly, look around and be distracted by other children or things happening outside the classroom. They rarely finish a task.
Difficulty in following simple instructions.	Child might not line up when asked to, or may struggle to follow other basic classroom routines like handwashing.
Difficulty in sitting still	Child might always be moving, cannot sit still during classroom activities, and might disturb peers
Does not understand that actions have consequences.	Child is unaware that what they do might result in something else happening — for example, that if they hit a peer they will be disciplined by the teacher.
Overreaction or underreaction to sensory stimuli such as loud noises, bright lights, or certain textures. They may become distressed by sensory experiences that others manage easily.	Child might cry if there is too much noise, or hide in a corner if the light is too bright.
Frequent tantrums, aggressive behaviour, or extreme emotional responses. They might have trouble managing frustration.	Child might hit peers for no apparent reason, or might cry, scream or shout if they don't get what they want immediately.
Cognitive difficulties	
Child's academic performance is significantly lower than that of their peers.	Low academic performance compared to peers.

Challenges in adapting to changes in routines or environments, such as moving from one activity to another or transitioning from home to preschool.	Child does not seem to understand how to move to a new activity or becomes distressed when asked to do so.
Difficulty understanding basic concepts or instructions, limited problem-solving skills, or trouble with memory and recall.	Child cannot remember letter sounds, simple instructions or basic counting, and this is noticeable because most of their peers can do it.
Struggles with self-care tasks like dressing, eating, or using the toilet independently, which can impact their participation in daily activities.	They perform self-care tasks at a significantly lower level than their peers.
Medical	
Signs of medical conditions such as heart conditions, asthma, HIV-AIDS, diabetes, epilepsy that might affect their learning or participation in school activities.	Child is often unwell and may not attend school regularly. Child may seem constantly tired and may not have energy to participate in activities. May experience seizures.
Persistent and unexplained fatigue that impacts daily activities.	Child seems constantly tired and unwilling to join in class activities.
Combined difficulties	
Having a combination of hearing and vision difficulties.	Child has limited responses to sound or visual stimuli.
Having a combination of vision, hearing, difficulties with mobility or other difficulties.	Child has limited responses to sound or visual stimuli and limitations in mobility.

Appendix three: Teacher self-reflection questions on inclusion of children with disabilities or additional needs

Before completing this form, think about the children in your class who might have disabilities or additional needs. You can consult the list of observable characteristics to help you identify these children. It can be helpful to pay particular attention to the characteristics of the children who are performing below the level of their peers.

Please complete one form for each of these children.

Tip: You can add updates to this form as you try new strategies. Think about how these new strategies help to support a child's inclusion.

Tip: In completing this form, you can draw on your own knowledge of the child. If other people who know the child have shared feedback with you, or you have copies of assessments or reports, this could be very useful.

School name: _____ County: _____

Teacher name: _____ Date completed: _____

Questions	Responses
1. Please describe the particular disabilities, additional needs or challenges this child experiences.	Child's initials or code: _____
2. Name three things that you are already doing to support their inclusion and their learning.	1. 2. 3.
3. Do you have any difficulty communicating with this child? Yes No	If yes, describe these challenges:
4. Does the child feel safe and respected at school? Yes No	If no, describe why not:
5. Are you aware of any teasing, discrimination or bullying the child experiences?	If yes, describe this:

Yes No	
6. Is the child fully included in literacy activities? Yes No	If no, describe any barriers to their inclusion or learning:
7. Is the child fully included in numeracy activities? Yes No	If no, describe any barriers to their inclusion or learning:
8. Is the child fully included in play activities? Yes No	If no, describe any barriers to their inclusion or learning:
9. Do you have good communication with the child's parents? Yes No	If no, describe the challenges:
10. Is the physical environment (including toilets and handwashing facilities) safe and accessible for this child? Yes No	If no, describe the challenges:
11. After reviewing your responses to these questions, what are your top three priorities to improve this child's inclusion and learning?	1. 2. 3.

Appendix four: Inclusion tips for supporting children with disabilities or additional needs

Top tips for teaching children with physical difficulties

Environment	Teaching strategies
• Ask parents/caregivers if they need help to get their child to school. Perhaps other children, families or local organisations for people with disabilities (OPDs) can help. • Check what low/no cost adaptations can be made – such as smoothing pathway for a wheelchair user. • Involve the community in making ramps, handrails or other adaptations. • Look carefully at the classroom and check for any hazards that might trip children. • Be aware of wet areas after heavy rains to prevent children from slipping. • Ensure the desks are spaced out so that it is easy to move between them and encourage all children to hang their bags up and keep the classroom clear of clutter.	• Allow extra time for movement from one place to another, to different classrooms or going outside. • Allow extra time for writing, reading or manipulating objects. • Ask the learner what their favourite topics are and praise their efforts and their abilities in things they can progress with. • Model an inclusive and positive attitude to children with physical difficulties, and others will copy your example. • Adapt lessons to ensure that children with physical difficulties can do all the tasks. For example, if it involves going outside to collect something, ask a buddy to do it for them. • Involve them in every activity and do not allow them to feel left out or to sit on the edge of the class.
Resources	Peer support
• If children find it difficult to grip a pencil, put an elastic band around it to help their grip – or use a larger pen or pencil. Pens or pencils with thicker tips can make it easier to write on paper too. • Allow fidget toys or objects in class for children to practise their fine motor skills. • Ask the child or parents what additional resources might be helpful. • Raise tables with some blocks – or books – so the wheelchair can fit underneath • What assistive devices does the child need (crutches, wheelchairs, etc? Help the family to obtain these. • Try to include images of physical disability in your resources or pictures so that children can relate to them. Include examples of people who have	• Support children with physical difficulties to make friends; use a buddy system to pair them with someone who can help them around the school. • Think about their difficulties and what other children could help them with. Also think about what the child with physical difficulties can help others with (they might be really good at maths or reading, for example). • Organise group work carefully so that children with physical difficulties can participate with support from others – for example, writing their answers down or helping them move into the group. • Encourage peer support so that children with physical difficulties are supported with those things they need help with, and also that all children

achieved well with a physical disability. Also try to make sure that you include images of boys and girls.

respect them and treat them with dignity at all times.

- Friends can carry books, turn pages, help to move around the school, and involve in all playtime activities.

Top tips for teaching children with intellectual difficulties

Environment	Teaching strategies
• Create a positive learning environment that demonstrates everybody can learn — ensure that you have high expectations for all children and they all feel valued. • All adults and children in the school should be sensitive to intellectual difficulties and ensure all are treated with dignity and respect and are fully included in the life of the school — promote a culture of kindness. • Think about where a child needs to sit in order to learn best — you could ask them what they prefer. They might need a quieter spot in the classroom. • Some children may find the classroom noise and busyness very distracting, so a quiet space either within the school or outside can be really helpful if they need some time out. • Ask parents about what works for the child at home and how they learn best. • Establish clear routines for all your classes — this helps everyone but will be especially helpful for children with intellectual difficulties. • Keep the classroom tidy and uncluttered — too many things out can be distracting and chaotic for some children with intellectual difficulties.	• Ensure that all learners are fully included in every activity — this might mean making adjustments to tasks so that children with intellectual difficulties can be fully included. • Set individual learning targets using an IEP (individual education plan) — this will be based on their prior learning and setting manageable targets for their next steps. This ensures the child is measured against their own progress not that of the whole class. • You could break the IEP down further to have weekly or even daily small targets — this helps with a sense of achievement and progress for the child. • Be patient, as the child with intellectual difficulties may need more time to process and complete tasks. • Break down the learning into manageable tasks so that the child can make progress and understand what to do next — this should be with clear, simple instructions. • Use a wide range of activities to teach concepts — including songs, poems, games, singing, dancing and acting/roleplay. • Don't forget to give praise for all achievements, however small — focus on strengths as well as challenges.
Resources	Peer support
• Use visual timetables where you can use symbols or pictures to show the plan for the day — you can put simple text alongside the images. • Explain the plan for each lesson and what you are going to cover — this can sometimes be done visually too. • Use multi-sensory resources where possible, including real objects that the child can touch, see, hear or smell to bring the learning to life. • Use real objects for counting or understanding concepts.	• Ensure the child has a good group of friends or buddies who are caring and kind and help the child with intellectual difficulties to be as independent as possible. This group of friends will be helpful in keeping them safe from teasing or bullying and can ensure they are included in all social activities. • Plan learning so that children work in pairs or groups whenever possible and encourage all children to assist those with intellectual difficulties. • Organise effective group work, with clear roles for different members of the group.

Top tips for teaching children who have seeing difficulties

Environment	Teaching strategies
• Ensure that the classroom is as uncluttered as possible — tidy away bags and chairs. • Ensure toilets are clean and accessible. • Identify safe routes around school and outside. • Children with difficulty seeing will need to be able to hear clearly, so try to ensure the classroom is not too noisy. • Think about where might be best for the child with difficulty seeing to sit. Ask them what would work best for them. • Try to have regular communication with the child's family. • Try to ensure good lighting in your classroom or sit children with visual difficulties near natural light so they have the best chance of seeing (however, some children with difficulty seeing will be sensitive to bright light). • Ensure the environment is well organised, so you can include physical activities and games where possible, to help develop children's confidence in moving around the classroom.	• Read out what you write on the board to ensure children with difficulty seeing can hear it if they cannot see it (ask them what they can see). • If you are showing the class a picture from a book, give a child with low vision the opportunity to hold the book so they can see it close up. • Children with difficulty seeing find it difficult to read large quantities of text — you could give them a summary, use more pictures, ask someone to read to them, or record and play back. • Things like reading, writing and using braille can all take a lot longer for a child with difficulty seeing. It does not mean they are less able; they just need more time. Be patient. • Try to focus on the strengths of children with difficulty seeing, and not their difficulties. Remember to praise. • Address the child by their name so they know that you are talking to them. • Tests and assessments may need to be adapted — you might have to ask the questions orally, allow extra time, or organise for a braille version of the test — it's helpful to plan ahead.

Resources	Peer support
- Children with difficulty seeing rely on other senses, so try to use more tactile objects in your teaching — such as counters or other objects for counting. - Children with low vision will be able to see if the resources are clear and in good light. - Children with difficulty seeing may benefit from materials in large print. - They might write with thick tipped pens so they can read their own writing. - Blind children may need to learn to read and write braille – they will need braille writing equipment and resources produced in braille. - The teacher may need to get support from specialist teachers or blind people's organisations. - Some children may need glasses.	- Use a buddy system to help them get around the school — ask for volunteer buddies and make it an important and valued role. - Possibly pair with a sighted child to access travel to and from school. - Use peer learning so that children with and without difficulty seeing can help each other — they will have different strengths and abilities. - Ensure that any group work is well organised so that children with difficulty seeing can take part and are encouraged to do so by their peers. - Children with difficulty seeing may be bullied or teased by other children, so it's important to monitor what is going on in the classroom and to model respect for all children.

Top tips for teaching children with hearing difficulties

Environment	Teaching strategies
- Ask parents/caregivers to show you signs and gestures they use at home for communication – use the same signs yourself and encourage other learners to also use them. - Keep background noise to a minimum – both inside and outside the classroom. Encourage children to help by being quiet when the teacher is talking. - If possible, consider arranging learning groups in a semi-circle or horse-shoe shape so learners can see each other when speaking. - Or, seat the learner with their group at the front of the class in a position where he or she can see you when you teach from the front of the class. - Encourage the learner to look at your face – they will need to see your facial expression and may need to read your lips. - Do not stand with your back to the window, but try to face the light as it will make it easier to lip-read.	- Always get the learner's attention before you begin to speak. You may want to consider using an object or card (i.e. an image of an ear). You, or one of the children, must hold up or refer to the object or card before speaking. This allows children who have difficulty hearing the time to identify and follow the speaker. - Repeat the comments and questions of other learners, especially those groups further away from the learner. - Always face the class and ensure that your hand is not in front of your mouth so that all children can see your expressions and lip-read if necessary. - Give demonstrations – for example, if you are teaching about measuring liquids, demonstrate with empty bottles and water. - Manage contributions from other children so that the children with difficulty hearing have time to see who is talking.

Resources	Peer support
• Use pictures and objects as much as possible – this is good practice for all learners. • Find out which government clinics or hospitals, NGOs or international organisations are available to test and provide hearing aids if appropriate. • Make sure you learn how to test the hearing-aid batteries and change them if the learner is too young to do it themselves • Provide additional notes or handouts – even before you are teaching the topic, so that children with hearing difficulties can be prepared. • Make sure key information is written clearly on the blackboard. • Ask the child which resources help them the most. • Find out what local services are available for deaf/hearing impaired children in your area.	• Try teaching all learners in your school some basic signs (ask an NGO or deaf people's organisation to help) so they can communicate in the classroom and outside. • Make sure the learner has a group of friends who are helpful and ensure that learners with a hearing impairment do not feel excluded. • Consider asking another learner (a buddy) to take notes or share their written work so that the child with hearing difficulties can focus on watching you. It is impossible to lip-read and write at the same time. • In group-work activities, ensure that the learner with hearing difficulties is in a group of learners that she or he can easily lip-read. • Use cue cards for speaking and listening in group work.

Top tips for teaching children with communication difficulties

Environment	Teaching strategies
• Reduce background noise so that children can concentrate on listening and speaking without distraction. • Include examples of language wherever possible in the classroom, through vocabulary on the wall or pictures with the words underneath, or word labels on objects. • Create a culture of listening to each other in the classroom and respecting all learners, including those who take longer to speak • Ensure you speak to parents to find out about the child's communication abilities and preferences. • Use a visual timetable – with words underneath – to set out the plan for the day.	• Face the child when speaking to them and slow down your speech if necessary. • Do not interrupt children when they are talking and do not speak for them. • Model correct, clear and simple language. • Be patient and allow time to talk to the child one-to-one. • Be expressive, use body language, gestures and facial expressions when you are teaching to support your communication. • Demonstrate or model what you want children to do rather than just rely on spoken instructions. • Write clear instructions on the board and read them aloud – keep instructions simple. • Allow thinking and processing time. • Avoid asking the child to speak aloud in front of the whole class.
Resources	Peer support
• Use objects and pictures to support what you are saying. • Some children may need to use pictures to communicate or make choices – try to collect images that you can use in the classroom, or draw them if you can. • Create speaking and listening cards, as these can be used in group work to show whose turn it is to speak/listen. The teacher can also use a listen card to attract the attention of everyone.	• Help learners to make friends and to practice talking to each other by initiating structured conversations and practising turn-taking. • Use a buddy system to pair a child with communication difficulties with a talking partner. • Allow time to practice speaking and listening in groups or pairs.

Top tips for including children with learning difficulties

Environment	Teaching strategies
• Be sensitive to these children, who will need longer to learn in certain areas. Remember to praise them when they do well. • Put key vocabulary on the wall and label objects in the classroom. • Keep the classroom well organised to help children with learning difficulties to be able to plan and organise themselves. • Use a structured task list	• Give as many verbal instructions as possible but also write these on the board to reinforce reading. • Allow children to present information in alternative formats – for example, they could talk to you about their learning rather than writing it down. • Reduce the amount of reading required where possible, as it will take them longer than other children to read. • Give clear, simple instructions to ensure that children with learning difficulties can follow a task or activity. • Provide clear timings for tasks to help children keep focused.
Resources	Peer support
• Present information in a range of formats wherever possible – including objects for counting, pictures, diagrams, visual timetables, audio recordings, etc.	• Use a buddy system to pair a child who has difficulty reading with a strong reader, or a child who has difficulties with numbers with a child who is good at maths. • Pair children with learning difficulties with those who have weaker oral communication skills so that they can help each other. • Use a buddy system to help children with learning difficulties take notes from the board, as they will take longer to write things down • Be clear about what is expected in group work, so that children understand turn-taking and speaking and listening rules.

Ten top tips for including learners with disabilities and additional needs

1. Get as much information as possible from parents/carer-givers – they will be able to tell you how the learner manages at home. If the learner is older, she or he will be able to tell you or even show you. (School environment)
2. If a learner is easily distracted or requires additional attention, consider where they need to sit in order to learn the best. (Classroom environment)
3. Identify a buddy/buddy, learners who would like to assist a learner with difficulties on a regular basis. (Peers)
4. Always involve learners in decisions.
5. Always get the learner's attention before you begin to speak. Speak calmly, kindly and patiently in a clear voice using simplified language.
6. Consider the seating arrangement. If a learner has difficulties seeing the board or hearing the teacher, place them near the front.
7. As a teacher, move around the classroom, noticing what learners are doing and intervening when they need help.
8. Always read aloud what is written on the board, on posters or on charts.
9. Simplify exercises for some learners and provide extension activities for others to ensure you are meeting the needs of all learners.
10. If you are unsure about how to help a learner, talk to their parents/caregivers and find out the best ways to support them.

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