

# Strengthening Partnerships to Advance Disability Rights in Africa Project (SPADRA)

## Phase 1: Baseline Survey Report

April 2024



The African Disability Forum is committed to promoting accessibility and inclusivity in all our research papers and documents.

We strive to ensure that our work is accessible to all individuals, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, in alignment with our mission of working with OPDs to advocate for the rights and empowerment of all persons with disabilities across Africa.

For purposes of this Report, specific attention was given to, among others:

- Ensuring that all photos and images have an Alt Text description.
- Using left alignment for paragraphs rather than 'justified.'
- Making use of color contrasting.

*Photo on Cover Page:*

*Women and Girls with Disabilities from Mukuni Village, Zambia, informing the design of the SPADRA Project*

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“I was blind in my right eye and had low vision in my left eye when I was enrolled in a regular public basic school. Born in a typical village, my parents did not see the need to educate me, so it was help from a philanthropist that gave me the opportunity to basic and senior high school. In class, I struggled to read from the board and with textbooks. I did not have any visual aids. I did not know about support from social welfare and only learned about the school for blind learners when I enrolled at the College of Education. A tutor told me about the school for the blind at Akropong in the Eastern region of Ghana. I struggled with my studies. As a result of the strain on my left eye over the years, I developed glaucoma. I had to undergo surgery with a grant from the District Assembly Common Fund allocated to persons with disabilities.

Some pupils or students often teased me at the basic and senior high school. Some will tell me they felt very uncomfortable looking into my right eye (damaged eye). But I had few friends who would tell me to ignore them, and these friends supported me with my classwork. Sometimes, they will read text to my hearing if I cannot read using my left eye. Most of the gutters were not covered in the basic and high school. The paths to the classrooms were rough due to erosion, so it took me long to get to the classroom at times. However, my teachers did not see my difficulty moving around the school compound, so they would either lash or shout at me for coming to class late. When I joined the Ghana Blind Union, I attended a program where I met several visually impaired students, and this really motivated me to educate myself to a high level.

The situation at the College of Education was better than the basic and senior high schools. Moving around the campus was relatively easy because gutters were covered, there were pavements, and students were more eager to help. I did not experience any mockery. However, the College did not have learning materials printed in braille or large print format, so reading from regular text was the same struggle. I also learned about braille at the College of Education. Currently, for my work, I have an assistant to help mark class exercises and exams. The allowances the government pays the assistants are very small, so those of us who employ their services must top up with our own monies. The Blind Teachers Association (BTA) has had several engagements with successive governments to increase allowances paid to assistants in line with salary increments given to teachers, but that has not been successful.”

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*Patricia, a blind teacher at a mainstream basic school in Ghana, shares her lived experience.*

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## Acronyms

|        |                                                                                                                                                |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ADF    | African Disability Forum                                                                                                                       |
| ADP    | Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa (Africa Disability Protocol) |
| CBM    | Christian Blinden Mission                                                                                                                      |
| CEDAW  | Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women                                                                                  |
| CHRAJ  | Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice                                                                                          |
| CRC    | Convention on the Rights of the Child                                                                                                          |
| CSOs   | Civil Society Organizations                                                                                                                    |
| DACF   | District Assembly Common Fund                                                                                                                  |
| DIWA   | Disabled Women in Africa                                                                                                                       |
| DIWODE | Disabled Women in Development                                                                                                                  |
| ECD    | Early Childhood Development                                                                                                                    |
| FCDO   | Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office                                                                                                     |
| FEDOMA | Federation of Disability Organizations in Malawi                                                                                               |
| FGD    | Focus Group Discussions                                                                                                                        |
| GAPA   | Ghana Association of Persons with Albinism                                                                                                     |
| GFD    | Ghana Federation of Disability Organizations                                                                                                   |
| GFD    | Ghana Federation of Disability Organizations                                                                                                   |
| GNAD   | Ghana National Association of the Deaf                                                                                                         |
| GNECC  | Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition                                                                                                    |
| GSPD   | Ghana Society for the Physically Disabled                                                                                                      |
| IA     | Inclusion Africa                                                                                                                               |
| ILO    | International Labour Organization                                                                                                              |
| iNGO   | International Non-Governmental Organization                                                                                                    |
| LEAP   | Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty Program                                                                                                 |
| MACOHA | Malawi Council for the Handicapped                                                                                                             |
| MEHSOG | Mental Health Society of Ghana                                                                                                                 |
| NAD    | The Norwegian Association of Disabled                                                                                                          |
| NCPD   | National Council for Persons with Disabilities                                                                                                 |
| NGOs   | Non-Governmental Organizations                                                                                                                 |

|        |                                                                       |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| NHIS   | National Health Insurance Scheme                                      |
| OPD    | Organizations of Persons with Disabilities                            |
| OSISA  | Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa                           |
| OSIWA  | Open Society Initiative for West Africa                               |
| SCT    | Social Cash Transfer                                                  |
| SIAM   | Spinal Injuries Association of Malawi                                 |
| SIDA   | Swedish International Development Cooperation                         |
| SPADRA | Strengthening Partnerships to Advance Disability Rights in Africa     |
| SWOT   | Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats                     |
| UNCRPD | United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities  |
| UNDP   | United Nations Development Program                                    |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund                                        |
| UNPRPD | United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities |
| WAG    | Women's Action Group                                                  |
| YADIZ  | Youth in Action for Disability Inclusion in Zambia                    |
| YOGDA  | Young Girls with Disabilities Advocates                               |
| ZAEPD  | Zambian Association on Employment for Persons with Disabilities       |
| ZAFOD  | Zambia Federation of Disability Organizations                         |
| ZAPD   | Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities                           |
| ZNAHI  | Zambia National Association of the Hearing Impaired                   |
| ZNAPD  | Zambia National Association of Persons with Physical Disabilities     |

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1. The SPADRA Project



The African Disability Forum is the continental membership organization of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in Africa. ADF currently has members from 44 African countries (National Umbrella Organization of Persons with Disabilities), 9 continental OPDs, and 4 sub-regional OPDs.

In August 2023, the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation (Sida) signed an agreement on the **‘Strengthening Partnerships to Advance Disability Rights in Africa (SPADRA)’** project.

The project, led by the ADF, is being implemented in partnership with IDA, Disabled Women in Africa (DIWA), and Inclusion Africa (IA).



The IDA is an alliance of networks that brings together over 1,100 organizations of persons with disabilities and their families from across eight global and six regional networks.



DIWA, headquartered in Malawi, is an independent organization representing women and girls with disabilities. With a membership of 33 organizations spanning Africa, DIWA focuses on addressing the challenges faced by women with disabilities at local, national, and regional levels.

DIWA’s goal is to empower African women and girls with disabilities through research, information sharing, networking, partnership, and capacity development, fostering unity in diversity in a world where African women and girls with disabilities exercise their rights, shape their futures, and live free from gender- and disability-based discrimination.



IA is a pan-African, regional federation of family-based organizations advocating for the equal rights and inclusion of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families in Africa. IA is registered in Kenya as an NGO with headquarters in Nairobi.

The members of IA are national family-based organizations in 18 countries that promote the inclusion of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in their communities. IA also functions as the regional body of Inclusion International and has profound experience and expertise in using the human rights-based approach and running advocacy initiatives.

The project aims to advance disability and gender rights in Africa by strengthening Organizations of Persons with Disability (OPD) capacity, cross-disability, and mainstream partnerships at Pan-African and national levels.

### 1.1. The Focus of the SPADRA Project

SPADRA is more than a project; it's a beacon of hope. It aspires to intertwine gender and disability rights into a cohesive fabric, strengthening the fabric of OPDs across Africa.

By weaving together cross-disability collaborations and mainstream partnerships, SPADRA targets Benin, Ghana, Malawi, and Zambia, envisioning a future where equity and inclusion are not just ideals but realities for persons grappling with the compounded challenges of disability and gender biases.

### 1.2. SPADRA Project Aims and Objectives

The project aims to advance gender and disability rights in Africa by strengthening OPD capacity and cross-disability and mainstream partnerships at the pan-African and national levels.

The project has two **specific objectives**:

**Strengthening cross-disability and mainstream partnerships** to advance gender and disability rights at Pan-African and national levels

**Improving the capacity of OPDs** to model and lead the design and delivery of disability and gender equality initiatives that monitor and uphold human rights instruments

The initial target countries are Benin, Ghana, Malawi and Zambia.



The project has three **expected results**:

**African  
OPD  
consortium**

An inclusive, dynamic, and robust consortium of African OPDs was formed to advance and inform global and regional approaches to disability and gender rights.

**OPD  
Capacity  
Building**

Strengthened the capacity of consortium members and partners to design, implement, and share learning on collaborative gender and disability rights initiatives.

**Regional  
Consortium  
Program**

A gender and disability rights regional consortium program was developed based on context-specific needs to strengthen policy implementation and legal commitments.

The **specific focus areas** for collaboration, capacity building, and program development are:

**Social  
Protection**

**Inclusive  
Education**

**Access  
to Justice**

The **intersecting human rights instruments** considered in the Baseline Survey Report are:

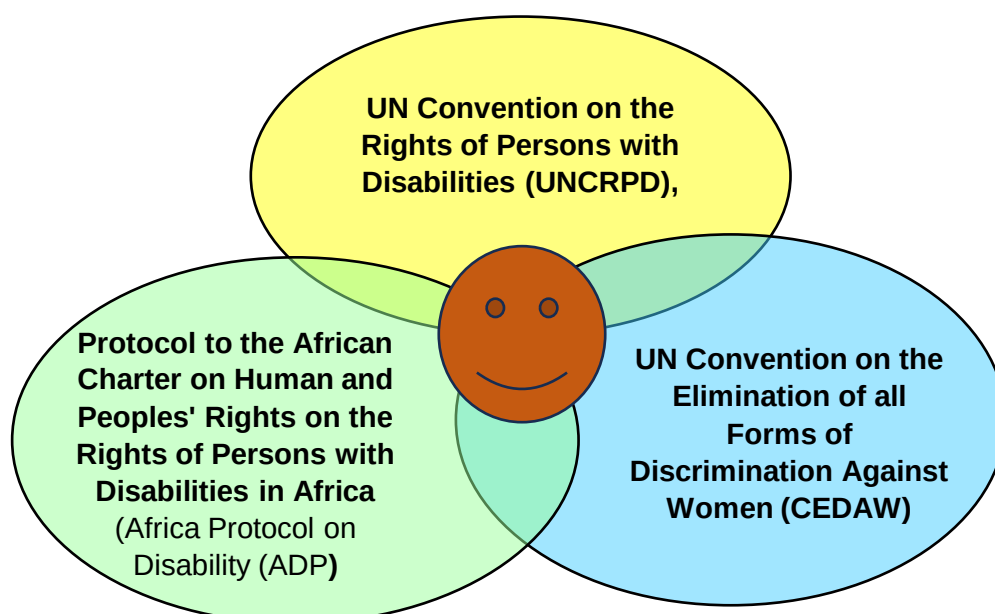


*Diagram 1: Intersecting Frameworks of Disability and Human Rights Treaties in SPADRA Phase I*

The Venn diagram presented in the SPADRA Phase I report serves as a conceptual map, illustrating the symbiotic relationship between critical international human rights treaties and their relevance to investigating the conditions faced by women and girls with disabilities in the target countries. This diagram encapsulates three critical spheres — each representing a foundational human rights instrument: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the African Disability Protocol. The overlapping areas of these spheres visually articulate the interdisciplinary nature of SPADRA’s investigative focus on Social Protection, Inclusive Education, and Access to Justice.

### **Core Elements of the Diagram:**

#### **1. Individual Spheres:**

*UNCRPD Sphere:* Symbolizes the global commitment to promoting, protecting, and ensuring the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities.

*CEDAW Sphere:* Represents the international bill of rights for women, focusing on eliminating discrimination against women to ensure their full development and advancement.

*African Disability Protocol Sphere:* Highlights the continent-specific instrument that addresses the rights of persons with disabilities within the unique African context, supplementing the UNCRPD’s provisions.

#### **2. Intersecting Areas:**

The diagram’s intersecting areas emphasize the intersections between these treaties, showcasing where their mandates converge regarding women and girls with disabilities. This intersectionality underlines the need for a holistic approach to investigating and addressing the barriers and challenges women and girls with disabilities experience, ensuring that interventions are grounded in a robust understanding of their rights as outlined by these frameworks.

#### **3. Thematic Focus Areas:**

Within the overlapping sections of the diagram, annotations or icons may depict the three thematic areas of focus for SPADRA Phase I—Social Protection, Inclusive Education, and Access to Justice. This placement signifies how these areas are informed and contribute to realizing the rights enshrined in the treaties.

#### **4. Analytical Insight:**

This Venn diagram is a visual aid and a strategic framework guiding the SPADRA Phase I investigation. It asserts that the rights and well-being of women and girls with

disabilities are situated at the nexus of disability rights, gender equality, and regional human rights considerations. By grounding the investigation within this tripartite framework, SPADRA acknowledges the complexity of the issues and the necessity of an integrated approach that respects and leverages the synergies between these critical human rights instruments.

Including this Venn diagram in the SPADRA Phase I report is a testament to the project's commitment to a nuanced, rights-based approach to advancing the status of women and girls with disabilities. It visually and conceptually aligns the project's objectives with international and regional human rights standards. It provides a solid foundation for the investigation and subsequent interventions to foster more inclusive, equitable societies. Through this lens, SPADRA seeks to highlight current challenges and illuminate the path toward systemic change that fully honors the dignity and rights of women and girls with disabilities in Africa.

### **1.3. The Objective of SPADRA Phase 1**

The overall objective of Phase 1 is to identify and define key entry points for SPADRA Phase II.

### **1.4. The Baseline Survey Study**

#### ***Methodology***

The ADF contracted a service provider to conduct a baseline study and gender analysis to identify the gender dimensions of critical disability issues, focusing on social protection, inclusive education, and access to justice in the four selected countries. The study focused on needs, capacities, opportunities, threats, and stakeholders.

Three sources of information gathering were used to compile the baseline survey:

#### ***Desktop Literature Review***

The Literature Review Report was developed through a desktop review of relevant international and national human rights instruments, duty-bearer reports in which they account to the oversight committees to these instruments, parallel reports and insights from OPDs and international non-governmental organizations (iNGOs), and literature highlighting gender-disability dimension dynamics in Africa.

The Literature Review is a separate report, with only highlights and insights integrated into the Baseline Survey Report.

The Desktop Literature Review constitutes **Part A** of the Annexures to this Report.

## **e-Survey**

Questionnaires were developed in English with an e-translation into French to target OPDs, iNGOs, and government officials in key ministries responsible for social protection, inclusive education, and justice/human rights. Electronic copies were circulated to the target audience in the four targeted countries, and the option of completing the survey online was available.

A total of **46** responses were received, consisting of:

*Table 1: E: Survey responses received.*

| <b>Country</b> | <b>Stakeholder Group</b> | <b>Number of Responses</b> |
|----------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Benin          | OPDs & NGOs              | 15                         |
|                | Umbrella OPD             | 01                         |
|                | iNGOs                    | 00                         |
|                | Government Ministries    | 01                         |
|                | Subtotal:                | 17                         |
| Ghana          | OPDs & NGOs              | 06                         |
|                | Umbrella OPD             | 01                         |
|                | iNGOs                    | 01                         |
|                | Government Ministries    | 03                         |
|                | Subtotal:                | 11                         |
| Malawi         | OPDs                     | 07                         |
|                | Umbrella OPD             | 00                         |
|                | iNGOs                    | 00                         |
|                | Government Ministries    | 03                         |
|                | Subtotal:                | 10                         |
| Zambia         | OPDs                     | 07                         |
|                | iNGOs                    | 00                         |
|                | Government Ministries    | 02                         |
|                | Subtotal:                | 09                         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |                          | <b>47</b>                  |

### ***Focus Group Discussions with Women and Girls with Disabilities***

Eight focus group discussions were conducted with women and girls with different disabilities in rural and urban/peri-urban settings in the four selected countries.

An interactive tool – the ‘Wheel of Opportunity’ (unpublished and self-designed by Sait and Lorenzo,1995) was adapted for this project to include the relevant articles from the UNCRPD, CEDAW, and the African Disability Protocol.

The data collection tool focused on the experiences of women and girls with disabilities, assessing opportunities and barriers in their daily lives, particularly regarding systemic service delivery across governmental and organizational services.

The DIWA and IA program staff received training during a half-day online session, and they were encouraged to invite women and girls with disabilities representing different impairment groups and other intersectionalities to participate in the focus group discussions.

- Focus Group Data Collection Tool
- Focus Group Template for Note-Takers
- Focus Group Attendance Register & Intersectionality
- Focus Group Participant Information and Consent Form

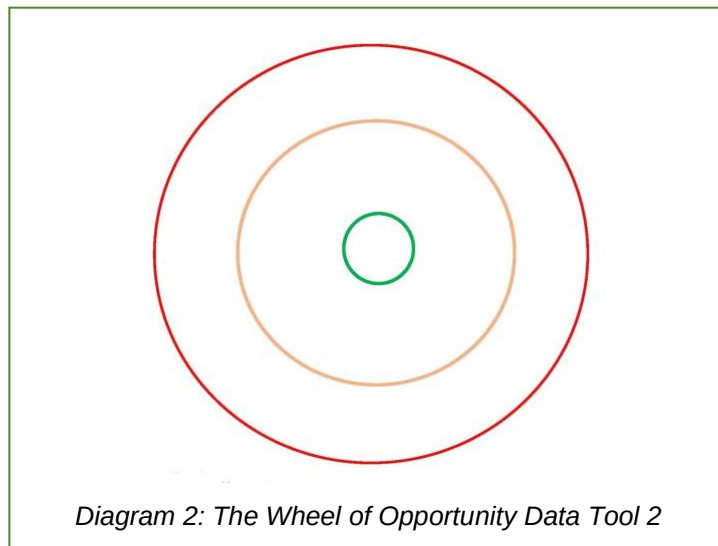




Photo: Focus Group Discussions in Cotonou, Benin

One hundred and one (101) women with disabilities and twelve (12) parents/guardians participated in eight focus groups (two per country) between 05 and 16 March 2024. (The total participant number was 136, with the difference predominantly being one man with a disability and personal assistants).

Participant breakdown:

*Table 2: Participant Demographics*

|               | Total Participants | Women with Disabilities | Parents/ Relatives | Other (men, assistants) |
|---------------|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Rural:</b> |                    |                         |                    |                         |
| Benin         | 15                 | 12                      | 3                  | 0                       |
| Ghana         | 21                 | 12                      | 3                  | 6                       |
| Malawi        | 18                 | 14                      | 0                  | 4                       |
| Zambia        | 21                 | 17                      | 0                  | 4                       |
| <b>Total:</b> | <b>75</b>          | <b>55</b>               | <b>06</b>          | <b>14</b>               |

|                    | Total Participants | Women with Disabilities | Parents/ Relatives | Other (men, assistants) |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Urban/Peri:</b> |                    |                         |                    |                         |
| Benin              | 15                 | 12                      | 3                  | 0                       |
| Ghana              | 19                 | 11                      | 2                  | 6                       |
| Malawi             | 13                 | 10                      | 1                  | 2                       |
| Zambia             | 14                 | 13                      | 0                  | 1                       |
| <b>Total:</b>      | <b>61</b>          | <b>46</b>               | <b>06</b>          | <b>9</b>                |

*Table 3: Impairment Demographics*

|                    | Type of Impairment |         |          |              |               |          |          |                  |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------|----------|--------------|---------------|----------|----------|------------------|
|                    | Visual             | Hearing | Physical | Intellectual | Psycho social | Albinism | Epilepsy | Parent/ Relative |
| <b>Rural:</b>      |                    |         |          |              |               |          |          |                  |
| Benin              |                    |         |          |              |               |          |          |                  |
| Ghana              |                    |         |          |              |               |          |          |                  |
| Malawi             |                    |         |          |              |               |          |          |                  |
| Zambia             |                    |         |          |              |               |          |          |                  |
| <b>Urban/Peri:</b> |                    |         |          |              |               |          |          |                  |
| Benin              |                    |         |          |              |               |          |          |                  |
| Ghana              |                    |         |          |              |               |          |          |                  |
| Malawi             |                    |         |          |              |               |          |          |                  |
| Zambia             |                    |         |          |              |               |          |          |                  |

As the table indicates,

- No women with psychosocial disabilities participated in the rural focus group discussions.
- Parents/guardians did not participate in the Zambia focus group discussions.
- Persons with albinism did not participate in the Zambia focus group discussions.
- Persons with epilepsy participated only in the Malawi focus group discussions.

Given the absence of women and girls with psychosocial disabilities in rural focus group discussions and the potential reasons behind this exclusion—stigma, cultural perceptions, and lack of inclusivity in recruitment strategies—psychosocial disabilities emerge as a critical area for SPADRA Phase II. This focus is not only necessary to bridge the significant gap in representation and participation but also to confront and mitigate the profound stigma and misunderstanding surrounding mental health and psychosocial issues, especially in rural settings.

The focus group discussion tools and responses constitute **Part B** of the Annexures to this Report.



### ***Analysis of the Raw Data***

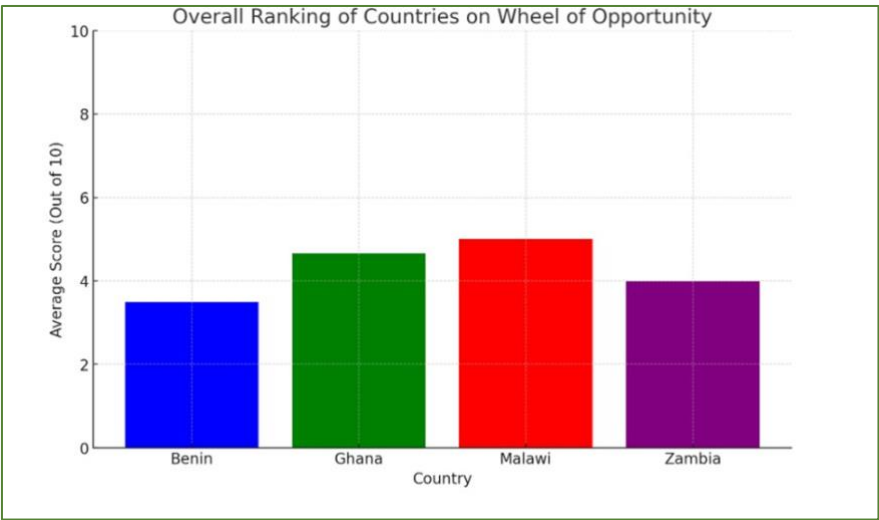
This Baseline Survey Report presents a comprehensive analysis of raw data supplemented by insights from the Desktop Literature Review. The analysis was structured into several layers:

- **Rural-Urban Comparative Analysis:** Data from focus group discussions were utilized to compare rural and urban contexts within each country, providing nuanced insights into regional disparities.
- **Comparative Country Analysis:** A comparative analysis was conducted across three focus areas to identify similarities and differences among countries, aiding in understanding cross-national variations.
- **Country-Specific Analysis:** SWOT analysis and theme-specific examination were performed based on data from OPDs and NGOs in each country, offering tailored insights into local contexts.
- **Comparative OPD Analysis:** Data from OPDs across countries were compared within each focus area, highlighting common challenges and potential best practices.
- **Harmonization and Divergence Analysis:** A critical evaluation of data from focus groups and e-surveys was undertaken to assess alignment and discrepancies, providing insights into data reliability and consistency.

This multi-layered analysis enhances understanding of rightsholder viewpoints and insights across diverse contexts, facilitating informed decision-making and targeted interventions.

The various analyses constitute **Part C** of the Annexures to this Report.

**1.5. Stakeholder Consultation Analysis**



*Graph 1: Overall Ranking of Countries on the Wheel of Opportunity*

The thematic analysis examines the lived experiences of women with disabilities and insights from OPDs in the four countries juxtaposed with international treaties. This approach bridges the gap between policy intentions and realities on the ground, providing a nuanced understanding of challenges and opportunities.

By delving into the narratives of women with disabilities and perspectives from OPDs, we uncover systemic barriers and access issues they face daily.

The bar chart visually compares the overall ranking of the four countries—Benin, Ghana, Malawi, and Zambia—across three key themes: Social Protection, Inclusive Education, and Access to Justice. These themes were evaluated based on the individual Focus Group Discussions (FGD) urban and rural country reports, capturing insights into the positioning on the Wheel of Opportunity for persons with disabilities.

The scores were developed by analyzing the narratives from the reports. Those ratings were directly used for themes where explicit numerical ratings were provided (as in some urban and rural comparisons within the reports). In cases where the reports described the situation qualitatively without explicit ratings, a scoring interpretation was made based on the described level of challenges, opportunities, and best practices mentioned.

Each theme was assessed on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 represented the most significant challenges and lack of opportunities, and 10 represented the highest level of opportunity and minimal challenges. The scores for Social Protection, Inclusive Education, and Access to Justice for each country were then averaged to produce an overall score that reflects the country's positioning on the Wheel of Opportunity.

### Results:

- **Benin** showed an average score, indicating a balance of challenges and opportunities across the three themes, slightly leaning towards more opportunities in urban areas than rural areas.
- **Ghana** presented a similar profile to Benin, with moderate scores reflecting a combination of opportunities and significant challenges, especially in the peri-urban and rural divides.
- **Malawi** reported middle-range scores across all themes, suggesting an evenly distributed experience of challenges and opportunities in both urban and rural settings.
- **Zambia's** scores suggested moderate challenges across both urban and rural settings, with a consistent need for improvement in all areas.

The scores reveal a nuanced landscape in which no country stands out significantly better or worse across the board. This highlights the complexity of addressing Social Protection, Inclusive Education, and Access to Justice in varying contexts. Each country exhibits its unique mix of strengths and areas for improvement, emphasizing the importance of tailored strategies to enhance the overall quality of life and opportunities for persons with disabilities.



*Photo: Zambia Focus Group Discussion:  
Facilitator Mwayiwathu Kusakala (standing) during discussions.*

## **SECTION 2: SOCIAL PROTECTION**

### **A Foundation for Dignity and Independence**

## **2. Social Protection: A Foundation for Dignity and Independence**

### **2.1. Introduction**

Social protection encompasses formal and informal interventions to mitigate social and economic risks, facilitating inclusive social development and equitable economic growth. It addresses challenges such as unemployment, exclusion, health, disability, and old age, enhancing persons' capacity to manage financial and social risks while promoting access to labor markets and entrepreneurship.

Within the SPADRA Project, social protection initiatives target the economic and social vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities, extending beyond financial aid to encompass disability-inclusive healthcare services, vocational training, and assistive technology provision. Global recommendations stress universal income security, healthcare coverage, and access to disability-related services. Optimal participation of OPDs is crucial for effective program design and implementation, necessitating capacity-building opportunities and inclusive platforms. While OPDs offer firsthand insights into community challenges, collaboration with government bodies, NGOs, and international agencies is essential.

The UNCRPD explicitly covers the right to social protection under Article 28. It emphasizes equal access to schemes and programs for persons with disabilities, including children (Article 28). Additionally, it mandates access to assistance for disability-related expenses and quality disability-related services and devices to facilitate independent living in the community (Article 28 and Article 19). The UNCRPD also requires intentional, targeted measures to protect persons with disabilities during situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies (Article 11). Furthermore, it addresses the particular disadvantages faced by women and girls with disabilities (Article 6 and Article 28). It emphasizes consultation and involvement of persons with disabilities, including children, in policy design, implementation, and monitoring through their representatives' organizations (Article 4.3).

Article 18 of the African Disability Protocol (ADP) provides regional dimensions to governments' obligations to ensure that women and girls with disabilities enjoy an adequate standard of living. The ADP reinforces the rights outlined in the UNCRPD, emphasizing social protection and security for citizens with disabilities.

### **2.2. Building on Strengths and Successes**

Advocacy for rights and policy changes, partnerships with governmental and non-governmental organizations, and innovative income-generating activities are widespread.

Urban areas in Benin and Malawi showcase structured social protection programs. Malawi's livelihood programs, in particular, set positive examples for engagement and empowerment.

Ghana and Malawi demonstrate strong collaborative advocacy efforts, influencing policy design and direct assistance programs, especially in urban settings.

Malawi stands out for its comprehensive approach to social protection and innovative income-generating activities empowering women and girls with disabilities.

Comprehensive advocacy and direct interventions serve as exemplary models for other countries in Phase II of the SPADRA project.

Organizations like ONG Le Laurier and La Chrysalide in Benin advocate for laws protecting and empowering women and girls with disabilities. Efforts resonate with Article 28 of the UNCRPD, emphasizing the right to an adequate standard of living and social protection. Advocacy focuses on innovative income-generating activities and advocating for budget allocations to ensure active community participation.

Rightsholders in Ghana emphasize digital inclusion and capacity-building for caregivers, aligning with Articles 22 and 23 of the CEDAW. The Ghana Federation of Disability Organizations (GFD) advocates for the empowerment of women with disabilities as crucial for societal progress.

Rural and urban contexts witness active advocacy by OPDs for better social protection, awareness raising, and direct support.

### **2.3. Addressing Gaps and Challenges**

OPD survey responses provide valuable insights into the gaps and challenges within social protection initiatives:

- While specific projects are outlined, there's a broader need for direct service provisions and sustainable livelihood support, especially in rural areas.
- Urban and rural provisions exhibit stark contrasts, with rural areas facing more pronounced challenges due to isolation and limited outreach of programs.
- Issues identified include limited data collection and monitoring, insufficient direct service provision, and the need for greater support for caregivers.
- Rural challenges include difficulty accessing aid, poor support distribution, and lack of awareness about Social Protection Centres (SPCs), which hinder progress.
- Urban challenges include a lack of knowledge about social advancement centers and difficulties accessing social assistance.

- Moreover, personal stories from both contexts highlight profound struggles, particularly among women and girls with disabilities, revealing systemic barriers and social stigma.
- Benin lacks direct service provision and enhanced impact assessment, particularly in more rural contexts.
- Ghana needs to address social assistance for caregivers and enhance resource allocation.
- Malawi requires improvements in data collection, impact assessment, and inclusive disaster response strategies.
- Zambia must focus on building capacity and addressing mobility and communication barriers.

## 2.4. Country-Specific Analysis

### Benin

- *What does the Literature Review Tell Us?*

The literature review reveals that the government reports significant strides in Benin towards promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. The 2017 Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act provides comprehensive social benefits, including improved access to healthcare, education, and vocational training. The government's decentralized project, led by local government communes, focuses on social safety nets, including a conditional cash transfer program targeting the most vulnerable.

Benin's commitment is further evidenced by its initiatives to extend rehabilitation services by establishing community-based units and orthopedic centers. Non-governmental organizations, such as Thalitakourn and Équilibre Bénin, play a crucial role in complementing state efforts by operating rehabilitation centers. Ongoing efforts include expanding rehabilitation programs to more communes and ensuring compliance through regular visits to rehabilitation centers.

Additionally, the government's focus on social protection, including health insurance through the ARCH program, underscores its dedication to improving the well-being of persons with disabilities.

- *What do Women and Girls with Disabilities Tell Us?*

Women and girls with disabilities express contrasting sentiments when reflecting on their lives as they face a myriad of challenges in both rural and urban settings.

In rural areas, difficulties accessing aid, poor distribution of support, and limited awareness about Social Protection Centers compound the challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities.

Similarly, a lack of knowledge about social advancement centers and obstacles in accessing social assistance exacerbate the situation in urban areas.

Despite these challenges, some best practices and areas of ease of access were observed.

- Vocational training centers exist in rural areas, and part-time assistance is available, although hindered by issues such as expired support cards.
- Conversely, material aid and financial support for vocational training are provided in urban areas, albeit with cumbersome access processes.
- OPDs play a crucial role in both contexts, actively advocating for better social protection, raising awareness, and providing direct support to address these challenges.



Photo: Focus Group Discussion in Bohicon, a Rural Community in Benin

Personal stories from both rural and urban contexts illuminate the profound struggles faced by women and girls with disabilities, underscoring systemic barriers and social stigma. While there are pockets of progress, the Wheel of Opportunity rates the rural context at 3/10 and the urban context at 4/10, indicating significant room for improvement in both settings.

The narrative reports capturing the rich discussions in the focus groups offer the opportunity for mining data to inform design during SPADRA II and implementation during SPADRA III. Refer to Annexure B.

- *What do OPDs<sup>1</sup> Tell Us?*

When examining the insights provided by OPDs and disability NGOs, several key points emerge.

Disability organizations demonstrate **strengths** in collaborative advocacy efforts, working collectively to amplify the voices of persons with disabilities and push for policy changes. Additionally, they show resilience in adapting infrastructure to be more inclusive and accessible, facilitating greater participation for persons with disabilities.

However, OPDs and disability NGOs also face notable **weaknesses**, including limited documentation of their activities and outcomes, which hinders their ability to showcase their impact and secure resources for future initiatives.

Resource constraints further impede their efforts, limiting their capacity to implement comprehensive programs and services.

Despite these challenges, OPDs recognize various **opportunities** for progress, particularly in leveraging data-driven advocacy approaches to highlight the needs and experiences of persons with disabilities more effectively. Additionally, there is potential for OPDs to engage in direct service provision, bridging gaps in access to essential support services for their constituents.

Nonetheless, OPDs also identify **threats** stemming from systemic barriers entrenched within society, including discriminatory practices and policies that perpetuate exclusion and marginalization.

Overall, while OPDs exhibit strengths and opportunities for growth, they also face significant challenges and threats that must be addressed to enhance their effectiveness in advocating for the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.

- *Which Organizations are Active in Social Protection?*

1. **FEDERATION DES ASSOCIATIONS** (Benin's umbrella OPD) advocates for inclusive education but lacks specific details on the outcome of advocacy efforts. Evidence-based advocacy presents opportunities, yet political changes may pose threats to effectiveness.
2. **COLOMBE HIBISCUS** advocates for educational access through, among others, support services but lacks details on the outcome of advocacy efforts. Leveraging partnerships and data presents opportunities, yet threats include policy enforcement and funding challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: Responses from OPDs in Benin included a significant number of disability welfare organizations (NGOs)

3. **CREDELL** advocates for accessibility in infrastructure but lacks detailed outcome documentation for advocacy efforts. Collaboration within a consortium presents opportunities, yet the reliance on decrees and policy changes poses potential threats if not fully implemented or monitored.
4. **FODDEB** advocates for disability rights and collaborates within a consortium but lacks specific details on the outcome of advocacy efforts. Continued advocacy for policy implementations presents opportunities, while legal and bureaucratic delays may hinder progress.
5. **ICOG** advocates for accessibility adjustments but lacks specific interventions for social protection. Opportunities lie in partnerships with Social Watch Benin, yet reliance on media advocacy poses threats if not complemented by concrete policy changes and programmatic interventions.
6. **LA CHRYSALIDE** advocates for laws protecting persons with disabilities and equal opportunities, showcasing a strong commitment to enhancing social protection for women and girls with disabilities. However, the lack of information on the direct impact of advocacy efforts on social protection services suggests a need for more explicit outcome documentation. Collaborations indicate potential for broader impact, while no specific threats to effectiveness are mentioned.
7. **ONG ACTIONS INCLUSIVE** proactively advocates for the empowerment of young girls and women with disabilities. However, the lack of specific programs addressing unique needs may limit effectiveness. Data collection efforts present opportunities for evidence-based advocacy, but challenges in converting advocacy into policy changes remain potential threats.
8. **ONG BROPEs** advocates for rights and institutional support yet lacks specific outcome documentation for advocacy efforts. Leveraging existing advocacy presents opportunities, while legal and bureaucratic delays may threaten progress.
9. **ONG CRI D'AMOUR SARC** advocates for municipal budget allocations to support persons with disabilities but lacks specific details on the outcome of advocacy efforts. Continued advocacy for budget allocations presents opportunities, while potential threats may arise from insufficient municipal support or policy constraints.
10. **ONG LE LAURIER** actively advocates for the rights and dignity of vulnerable children, including those with disabilities, through health, vocational training, and empowerment initiatives. While their advocacy efforts demonstrate collaboration with various organizations, the lack of specific outcome documentation suggests potential gaps in measuring effectiveness. Collaborations offer significant

opportunities to enhance social protection networks, with no particular threats identified, indicating a potentially stable environment.

11. **ONG RACINES** advocates for disability rights but lacks active data collection. Environment adaptation advocacy presents opportunities, yet the lack of financial resources poses threats.
12. **ORGANIZATION INTERNATIONALE** focuses on vocational training but has a limited scope of initiatives. Data collection for advocacy presents opportunities, yet reliance on donations threatens sustainability.
13. **PERSONNE PHYSIC** focuses on physical infrastructure improvements but has a limited scope beyond physical access. Collaboration potential presents opportunities, yet ensuring full inclusion beyond physical access poses threats.
14. **RÉSEAU DES ASSOCIATIONS DE PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES DU LITTORAL** ADVOCATES for women and girls with disabilities, with collaboration offering opportunities for leveraging advocacy achievements for policy inclusion. However, insufficient support, funding, and societal barriers potentially threaten effectiveness.
15. **RESPESD BENIN** advocates for legislative changes but lacks specific details on the outcome of advocacy efforts. Leveraging partnerships presents opportunities, yet institutional and societal challenges may threaten effectiveness.
16. **SOLDATIC BENIN** offers comprehensive care for people with hearing impairments and advocates for disability support, yet limited data collection and monitoring may hinder understanding the impact and areas for improvement. Opportunities lie in potential expansion and improved data analysis, although threats include limited resources and societal factors that may impact sustainability.
17. **TERRE ROUGE BENIN** engages in data advising but lacks detailed advocacy initiatives. Collaboration with the government presents opportunities, yet the insufficiency of disability professionals poses potential threats.

## Ghana

- *What does the Literature Review Tell Us?*

The literature review on Ghana's compliance with the UNCRPD reveals a multi-faceted approach to ensuring an adequate standard of living and social protection, as mandated by Articles 28 and 36 of the Constitution.

Efforts include the Social Protection Policy, District Assembly Common Fund allocation for persons with disabilities, and the Livelihood Empowerment Against

Poverty Program (LEAP). Challenges persist in fund administration, and research suggests skepticism among beneficiaries regarding the effectiveness of the Disability Fund, with limited benefits reported, particularly among women.

Article 26 on Rehabilitation and Habilitation is addressed through Act 715 and various policies, yet outdated rehabilitation centers and limited community-based programs remain.

Social protection programs like LEAP and the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) benefit persons with disabilities, although other programs, like the Labour-Intensive Public Work (LIPW) program, lack reported benefits. Interviews with women with disabilities highlight barriers and successes, with over 23,814 beneficiaries of LEAP cash transfers indicating some positive impact.

- *What do Women and Girls with Disabilities Tell Us?*

Women and girls with disabilities offer valuable insights into the challenges and best practices surrounding the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) disbursement. In both rural and peri-urban areas, there is a shared concern regarding the lack of transparency in DACF allocation. However, peri-urban areas face additional complexities, including political influence and sexual exploitation by male leaders. Participants also shared concerns about delays (sometimes involving several visits to an NHIS center) in getting free NHIS registration or renewal, which often force persons with disabilities in urgent need of healthcare services to pay for the NHIS registration/renewal. However, once such payment is made, the person with a disability no longer gets free NHIS renewal per system design.

Despite these challenges, rural and peri-urban areas have benefited from efforts by DACF fund management committees, contributing to ease of access to funds. Conversely, peri-urban areas have seen potential success through collaborations between banks and disability groups, facilitating improved access to resources.

OPDs play similar roles in advocacy and awareness across both areas, but there is a specific need in peri-urban regions to address exploitation and gender-based violence. Underrepresented intersectionalities further highlight disparities, with both rural and peri-urban areas facing stigma against mothers of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. At the same time, peri-urban areas focus on the struggles of Deaf women and visually impaired persons.

Both areas are rated Orange on the Wheel of Opportunity, indicating moderate opportunities but significant room for improvement. Critical areas for intervention include enhancing transparency in DACF fund allocation and disbursement and providing targeted support for women and girls, particularly in peri-urban areas, to prevent exploitation and promote empowerment.



Photo: Focus Group Discussion in a Rural Community in Ghana

The narrative reports capturing the rich discussions in the focus groups offer the opportunity for mining data to inform design during SPADRA II and implementation during SPADRA III. Refer to Annexure B.

- *What do OPDs Tell Us?*

OPDs provide valuable insights into various aspects of disability rights advocacy and inclusion efforts.

Their **strengths** lie in collaborative advocacy initiatives and digital inclusion projects, which have contributed to advancing the rights of persons with disabilities.

However, OPDs face **challenges**, particularly in data collection, which hinders their ability to assess needs and monitor progress effectively.

Despite these challenges, there are **opportunities** for improvement, such as advocating for social security measures for caregivers and enhancing resource allocation to support disability-related programs and services.

However, OPDs also identify **threats** posed by socio-cultural barriers, which continue to hinder the full realization of disability rights and inclusion. These barriers underscore the importance of addressing deeply ingrained societal attitudes and norms to create a more inclusive environment for persons with disabilities.

- *Which Organizations are Active in Social Protection?*

1. **INCLUSION GHANA** excels in advocacy and partnership, actively collaborating with local governments and organizations to enhance access to social protection services. Their efforts have increased access to interventions like financial assistance and health insurance for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

However, data collection and monitoring challenges persist, impacting evidence-based advocacy and policymaking. The organization also identifies insufficient support for caregivers, particularly women, as a critical weakness, emphasizing the need for targeted policies and interventions.

Opportunities lie in advocating for social security for caregivers and increased budget allocations to enhance social protection impact, although potential threats include limitations in resource allocation from government bodies.

2. **GHANA BLIND UNION** demonstrates proactive advocacy and networking, educating and empowering blind and partially sighted women and families for social inclusion.

Collaboration with organizations like the Ghana Federation of Disability Organizations strengthens their capacity to improve social protection access. However, the absence of structured data monitoring on social protection services implementation presents a challenge.

Opportunities include empowering women and girls with disabilities through rights education and digital inclusion initiatives, although socio-cultural barriers remain a threat to effective advocacy and inclusion efforts.

3. **MENTAL HEALTH SOCIETY OF GHANA (MEHSOG)**'s comprehensive advocacy efforts cover various aspects, including healthcare access and financial support for persons with mental disorders. Collaborations with organizations like *BasicNeeds Ghana* enhance advocacy impact, although the lack of data collection on social protection services implementation poses a significant challenge.

Opportunities lie in continued policy influence and partnership expansion, although persistent stigmatization and marginalization threaten adequate social protection coverage.

4. **GHANA ASSOCIATION OF PERSONS WITH ALBINISM (GAPA)**'s advocacy for persons with albinism demonstrates proactive engagement, although data collection and analysis challenges hinder evidence-based advocacy.

Partnerships with organizations like UNDP present opportunities for collaborative advocacy while ensuring consistent access to resources, which remains a challenge amidst funding fluctuations.

5. **YOUNG VISIONARY LEADERS OF GHANA** exhibit leadership in national advocacy, focusing on transparency within government social protection programs.

However, resource constraints limit independent monitoring of service implementation. Opportunities for broadening impact through collaboration with prominent organizations exist, although potential shifts in government priorities threaten program sustainability.

6. **The GHANA FEDERATION OF DISABILITY ORGANIZATIONS (GFD—Umbrella OPD)** engages proactively in advocacy and collaboration, targeting women and girls with disabilities in social protection programs. However, the lack of structured data monitoring hampers evidence-based improvements. Policy influence opportunities exist, although policy and program exclusion remain threats to effective inclusion. Partnership opportunities provide a solid advocacy foundation, although threats to social protection services' effectiveness are not explicitly identified.

*Other important semi-state institutions include:*

7. **NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (NCPD)** advocates for improved access to social protection services and collaborates with various organizations. While opportunities for policy influence exist, threats to service effectiveness are not specified in their submission.

8. **UNICEF GHANA** advocates for disability-inclusive social protection programs, although concerns about program effectiveness and sustainability remain.

Opportunities for leveraging studies and partnerships for inclusive policies exist, although potential threats include policy changes affecting fiscal allocations.

9. **COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND ADMINISTRATIVE JUSTICE (CHRAJ)** demonstrates a targeted approach to addressing the needs of persons with disabilities, although the outcomes of their efforts are unspecified. Opportunities for capacity building exist, although financial constraints threaten service improvements.

- *What does the Literature Review Tell Us?*

The literature review reveals the Malawi government's initiatives to support persons with disabilities, as outlined in its combined initial and second periodic UNCRPD reports submitted in 2017. Under Article 28, these programs encompass public works, fertilizer input subsidies, social cash transfers, school meals, village savings and loans, and the iron sheets and cement subsidy programs.

While no specific legislation exists for the social security system, the Pension Act provides for equal treatment for persons with disabilities. Collaborating with Development Partners like NAD, CBM, UNDP, ILO, Sight Savers, FCDO, and UNICEF, Malawi focuses on poverty reduction through social protection programs to address contingencies and uphold universal social rights.

Noteworthy improvements include increased awareness and inclusion of persons with disabilities in social protection programs facilitated by the Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA), benefiting over 500 persons through cash transfers and 1,800 through public works.

However, challenges persist, such as disability-unfriendly features in institutions offering loans and limited accessibility to rehabilitation services. Alternative reports by FEDOMA, the umbrella OPD, highlight significant shortcomings, emphasizing the need for improved policy recognition, accessibility, and social security schemes tailored to persons with disabilities.

- *What do Women and Girls with Disabilities Tell Us?*

Women and girls with disabilities communicate significant challenges across both rural and urban settings, albeit with nuanced differences.

In rural areas, the absence of sustainable livelihood support perpetuates exclusion, compounded by the lack of sign language interpreters and accessible programs.

Conversely, urban environments face their own hurdles, characterized by reactive programs that fail to incorporate inclusivity.

However, amidst these challenges, urban areas showcase promising models of active participation, particularly evident in initiatives like Food for Work programs, which illuminate a potential pathway for inclusive endeavors.

In both contexts, the role of OPDs emerges as crucial. Advocacy for inclusive program design is paramount, with a specific emphasis on continuous government monitoring to ensure the meaningful inclusion of women with disabilities. This advocacy serves as a linchpin in striving towards more equitable and accessible

opportunities for women and girls with disabilities in both rural and urban landscapes.

The narrative reports capturing the rich discussions in the focus groups offer the opportunity for mining data to inform design during SPADRA II and implementation during SPADRA III. Refer to Annexure B.



- *What do OPDs Tell Us?*

OPDs offer valuable insights into their operations and challenges, highlighting strengths and improvement areas.

Their **strengths** lie in their comprehensive advocacy efforts and in facilitating enhanced livelihoods for their constituents.

However, OPDs face **weaknesses** in the form of scarce detailed outcome evaluations, which hinder their ability to measure their initiatives' impact effectively.

Despite these challenges, **opportunities** abound for OPDs, particularly in inclusive policy frameworks and initiatives aimed at economic empowerment. By leveraging these opportunities, OPDs can advance their mission and support their communities more effectively.

Nonetheless, they also face **threats**, notably economic instability, which can undermine their efforts to promote the rights and welfare of persons with disabilities.

Despite these challenges, OPDs remain vital actors in advocating for the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities, continuously striving to address the diverse needs of their constituents while navigating complex socio-economic landscapes.

- *Which Organizations are Active in Social Protection?*

1. **CHIMWEMWE DISABILITY AND COMMUNITY CARE ORGANIZATION** engages in awareness and advocacy activities to promote the fundamental rights of persons with disabilities. Their collaboration with various entities suggests a collaborative approach to advocacy. However, specific outcomes or impacts of their advocacy initiatives are not detailed, potentially indicating gaps in measuring and communicating their effectiveness. Yet, ongoing data collection on social protection implementation provides opportunities to inform government policy and program development.
2. **DIWODE** advocates for increased inclusion and access to health services for women and girls with disabilities. Collaboration with other organizations enhances their impact, although reliance on external partnerships and funding could be vulnerable. Opportunities lie in advocacy initiatives to reduce poverty, while changes in political or economic climates pose threats.
3. **SPINAL INJURIES ASSOCIATION OF MALAWI (SIAM)** engages in proactive advocacy and prioritizes disability-specific social protection programs. Opportunities include building on existing initiatives and engaging with government and stakeholders, while economic challenges pose threats.
4. **THE VOICE OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITY** conducts focused advocacy on various issues affecting women and girls with disabilities. The lack of data monitoring on social protection implementation is a weakness, but enhancing support systems presents an opportunity. Inadequate policy support could threaten the effectiveness of social protection measures.
5. **VIHEMA DEAFBLIND MALAWI** advocates for the rights and needs of deafblind persons, implementing initiatives like goat pass-on and small-scale business programs to enhance livelihoods. However, detailed outcome evaluations of these programs, particularly regarding their specific benefits for women and girls with disabilities, are lacking. Partnerships with other organizations could bolster their capacity to offer more comprehensive social protection services. However, uncertainties about emerging trends or policy changes pose potential threats to sustaining these efforts.
6. **YOUNG GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES ADVOCATE (YOGDA)** advocates for improved access to social protection services, showing commitment despite being a new organization. Collaboration with established organizations offers growth opportunities, although economic instability threatens advocacy efforts.

7. **Beit CURE Children's Hospital.** It has established partnerships to improve access to social protection services for women and girls with disabilities. Their involvement in healthcare and rehabilitation services showcases their contribution to enhancing living conditions. However, specific advocacy initiatives within the last few years are not detailed, suggesting potential gaps in documented efforts. Expanding partnerships and addressing socio-cultural beliefs are opportunities, while threats include economic challenges affecting social protection services.

## Zambia

- *What does the Literature Review Tell Us?*

The literature review sheds light on Zambia's initiatives for persons with disabilities as outlined in its 2017 UNCRPD Report.

Under Article 28, the Citizens Economic Empowerment Commission Act No. 9 of 2006 provides loans to targeted groups, including persons with disabilities, benefiting some in rural areas.

The National Social Protection Policy, with a disability pillar, guides nationwide basic social protection programs covering areas such as livelihood, social assistance, and security, including programs like the Social Cash Transfer aimed at reducing poverty.

The Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities (ZAPD) plays a central role in overseeing disability-related matters, though discussions persist about its focus.

ZAPD supports persons and groups of persons with disabilities with grants for livelihoods, and ministries support vulnerable farmers, including persons with disabilities.

Regarding Article 26, the National Policy on Disability emphasizes habilitation and rehabilitation, with plans to scale up Community-Based Inclusive Development for effective disability mainstreaming.

The Social Cash Transfer (SCT) program provides cash transfers to households, with beneficiaries entitled to varying amounts, including double for households with severe disability members. However, the 2019 assessment of the National Policy on Disability identified the need for policy and legislative reviews to enhance implementation effectiveness.

In addition, the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, in its completed survey form, highlights the Ministry's advocacy for persons with disabilities to obtain disability cards as a proactive approach to ensuring their

access to social protection services. However, weaknesses are evident in the limited scale of data collection efforts, which primarily focus on specific areas such as education and healthcare access for girls. This limited scope may hinder social protection services' comprehensive assessment and customization. Nevertheless, ongoing data collection provides opportunities for enhancing policies and services to meet the needs of women and girls with disabilities. Despite these efforts, significant threats persist, including high levels of poverty, stigma, and discrimination. These factors pose substantial barriers to the effective delivery of social protection services, particularly impacting girls and women with disabilities who have been deprived of educational opportunities. Addressing these threats is crucial to ensuring the equitable provision of social protection services for all persons with disabilities.

- *What do Women and Girls with Disabilities Tell Us?*

In urban settings, women and girls with disabilities face barriers such as complex bureaucratic processes and a lack of targeted programs, complicating access to social aid. Conversely, rural areas present challenges amplified by isolation, limited access to basic services, and a pronounced absence of sustainable livelihood support crucial for community participation.

Urban areas occasionally offer more structured social protection programs, albeit with variable accessibility. In rural settings, efforts like the distribution of mosquito nets and sanitary pads acknowledge basic needs but highlight a gap in comprehensive social protection.

Urban OPDs are pivotal in bridging service gaps through advocacy and direct assistance programs. In rural areas, OPDs are called upon to enhance advocacy, engage in community sensitization, and ensure programs are inclusive, particularly concerning assistive technologies and cash transfer systems.

The narrative reports capturing the rich discussions in the focus groups offer the opportunity for mining data to inform design during SPADRA II and implementation during SPADRA III. Refer to Annexure B.

- *What do OPDs Tell Us?*

An analysis of OPD responses reveals **strengths** in inclusive decision-making processes and the impact of advocacy efforts. These organizations demonstrate a commitment to representing the diverse needs of persons with disabilities and influencing policies and programs accordingly.

However, **weaknesses** emerge concerning the lack of detailed information on the outcomes of their initiatives, indicating potential gaps in measuring and communicating the effectiveness of their activities.

Despite this, **opportunities** exist for capacity-building and economic empowerment initiatives that could further enhance the impact of OPDs.

Nevertheless, **threats** loom due to inadequacies in the legal framework, which could undermine the effectiveness of advocacy efforts and limit the realization of rights and opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Thus, while OPDs exhibit strengths in advocacy and inclusive decision-making, addressing weaknesses and leveraging opportunities is crucial to navigating potential threats and ensuring the advancement of disability rights and empowerment.



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Photo: Focus Group Discussion in an Community in Zambia

- *Which Organizations are Active in Social Protection?*

1. The **DOWN SYNDROME FOUNDATION OF ZAMBIA** engages with the government to provide social cash transfers to girls and women with Down Syndrome, demonstrating a proactive approach to advocating for social protection services. Their focus on recognizing and including women and girls with intellectual disabilities marks a critical strength. However, the lack of specific

outcomes or impacts from these advocacy efforts indicates a weakness in communicating achievements or assessing direct benefits. Collaborating with *Family Voices Zambia* presents an opportunity for partnership to enhance access to social protection services. However, potential threats such as policy inertia, insufficient funding, and societal stigma could hinder progress.

2. The **MENTAL HEALTH USERS NETWORK OF ZAMBIA** advocates for repealing the Mental Disorder Act, replaced by the New Mental Health Act of 2019, aligning with the UNCRPD principles and aiming to enhance the legal framework for people with psychosocial disabilities. However, the lack of detailed outcomes or impacts from these advocacy efforts suggests a gap in communicating achievements and assessing direct benefits for women and girls with disabilities. Collaborating with the *Validity Foundation* presents an opportunity to further influence social protection policies toward community-based support. Nevertheless, changing policies or inadequate implementation could threaten social protection services' effectiveness.
3. The **ZAMBIA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PERSONS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES (ZNAPD)** exhibits strengths in advocacy and impact, particularly in ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities in accessing government programs like the Constituency Development Fund, thereby influencing policy positively. Additionally, their efforts have led to the representation of persons with disabilities in decision-making bodies at various levels, enhancing their participation in governance. However, weaknesses lie in the limited scale of data collection efforts, which primarily focus on specific areas such as education and healthcare access for girls. Opportunities for ZNAPD include capacity building for inclusive society advocacy, signaling a chance to enhance their impact further through specialized training and resources. Nonetheless, the sustainability of government programs for social protection poses a threat if policy changes or economic constraints reduce their accessibility or availability.
4. The **ZAMBIA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE HEARING IMPAIRED (ZNAHI)** has shown strengths in collaborative advocacy efforts with other OPDs to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in accessing government funds, reflecting successful advocacy and strong collaboration. However, weaknesses include the absence of specific advocacy programs for social security for women and girls with disabilities, indicating an area for development. Opportunities for ZNAHI lie in collaborating with the Zambia Federation of Disability Organizations (ZAFOD) to improve access to social protection services and advocating for tailored programs that address the unique needs of women and girls with hearing impairments. Nevertheless, limited mention of emerging trends or policy changes poses a potential threat to their advocacy efforts and social protection services.

5. **THE ZAMBIAN ASSOCIATION ON EMPLOYMENT FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (ZAEPD)** has engaged in sensitization initiatives to help members access social cash transfers through the Ministry of Social Welfare and referred cases of rights abuse to other OPDs, showcasing commitment to enhancing social protection. However, the lack of specific advocacy programs for social security indicates a potential area for growth. Opportunities for ZAEPD include partnering with relevant government ministries to influence policies impacting the social protection of women and girls with disabilities. Nonetheless, challenges such as mobility barriers and communication obstacles threaten the effectiveness of social protection services for their target demographic.
6. **YOUTH IN ACTION FOR DISABILITY INCLUSION IN ZAMBIA (YADIZ)** undertakes advocacy initiatives to promote Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights. It provides economic empowerment and job training for youths with disabilities, showcasing a commitment to enhancing social protection and overall well-being. However, the absence of detailed impact assessments suggests a need for better tracking and communication of their effectiveness. Ongoing data collection efforts provide an opportunity to directly influence policy and program development to meet the needs of women and girls with disabilities. While the *Zambian Disability Act of No 6 of 2012* is mentioned, potential threats to the effectiveness of social protection services are not elaborated upon, indicating a need for further analysis of policy trends and changes.
7. **ZAMBIA ASSOCIATION OF PARENTS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES (ZAPCD)**. ZAPCD serves as a vital resource and support network for families navigating the unique challenges of raising children with disabilities in Zambia. It advocates for the rights of children with disabilities, urging communities to embrace inclusivity, and provides support, advocacy, and resources for parents of children with disabilities.
8. **ZAMBIA FEDERATION OF DISABILITY ORGANIZATIONS (ZAFOD)**: ZAFOD, as the umbrella OPD, regrettably did not participate in the survey.

## SECTION 3: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: UNLOCKING POTENTIAL

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Inclusive education is not just a policy – it is the gateway to empowerment for women and girls with disabilities.

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“Generally, parents with children with disabilities do not allow their children with disabilities to go to school all because of their nature. For example, my parents never allowed me to go to school until the social welfare office, Malawi Against Physical Disabilities (MAP), and MACOHA intervened. At the secondary level, my parents never allowed me to go to school to the extent that after passing my Standard 8 final exams, I stayed for two terms without going to school because my parents refused me. Yet, they were paying for my other five siblings in secondary school. The social welfare office intervened and pushed to enable me to return to school. Through this intervention in collaboration with MAP and MACOHA, I began to go to school until I reached my tertiary level.

Many young girls with disabilities are passing through the same situation I passed through, and they need help.”



Photo: Chione, the lady wearing blue jeans.

## 3. Inclusive Education: Unlocking Potential

### 3.1 Introduction

Inclusive education champions equal opportunities in learning for all persons, regardless of their abilities. Rooted in principles of fairness and justice, it aims to foster a societal ethos where every person is recognized and valued. This educational approach endeavors to level the playing field, ensuring that all students, including those with disabilities, have an equitable chance to excel academically. Particularly in Africa, quality inclusive education warrants a thorough examination through the lens of gender-disability intersectionality. Understanding the complex interplay of challenges faced by persons with disabilities, especially women and girls with disabilities, is crucial for crafting effective policies and practices that promote inclusive education.

Women and girls with disabilities across Africa encounter compounded obstacles, ranging from cultural biases to limited healthcare access and societal expectations that impede their educational opportunities. Addressing these barriers necessitates a gender-disability intersectional lens, which acknowledges the unique struggles of this demographic and seeks to dismantle discriminatory practices. Moreover, a comprehensive understanding of inclusive education in Africa requires scrutiny of broader social and cultural factors influencing educational experiences at the intersection of gender and disability. Societal perceptions, traditional norms, and systemic inequalities significantly shape the educational landscape for these students.

OPDs are pivotal in shaping inclusive education policies and practices in this context. However, they often face challenges such as limited influence within educational institutions. Yet, they possess strengths in highlighting the unique challenges students with disabilities face. Collaborations between OPDs, educators, policymakers, and advocacy groups present opportunities to address these challenges effectively. Nonetheless, threats may arise from a lack of recognition or understanding of the nuanced needs of students with disabilities.

Articles 24 of the UNCRPD and 16 of the ADP underscore the importance of education rights for persons with disabilities. While both emphasize inclusive education principles, the ADP allows for separate educational settings, raising questions about harmonizing regional and global standards. Despite robust policy frameworks, implementation gaps persist due to deep-seated cultural and societal barriers and limited resources. Strengthening implementation mechanisms and community engagement are critical steps towards bridging this gap and fostering a truly inclusive educational environment.

### 3.2 Building on Strengths and Successes

Urban areas in Zambia and Ghana have exhibited noteworthy advancements in inclusive education, particularly in implementing inclusive policies and providing assistive devices, albeit progress has been gradual. Collaborative initiatives between OPDs and institutions such as MACOHA in Malawi and equivalent entities in Ghana have significantly contributed to these advancements.

The perseverance and determination demonstrated by OPDs underscore their commitment to advancing inclusive education. In Malawi, a steadfast dedication to accessible education and teacher training reflects the principles enshrined in Article 24 of the UNCPRD, which guarantees the right to inclusive education. By advocating for the elimination of barriers and the adaptation of educational curricula, OPDs are not only advocating for educational access but also fostering the development of future leaders and catalysts for societal change.

In Zambia, particular attention to infrastructure development and training initiatives aligns with the tenets outlined in Article 10 of the CEDAW, which advocates for equal rights in education. Organizations in Zambia are spearheading efforts to ensure that educational institutions are not only physically accessible but also conducive to the academic and social growth of girls with disabilities.

Through collaborative endeavors and innovative strategies, OPDs in these contexts are instrumental in reshaping the landscape of inclusive education and advancing the principles of equity and inclusion.

- **Shared Strengths:** Collaborative advocacy efforts have been instrumental in raising awareness about inclusive education. Initiatives to train educators and improve educational materials have been undertaken across all countries, showcasing a shared commitment to enhancing educational opportunities.
- **Collaborative Efforts:** Across the board, collaborative advocacy and awareness-raising initiatives have been highlighted as key strengths. Specific examples of progress in urban Zambia and Ghana underscore the effectiveness of cooperative efforts in driving positive change.
- **The rural dimension:** Some rural areas offer free schooling for girls up to the third grade, indicating a commitment to education accessibility. Limited but notable opportunities for specialized schooling exist in rural settings.
- **The urban dimension:** A few inclusive schools and specialized institutions provide support in urban areas, albeit limited in number.

- **OPD Initiatives:** OPDs in both urban and rural settings actively engage in sensitization and advocacy efforts for inclusive education and necessary educational reforms. Collaborative advocacy and awareness-raising initiatives by OPDs are evident strengths across all countries, emphasizing the importance of resource allocation, capacity building for educators, and addressing systemic barriers to ensure inclusive education for all.

### 3.3 Addressing Gaps and Challenges

Insights from OPDs and women with disabilities illuminate critical systemic barriers hindering the realization of inclusive education:

- **Systemic Barriers:** While successful interventions are evident from the mapping exercise, reports from focus group discussions (FGDs) and comparative analyses reveal systemic obstacles and the imperative for more inclusive policies and educator training. This disconnect underscores a gap between the inception of initiatives and their comprehensive implementation.
- **Rural Challenges:** Rural areas grapple with an absence of specialized schools and trained educators, exacerbating barriers for students with disabilities. Moreover, stigma and financial/material constraints impede access to quality education.
- **Urban Concerns:** In urban settings, inclusive schools are largely absent, with acceptance often conditional upon the severity of disabilities. This conditional acceptance perpetuates exclusionary practices and undermines efforts towards inclusivity.
- **Experiences of Underrepresented Intersectionality:** Narratives shared by persons navigating intersecting identities underscore the arduous educational journey marred by accessibility challenges and systemic apathy. These stories shed light on the nuanced struggles faced by women with disabilities in accessing quality education.

Despite advocacy efforts, the lack of detailed outcomes hampers progress evaluation. Resource constraints pose significant challenges, limiting the scope of interventions to foster fully inclusive education systems. Additionally, systemic barriers persist, impeding the realization of inclusive education for all.

### 3.4 Country-Specific Analysis

#### Benin

- *What does the Literature Review Tell Us?*

In Benin, the pursuit of gender equality and the rights of persons with disabilities encounters challenges rooted in entrenched cultural norms and gender roles, significantly impacting the lives of women and girls with disabilities. These societal attitudes often restrict their access to education, employment, and broader societal participation, excluding them from crucial policy discussions. Despite Benin's commitment to inclusive education through international treaties like the UNCRPD, implementation faces hurdles such as insufficient funding, inaccessible infrastructure, and a shortage of trained educators. These obstacles obstruct genuinely inclusive educational settings, as Agbidinoukoun et al. (2023) highlight. The scarcity of initiatives addressing the unique challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities, particularly in combating child marriage, underscores the urgent need for focused support.

International organizations and local advocacy groups, like Humanity & Inclusion, are vital in bridging these gaps through vocational and economic inclusion, capacity building, and educational policy enhancement. However, Benin's attempt to align educational reform theories with practice often falls short of being genuinely transformative, as noted by Fichtner (2015). The Federation of Associations of Persons with Disabilities in Benin reports significant barriers, including discrimination in various sectors. Despite collaborative efforts involving government ministries, civil society, and international partners, challenges persist, with only 2% of children with disabilities attending school. Strengthening Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) through partnerships emerges as a promising strategy, requiring integrated and collaborative approaches to address the educational needs of girls with disabilities.

The broader context in Benin highlights the need to address cultural norms, beliefs, and gender roles shaping the experiences of women and girls with disabilities. Despite legislative advancements, societal attitudes and traditional gender roles remain significant obstacles. Efforts by entities like the World Bank often overlook the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in transformative programs, while societal power dynamics sideline their voices. Addressing these disparities necessitates alignment with international frameworks advocating for the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities. Ensuring that women and girls with disabilities in Benin can fully exercise their rights and participate equally in all aspects of life is crucial for achieving gender equality and disability rights ideals.

- *What do Women and Girls with Disabilities Tell Us?*

In addressing the educational experiences of women and girls with disabilities in Benin, several challenges emerge.



Photo: Focus Group Discussion in Cotonou, an urban community, Benin

In rural areas, the absence of specialized schools, adequately trained teachers, and stigmatization and financial/material barriers pose significant hurdles to accessing quality education.

Conversely, in urban settings, inclusive schooling options are nearly nonexistent, with acceptance often contingent on the severity of disabilities, exacerbating the exclusionary environment.

Despite these challenges, there are some best practices and pockets of accessibility. In rural areas, girls benefit from free schooling up to the third grade and limited opportunities for specialized education. Similarly, a few inclusive schools and specialized institutions provide some support in urban locales.

OPDs play a crucial role in both contexts, engaging in sensitization efforts and advocacy for inclusive education while pushing for necessary educational reforms. However, the experiences shared by women and girls with disabilities underscore the systemic barriers and indifference they face, emphasizing the need for holistic interventions.

Assessing the overall landscape, rural areas receive a rating of 3/10 on the Wheel of Opportunity, indicating substantial deficiencies. In contrast, urban areas fare slightly better with a rating of 5/10, yet persistent challenges remain in both settings.

The narrative reports capturing the rich discussions in the focus groups offer the opportunity for mining data to inform design during SPADRA II and implementation during SPADRA III. Refer to Annexure B.

- *What do OPDs Tell Us?*

OPDs demonstrate strengths in collaborative advocacy and awareness-raising initiatives to promote inclusive education for persons with disabilities. However, a notable weakness lies in the lack of detailed outcomes assessment regarding the effectiveness of their efforts. Despite this, there exist opportunities for OPDs to enhance their impact assessment methodologies and advocate for improved resource allocation towards inclusive education initiatives. Nevertheless, threats loom in the form of societal and cultural norms, which may hinder the transformation necessary to embrace inclusive education practices fully. By leveraging their strengths, addressing weaknesses, capitalizing on opportunities, and navigating potential threats, OPDs can advance inclusive education for persons with disabilities in Benin.

- *Which Organizations are Active in Inclusive Education?*

1. **COLOMBE HIBISCUS:** The organization's proactive approach to operating an inclusive school is commendable, yet specific data on progress is missing. Opportunities exist in documenting best practices, while threats include policy changes and reductions in funding.
2. **CREDEL:** Advocacy efforts toward inclusive education reflect a commitment to ensuring educational access, although specific outcomes are unspecified. Opportunities exist in regional partnerships, while threats include a lack of monitoring and data collection.
3. **FEDERATION DES ASSOCIATIONS:** Strong advocacy efforts are evident, although specific impacts are not detailed. Opportunities lie in evidence-based advocacy, yet threats from political changes require adaptability.
4. **FODDEB:** FODDEB's involvement in advocacy for inclusive education is notable, although specific achievements are not detailed. Opportunities lie in leveraging partnerships for policy changes, yet resistance from educational institutions poses threats.
5. **ICOG:** Engagement with media professionals for inclusive education advocacy is innovative, although specific impacts are unclear. Collaboration with Social

Watch presents advocacy opportunities, yet threats include inadequate engagement with educational authorities.

6. **LA CHRYSALIDE:** This organization's strength is its advocacy for inclusive education, mainly through awareness-raising efforts. However, specific outcomes or impacts of these initiatives are not detailed, indicating room for improvement in monitoring and evaluation. Collaborative memberships in coalitions offer opportunities to influence educational policies for inclusivity, yet the lack of specific policies poses threats to achieving fully inclusive education.
7. **ONG ACTIONS INCLUSIVE:** The organization is committed to promoting inclusive education through specific initiatives, although detailed outcomes are lacking. Partnerships offer advocacy opportunities, yet delays in educational attainment pose threats.
8. **ONG CRI D'AMOUR SARC:** The organization's advocacy efforts for inclusive education demonstrate a commitment to enhancing educational access, although specifics on the impact of partnerships are lacking. However, partnerships present opportunities to drive policy changes, yet socio-cultural barriers pose threats to achieving educational equity.
9. **ONG LE LAURIER:** The organization's strength lies in its advocacy for inclusive education, demonstrated by organizing events at the Town Hall of Ouidah and partnering with organizations like SSPH/OCPS, La Chrysalides, and Ilewa. However, it lacks explicit details on the impact of its advocacy on inclusive education policies. Nonetheless, its focus and partnerships present opportunities to influence educational policies positively, although potential threats from political changes require vigilance.
10. **ONG RACINES:** Awareness-raising initiatives for girls with disabilities are commendable, yet monitoring of policy implementation is lacking. Providing specialized resources offers opportunities, while resource constraints pose threats.
11. **ORGANIZATION INTERNATIONALE:** Acknowledgment of inclusive education principles is positive, yet specific initiatives are not detailed. Opportunities lie in policy advocacy, while threats include systemic challenges.
12. **PERSONNE PHYSIC:** Advocacy for physical accessibility in education is noteworthy, yet data collection on inclusive education policies is lacking. Emphasizing policy and awareness offers opportunities, while systemic barriers pose threats.
13. **RÉSEAU DES ASSOCIATIONS DE PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES DU LITTORAL:** Advocacy for inclusive education and partnerships with organizations indicate proactive efforts, though detailed outcomes are lacking.

Leveraging partnerships can further promote inclusive education policies, but threats from socio-cultural barriers persist.

14. **RESPESD BENIN:** Advocacy efforts for inclusive education reflect commitment, although specific achievements are unspecified. Engaging with authorities presents opportunities, yet threats include resistance due to cultural practices.
15. **SOLDATIC BENIN:** With a clear commitment to inclusive education, SOLDATIC BENIN focuses on equal learning opportunities. However, details on the outcomes of advocacy initiatives or implementation of inclusive education policies are lacking, suggesting a need for improved monitoring. Nevertheless, opportunities exist to establish income-generating activities and expand partnerships, while threats include resistance to inclusive education and inadequate funding.
16. **TERRE ROUGE BENIN:** Although commitment to vulnerable populations is evident, specific focus on inclusive education is lacking. Leveraging data for advocacy presents opportunities, yet threats include resource constraints.

## Ghana

- *What does the Literature Review Tell Us?*

In Ghana, addressing disability prevalence is a crucial concern, with varying rates reported across regions by the Ghana Statistical Service. While specific disaggregated data focusing on women and girls with disabilities might be lacking, it's acknowledged that they encounter distinct challenges, including higher poverty rates, marginalization, and limited access to education and employment opportunities. To tackle these issues, the Ghanaian government has implemented policies and legislation, such as the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715), to promote the rights of persons with disabilities.

Ghana has made significant strides in inclusive education through its Inclusive Education Policy, which outlines the government's strategic path for educating all children with special educational needs. This policy, developed in alignment with various national and international commitments, emphasizes transforming special education schools into resource centers and creating a legal framework for both private and public schools to implement inclusive education. Discussions and consultations with stakeholders in the education sector have contributed to shaping this policy, signifying Ghana's commitment to improving the lives of persons with disabilities.

The Ghana National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) reports piloting Inclusive Education in 2,000 schools, supported by UNICEF, to ensure access to

formal education for disadvantaged children, including those with disabilities. However, despite policy efforts, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient trained personnel, limited resources, and societal stigma hinder implementation. Nevertheless, international organizations like UNICEF Ghana and Plan International Ghana have been instrumental in capacity-building and advocacy efforts for inclusive education, particularly benefiting girls with disabilities. Additionally, Women's organizations and OPDs, like the Ghana Federation of Disability Organizations, play crucial roles in advocating for disability rights and ensuring inclusion in Ghana's development agenda. While Ghana's commitment to inclusive education is evident through its policies, bridging the gap between policy and practice remains a pressing need, given the challenges faced on the ground.

- *What do Women and Girls with Disabilities Tell Us?*

Inclusive education for women and girls with disabilities in Ghana reveals a nuanced divide between rural and peri-urban settings, each presenting distinct challenges and practices. Both settings encounter obstacles related to accessibility and resource availability, yet peri-urban areas grapple with the added burden of the persistent perception of inclusive education as experimental or provisional. While both rural and peri-urban areas benefit from grants from the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) for apprenticeship training, more in peri-urban regions rely more heavily on informal support networks comprising peers and family members.



Photo: Focus Group Discussion in a peri-urban community, Ghana

Despite these differences, OPDs play similar advocacy roles across both settings, emphasizing the necessity for government action to integrate disability-specific skills like Braille and sign language into teacher training curricula. Intersectionalities within these areas reveal distinct concerns, with rural communities highlighting instances of neglect and abuse within educational environments.

In contrast, peri-urban areas grapple initially with debates surrounding forced oralism versus the use of sign language in Deaf education. However, the use of sign language is the accepted standard. Overall, both rural and peri-urban areas are rated as Orange, signifying moderate opportunities for inclusive education alongside significant barriers to full inclusion.

Critical areas for intervention include government-led curriculum modifications aimed at incorporating disability-specific training for educators, infrastructural enhancements to improve accessibility across educational settings in rural and peri-urban contexts, availability of assistive devices and learning aids, and provision of support teachers for learners with disabilities.

The narrative reports capturing the rich discussions in the focus groups offer the opportunity for mining data to inform design during SPADRA II and implementation during SPADRA III. Refer to Annexure B.

- *What do OPDs Tell Us?*

The collaborative advocacy efforts and endeavors of OPDs to ensure accessible learning materials stand out as notable strengths in advancing inclusive education. However, a significant weakness lies in the lack of comprehensive data to inform policy-making and program development. Despite this, opportunities abound, particularly in capacity building for educators and raising community awareness about the importance of inclusive education. Nonetheless, systemic barriers pose threats to the realization of inclusive education goals, underscoring the need for concerted efforts to overcome structural challenges hindering the full inclusion of students with disabilities in Ghana's educational system. Through strategic collaboration and targeted interventions, OPDs can play a pivotal role in addressing these challenges and fostering a more inclusive educational environment for all learners in Ghana.

- *Which Organizations are Active in Inclusive Education?*

1. **GHANA NATIONAL EDUCATION CAMPAIGN COALITION (GNECC).** The Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC) is committed to promoting educational equity through advocacy for inclusive education policies and participation in awareness campaigns. Challenges in monitoring policy implementation and assessing outcomes may hinder efforts to address barriers to inclusive education. Strengthening partnerships and advocating for increased resources can enhance support for inclusive education initiatives. However, resistance to policy changes and lack of funding may impede progress in achieving educational equity for all students.

2. **GHANA ASSOCIATION OF PERSONS WITH ALBINISM (GAPA).** GAPA's advocacy for the full implementation of inclusive education policies and the development of teacher training materials indicate a strong commitment to educational accessibility. However, limited resources for monitoring policy implementation pose challenges. Engaging with educational authorities offers opportunities to mainstream inclusive education practices and policies. Nonetheless, societal stigma and misconceptions about albinism continue to pose threats to educational inclusion.
3. **GHANA BLIND UNION.** The Ghana Blind Union has successfully advocated for adopting inclusive education policies and providing accessible information, demonstrating a strong commitment to improving educational access for the visually impaired. Despite these efforts, resource constraints pose challenges, particularly the lack of sufficient learning materials and assistive devices. However, opportunities abound in advocating for necessary resources and support, along with continued policy advocacy. Stigma and cultural misconceptions about disabilities stand as threats to achieving their goals of inclusive education.
4. **GHANA FEDERATION OF DISABILITY ORGANIZATIONS (GFD).** The GFD's advocacy efforts and engagement with educational stakeholders demonstrate a commitment to fostering inclusive education. However, specific challenges in implementing inclusive education policies are not detailed, nor are they suggesting areas for improvement. Opportunities lie in collaboration with educational organizations and advocacy groups. Financial constraints may pose threats to their progress toward fully inclusive education.
5. **GHANA SOCIETY FOR THE PHYSICALLY DISABLED (GSPD).** The Ghana Society for the Physically Disabled (GSPD) advocates for physical accessibility and inclusive policies to improve educational access for persons with physical disabilities. However, limited data on policy impacts and outcomes may hinder efforts to assess progress and address barriers to inclusive education. Increased collaboration with educational institutions and stakeholders can improve policy implementation and support for inclusive practices. Nevertheless, resistance to policy changes and lack of resources may impede progress in creating fully inclusive learning environments.
6. **INCLUSION GHANA.** Inclusion Ghana stands out for its advocacy efforts to implement Ghana's inclusive education policy, showcasing a solid dedication to improving educational access for learners with disabilities. Collaborations with both national and international partners further underscore their commitment to promoting inclusive education. However, the lack of sufficient data on policy implementation poses a challenge to their advocacy efforts. Nevertheless, opportunities lie in raising community awareness and engaging the government to allocate special budget lines for inclusive education. The ongoing exclusion of

learners with intellectual and developmental disabilities from regular schools remains a significant threat to their inclusivity efforts.

7. **MENTAL HEALTH SOCIETY OF GHANA (MEHSOG).** MEHSOG's dedication to advocating for the inclusion of persons with intellectual and mental disorders in the educational system highlights a strong commitment to addressing educational barriers. However, limited data on the educational needs of women and girls with mental disorders hinder targeted interventions. Advocating for accurate data collection and creating opportunities within the mainstream educational system present opportunities for systemic changes. Yet, the exclusion of persons with mental disorders from the formal education system remains a significant threat.
8. **GHANA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF (GNAD).** GNAD's advocacy for UNCRPD-compliant inclusive education and efforts to develop sign language curricula demonstrate a commitment to improving educational outcomes for deaf students. Challenges in implementing inclusive education nationwide are not explicitly mentioned, but areas for improvement are suggested. Strengthening partnerships and advocating for policy changes can enhance inclusivity. However, resistance to inclusive education models and insufficient funding threaten their progress.
9. **YOUNG VISIONARY LEADERS OF GHANA.** The Young Visionary Leaders of Ghana demonstrate a solid commitment to inclusive education through participation in advocacy campaigns and coalitions. However, the need for more direct involvement in monitoring policy implementation suggests areas for improvement. They are leveraging media and raising community awareness to present opportunities to enhance support for special needs children. Yet, stigma and cultural misconceptions about disabilities remain threats to their inclusive education efforts.

Other institutions that completed surveys include:

10. **COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND ADMINISTRATIVE JUSTICE (CHRAJ).** The CHRAJ's involvement in activities supporting inclusive practices demonstrates a commitment to fostering inclusivity. However, the lack of specific programs targeting inclusive education suggests a need for further emphasis in this area. Capacity building and staff training initiatives can indirectly support inclusive education efforts.
10. **NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.** The NCPD's collaboration with educational stakeholders indicates a commitment to creating inclusive learning environments. Limited data on policy outcomes and impacts suggests a need for more comprehensive monitoring and evaluation.

11. **UNICEF.** UNICEF demonstrates a solid commitment to inclusive education through its support for policy review, implementation plan development, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) promotion. Their focus on early detection through health and disability screenings underscores a proactive approach to support children with disabilities. However, challenges may arise in ensuring nationwide implementation of these policies and addressing potential gaps between policy development and execution. Despite these challenges, continued advocacy and support for inclusive education policies provide significant opportunities for UNICEF to impact educational outcomes positively. Expanding Universal Design for Learning and health screenings can enhance educational access and quality. Nevertheless, resistance to change within educational institutions, budgetary constraints, and a lack of awareness about the benefits of inclusive education could pose threats to these initiatives.

### Malawi

- *What does the Literature Review Tell Us?*

Malawi faces the challenge of ensuring inclusive education, especially for women and girls with disabilities, as highlighted by the Malawi Demographic and Health Survey. While disability's impact varies across different disabilities, data specifically on women and girls with disabilities are scarce despite recognizing their heightened risks of educational exclusion, violence, discrimination, and limited economic participation.

To address these issues, the Malawian government enacted the Disability Act of 2012 and developed the National Inclusive Education Strategy, promoting accessible infrastructure and inclusive teaching methodologies. USAID's contributions have made progress, although clarity on including children with disabilities remains elusive, as recent support for tertiary education lacks explicit reference to them.

Implementing inclusive education in Malawi faces challenges like inadequate funding, inaccessible school facilities, and a shortage of teachers trained in inclusive education, exacerbated by socio-economic conditions marked by widespread informal employment and limited formal sector opportunities.

International agencies like UNICEF and UNESCO support Malawi's educational infrastructure and inclusive education practices. NGOs such as Plan International and Save the Children address broader child welfare issues, including child marriage, with some initiatives catering to children with disabilities.

Women's organizations and OPDs, like the Federation of Disability Organizations in Malawi, play pivotal roles in raising awareness, shaping policy, and providing

direct support to persons with disabilities despite resource limitations, societal stigma, and challenges influencing national policy discourse.

Aligned with international frameworks like the UNCRPD and CEDAW, Malawi's initiatives reflect a commitment to inclusivity and rights protection for persons with disabilities. Strengthening the capacities of OPDs and women's organizations and ensuring their meaningful involvement in policy development and implementation are crucial for achieving educational equity for women and girls with disabilities in Malawi. This integrated approach, supported by national and international efforts, is vital for dismantling barriers and creating a genuinely inclusive educational landscape.

- *What do Women and Girls with Disabilities Tell Us?*

In considering inclusive education in Malawi, the divide between rural and urban areas unveils distinct challenges and promising practices, shedding light on the experiences of women and girls with disabilities.

In rural settings, inadequate enforcement of educational policies poses a significant barrier to accessing education for girls with disabilities, hindering their inclusion in schooling systems.

Conversely, urban areas grapple with policy implementation challenges, particularly impacting children with albinism and intellectual disabilities, despite having relevant policies in place.

However, amidst these challenges, urban settings showcase potential best practices, such as providing mobility devices and enrollment in Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers. These achievements are often facilitated by collaborative efforts between OPDs and institutions like the Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA), signaling a pathway towards inclusivity.

Furthermore, the role of OPDs emerges as pivotal in both rural and urban contexts, with a dual focus on advocating for disability-friendly infrastructure and promoting the availability of assistive devices.



Photo: Focus Group Discussion  
in a Rural Community in Malawi

While rural areas highlight the necessity for infrastructure improvements, urban settings underscore the importance of policy advocacy to address systemic barriers to inclusive education.

Through concerted efforts and partnerships between stakeholders, strides can be made to bridge the educational gap and ensure equitable access to education for women and girls with disabilities across Malawi.

The narrative reports capturing the rich discussions in the focus groups offer the opportunity for mining data to inform design during SPADRA II and implementation during SPADRA III. Refer to Annexure B.

- *What do OPDs Tell Us?*

Insights from OPDs highlight various aspects. OPDs in Malawi exhibit strengths in enhancing accessibility and adaptation within educational settings and providing essential teacher training to foster inclusive learning environments. Moreover, opportunities lie in the provision of assistive devices to support students with disabilities and in advocating for policy reform to ensure greater inclusivity in education. However, there are looming threats, particularly the slow pace of policy reform, which could impede progress towards achieving fully inclusive education for all in Malawi. Despite these challenges, OPDs continue to play a crucial role in driving forward initiatives to promote inclusive education and advocate for the rights of students with disabilities across the country.

- *Which Organizations are Active in Inclusive Education?*

1. **THE VOICE OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITY IN MALAWI.** The Voice of Women with Disability in Malawi demonstrates a proactive approach to enhancing inclusive education through initiatives like the Back-to-School program and advocating for conducive environments in mainstream schools. Collaborative efforts with other disability organizations, such as the Malawi Union of the Blind and FEDOMA, showcase a commitment to leveraging partnerships for a more significant impact. However, resource limitations, particularly the shortage of braille books, hearing aids, and specialist teachers, may hinder the effectiveness of their inclusive education efforts. Training more specialist teachers and advocating for increased funding for assistive devices present opportunities to improve educational outcomes for women and girls with disabilities. Nevertheless, systemic challenges within the educational system, such as insufficient resources and lack of accessible materials, threaten achieving truly inclusive education.
2. **SPINAL INJURIES ASSOCIATION OF MALAWI (SIAM).** The Malawi OPD Spinal Injuries Association demonstrates an active partnership approach to advocacy for inclusive education through collaborative efforts with other

organizations and government bodies. However, the lack of detailed data collection on policy implementation suggests room for improvement in monitoring and evaluating the impact of inclusive education policies. Advocating for increased funding for assistive devices and raising awareness about the right to quality education presents opportunities to improve access and quality of inclusive education. Nevertheless, reliance on government funding could be threatened by economic constraints, potentially affecting the sustainability of inclusive education initiatives.

3. **MALAWI OPD YOUNG GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES (YOGDA).** The Malawi OPD Young Girls with Disabilities emphasizes a strong normative foundation for advocating and implementing inclusive education policies, aligning with international frameworks. However, the lack of specific details on actions taken to enhance inclusive education suggests a potential lack of focus or progress in this area. Increased focus on advocacy and partnerships can further efforts to promote inclusive education for women and girls with disabilities. Yet, potential threats include insufficient funding, lack of trained educators, and inadequate policy support.
4. **CHIMWEMWE DISABILITY AND COMMUNITY CARE ORGANIZATION.** Chimwemwe is committed to promoting educational access for women and girls with disabilities through advocacy activities and partnerships with key education networks. Nevertheless, limited information on the achievements or impacts of advocacy efforts on inclusive education policies and practices suggests a need for more detailed reporting. Active involvement in advocacy and network partnerships presents opportunities to influence Malawi's inclusive education policies and practices. However, uncertainty regarding emerging trends or policy changes could threaten the effectiveness of inclusive education efforts.
5. **VIHEMA DEAFBLIND MALAWI.** VIHEMA Deafblind Malawi is committed to improving access to education for children with disabilities through advocacy efforts in early childhood development and education. However, the lack of specific mention of tangible improvements in educational access or quality for women and girls with disabilities raises questions about the impact of advocacy efforts. Continued advocacy and partnerships can further influence educational policies and practices towards inclusivity. Yet, uncertainty regarding emerging trends or policy changes could threaten the effectiveness of inclusive education efforts.
6. **DIWODE.** DIWODE demonstrates a capacity to deliver impactful projects by successfully implementing inclusive education programs and advocating for conducive learning environments. However, the lack of partnerships in the education sector may limit opportunities for leveraging additional resources and expertise. Conducting needs assessments and tailoring support for women and girls with disabilities in education could lead to more effective interventions.

Nevertheless, persistent social stigmas and inadequate policy support for inclusive education may hinder progress and impact.

*Other:*

7. **BEIT CURE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF MALAWI.** Beit CURE Children's Hospital of Malawi is committed to inclusive education through its proactive approach to health and early intervention services. However, limited information on advocacy initiatives directly focused on improving access to inclusive education indicates a need for more focused efforts. Enhancing collaboration with educational authorities and organizations offers the potential to advocate for and implement inclusive education policies. Yet, socio-cultural beliefs regarding disabilities may perpetuate stigma and discrimination, hindering educational opportunities for children with disabilities.

## Zambia

- *What does the Literature Review Tell Us?*

In Zambia, the government's commitment to inclusive education aims to address the needs of all citizens, including women and girls with disabilities, despite the challenges posed by disability prevalence. Supported by the Persons with Disabilities Act No. 6 of 2012, the legislative framework ensures the right to education for persons with disabilities, laying the foundation for an inclusive educational environment. Complementing this framework is the Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities Strategic Plan for 2017-2021, outlining an extensive education system comprising primary, secondary, and special education institutions alongside higher education and vocational training centers. However, women and girls with disabilities face significant barriers to accessing education, evidenced by lower literacy rates among persons with disabilities compared to the national average.

To address these barriers, Zambia has implemented measures such as the Education Act of 2011, emphasizing special education training for teachers, a revised curriculum for learners with disabilities, and the promotion of inclusive vocational training centers. Additionally, the government's adoption of the Inclusive Education Policy Framework aims to mainstream children with disabilities into regular schools, highlighting a commitment to universal primary education completion, currently at 91.8%. Nevertheless, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient adapted teaching materials, and a shortage of trained inclusive education professionals hinder progress towards fully inclusive education.

Aligning with international standards set by instruments such as the ACRWC, ADP, CRC, UNCRPD, CEDAW, and the Maputo Protocol is essential to overcome these

challenges and ensure the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities in education. As exemplified by UNICEF and the Global Partnership for Education, international partnerships are crucial in enhancing Zambia's educational infrastructure and teacher training to accommodate learners with disabilities. Collaboration among policymakers, community members, family members, and teachers is critical in creating an environment that supports the rights and needs of children with neurodevelopmental disabilities.

Moreover, targeted programs addressing the intersectionality of gender and disability are necessary, with organizations like the Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities and women's and disability-focused groups playing critical roles in advocating for inclusive practices and policies. Success in these endeavors depends on resource mobilization, changing societal attitudes towards disability, and fostering collaboration among government, NGOs, and international partners to translate policies into meaningful outcomes for women and girls with disabilities.

In addition, the Zambia Ministry of Education's response to the survey notes, "The lingering preference for special schools among some parents and learners indicates a challenge in fully realizing the goals of inclusive education for all." It also notes that organizations such as Save the Children, Sight Savers, and UNICEF strongly support the government's efforts to realize a disability-inclusive education system.

- *What do Women and Girls with Disabilities Tell Us?*



Photo: Focus Group Discussion in a Rural Community in Zambia

Challenges persist in both urban and rural contexts due to inadequate resources and training. While urban areas might have slightly better physical infrastructure, both settings lack sufficient support for inclusive education.

Efforts to address this should prioritize developing and implementing accessibility standards tailored to the unique needs of women and girls with disabilities in both urban and rural areas.

Additionally, the roles of OPDs are crucial. OPDs must advocate for inclusive education policies that ensure educators receive support in adopting inclusive pedagogies. Furthermore, OPDs should work to guarantee that necessary learning aids and infrastructure modifications are provided to accommodate students with disabilities.

By focusing on these aspects, Zambia can work towards creating a more inclusive education system that adequately serves the needs of women and girls with disabilities across urban and rural areas.

The narrative reports capturing the rich discussions in the focus groups offer the opportunity for mining data to inform design during SPADRA II and implementation during SPADRA III. Refer to Annexure B.

- *What do OPDs Tell Us?*

OPDs demonstrate notable strengths in advocating for policy reform and facilitating infrastructure development and training initiatives to support inclusive education. Their advocacy efforts have highlighted the importance of inclusive policies and fostered an environment conducive to implementing inclusive education practices.

Furthermore, OPDs identify opportunities for implementing advocacy programs to promote inclusive education and foster collaboration among stakeholders, including government bodies, educational institutions, and civil society organizations.

However, they also caution against threats such as slow policy reform, which could impede progress in realizing inclusive education goals.

Despite these challenges, OPDs continue to play a vital role in driving the agenda for inclusive education in Zambia, working towards a more equitable and accessible educational system for all, including women and girls with disabilities.

- *Which Organizations are Active in Inclusive Education?*

1. **DOWN SYNDROME FOUNDATION OF ZAMBIA.** The Down Syndrome Foundation collaborates with international organizations to develop guidelines on quality inclusive education and works to localize these guidelines with the

Curriculum Development Center in Zambia. However, the impact on educational access or quality for women and girls with Down Syndrome is not specified. Collaborations with Family Voices Zambia and government institutions present opportunities to influence policy and practice. However, delays in policy changes and a lack of adequately trained teachers could hinder progress toward fully inclusive environments.

2. **MENTAL HEALTH USERS NETWORK OF ZAMBIA (MHUNZ).** MHUNZ advocates for inclusive policies and collaborates with Disability Rights Watch to hold symposia on inclusive education, demonstrating a proactive approach. Delays in officially changing education policies to promote inclusivity highlight challenges in transforming advocacy efforts into policy action. Continuing engagement with governmental bodies and educational institutions presents opportunities to influence policy changes and implementation despite potential resistance to policy changes threatening progress in making education accessible to all.
3. **YOUTH IN ACTION FOR DISABILITY INCLUSION IN ZAMBIA (YADIZ).** YADIZ's engagement in research on school bullying and violence against learners with disabilities, along with partnerships with CHSZ for promoting inclusive education, reflects a proactive stance toward creating a safer and more inclusive educational environment. However, the lack of detailed outcomes suggests a need for more robust documentation mechanisms. Participation in research could be leveraged to advocate for policy changes addressing bullying and violence, while legislative or policy-related challenges may threaten achieving fully inclusive education.
4. **ZAMBIA ASSOCIATION OF PARENTS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES (ZAPCD).** ZAPCD serves as a vital resource and support network for families navigating the unique challenges of raising children with disabilities in Zambia. It advocates for the rights of children with disabilities, urging communities to embrace inclusivity, and provides support, advocacy, and resources for parents of children with disabilities.
5. **ZAMBIA ASSOCIATION ON EMPLOYMENT FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (ZAEPD).** ZAEPD advocates for inclusive education by ensuring persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities are integrated into the education system and provided with vocational skills training. However, slow progress in making educational environments accessible and overcoming communication barriers poses challenges to achieving fully inclusive education. Partnering with other OPDs and governmental entities presents opportunities for more robust advocacy and potential policy changes favoring inclusive education practices despite threats from emerging trends and policy changes.

6. **ZAMBIA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PERSONS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES (ZNAPD).** ZNAPD collaborates with other OPDs and the Ministry of Education to lobby for increased funding for accessible school structures and specialized teacher training, demonstrating a proactive stance on inclusive education. However, direct involvement in monitoring inclusive education policies could enhance their advocacy and program implementation. Advocating for more resources for assistive devices and raising awareness about the right to quality education presents significant opportunities. Yet, funding constraints threaten to allocate sufficient resources for inclusive education initiatives.
7. **ZAMBIA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE HEARING IMPAIRED.** The National Association of the Hearing Impaired (ZNAHI) advocates for accessible school infrastructures and teacher training in special education, displaying a commitment to inclusive educational environments. Collaborative efforts with other OPDs under ZAFOD demonstrate a collective approach to addressing educational barriers. However, the lack of detailed outcomes or impacts from advocacy efforts suggests room for more structured monitoring and evaluation. Stigma and discrimination within communities and schools remain potential threats to fully integrating children with hearing impairments into mainstream education.



Photo: Focus Group Discussion in a Rural Community in Zambia

## SECTION 4: ACCESS TO JUSTICE: ENSURING RIGHTS, RECOURSE AND REMEDIES

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Access to Justice is “the right of persons and groups to obtain a **quick, effective and fair response** to protect their rights, prevent or solve disputes and control the abuse of power, through a **transparent and efficient process**, in which mechanisms are **available, affordable and accountable.**”

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UN Development Programme



“I am Estina Kapulula from Salima Secondary School, and the violence I faced when I was in Form 4 still troubles me. When we were going to sit for our Form 4 final exams in 2021, it was discovered that English Paper 2 was brailled twice for visually impaired learners, forgetting to braille Paper 3 for us.

We only discovered this when we received Paper 2 for the Paper 3 exam. They could not find Paper 3’s brailled version. After discussing the challenge with officials from the district education manager’s office, they decided we still had to write. They said they would read for us, and we wrote this exam in the evening around 11 pm through dictation. We were forced to write the exam, and it was difficult to say no, even if we believed it was unfair.

While writing Paper 3, we were told that the Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB) had communicated with other centers like Lilongwe Girls and Blantyre Secondary School that those who use Braille papers should not write the Paper 3 exam. MANEB would decide how to grade learners who could not write Paper 3.

When results were released, those who did not sit for the exam had 6 points as their grade, but for us who wrote and seemed intelligent, we were given 8 points, which is very low, as our final grade for English. However, I passed with 3, 5, 6, 6, 7, and 7 for the other subjects, as my grades.

All my life, I worked hard to go to College, but with my grades, no institution could accept me. My future was frustrated because of one system mistake, and with my disability, I am in this village doing nothing. It pains me when I look back on the effort I had invested and my parent’s resources.”

## 4. Access To Justice: Ensuring Rights, Recourse And Remedies

### 4.1 Introduction

Access to Justice is a cornerstone of human rights, encompassing the fundamental entitlement of all persons, including those with disabilities, to equitable and effective participation in legal systems and proceedings free from discrimination. The gender-disability dimension amplifies the complexity of this right, particularly for women and girls with disabilities, who often encounter compounded challenges in accessing justice. In this context, the concept extends beyond mere legal frameworks to encompass tailored initiatives that address this demographic's specific needs and barriers.

A critical component of ensuring access to justice for women and girls with disabilities is the provision of legal awareness campaigns customized to their concerns. Such initiatives empower persons to understand and assert their rights effectively. Additionally, accessible legal information becomes imperative, recognizing potential communication barriers and diverse needs. By bridging gaps in understanding, informed decision-making and active participation in legal processes are facilitated.

Moreover, adapting court procedures to accommodate diverse abilities is essential. This involves providing reasonable accommodations, such as accessible courtrooms and communication aids, to ensure meaningful participation. Access to recourse for rights violations is particularly significant for women and girls with disabilities, who may face intersecting forms of discrimination. Therefore, efforts to enhance access to justice must address their specific challenges, ensuring that their grievances are addressed with sensitivity and their rights upheld with due consideration to their gender and disability.

OPDs play a pivotal role in advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities within the justice system. To fulfill this role effectively, OPDs require robust legal literacy, organizational capacities, communication skills, and the ability to engage in legal advocacy. By bolstering these capacities, OPDs can contribute significantly to shaping a more inclusive and equitable access to justice framework for persons with disabilities, including women and girls.

Drawing from the UNCRPD and the ADP, several dimensions and programs within the Access to Justice value chain emerge. These include harmonizing laws, legal capacity and decision-making, accessible legal information and communication, adaptation of legal procedures, legal aid and assistance, effective participation in legal proceedings, and remedies and compensation. These dimensions provide a comprehensive framework for addressing the diverse needs and rights of persons with disabilities within the justice system.

## 4.2 Building on Strengths and Successes

Strategic partnerships for advocacy and legal education campaigns emerge as innovative practices across documents, indicating a consensus on the importance of these strategies. Shared Strengths include strategic partnerships for advocacy, legal education campaigns, and efforts to sensitize the judiciary and legal professionals to the needs of women and girls with disabilities.

Access to justice remains a pivotal area of advocacy, with OPDs in all four countries pushing for legal reforms and greater awareness. This echoes the principles in Article 13 of the UNCRPD, which calls for equitable access to justice for persons with disabilities.

In Ghana, the Mental Health Society of Ghana (MEHSOG) stands out for its advocacy on behalf of persons with psychosocial disabilities, fighting stigma, and promoting legal capacity in line with Articles 15 and 16 of the Maputo Protocol, which emphasizes the right to be free from violence and discrimination.

## 4.3 Addressing Gaps and Challenges

The insights gathered from both OPDs and women with disabilities shed light on various systemic and societal barriers hindering access to justice. While the mapping exercise highlights specific projects targeting legal capacity and rights, the focus group discussions and comparative analysis reveal a broader landscape characterized by a lack of awareness, inadequate legal aid, and inaccessible judicial processes.

In Benin, rural areas particularly struggle with access to justice, as evidenced by significantly low ratings on the Wheel of Opportunities. This underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions to bridge the gap and ensure that persons in rural communities have equal access to justice mechanisms.

Critical intervention points identified include:

- Limited detailed data on advocacy outcomes indicate a need for enhanced monitoring and evaluation mechanisms
- The necessity for capacity building within the legal system to ensure effective implementation of inclusive policies
- Systemic and societal barriers that impede equitable access to justice for women and girls with disabilities

Notably, rural areas in all four countries face profound challenges in accessing justice, with common issues such as limited awareness about rights, inadequate legal aid

services, and inaccessible judicial processes. Addressing these challenges emerges as a priority across the board.

## 4.4 Country-Specific Analysis

### Benin

- *What does the Literature Review Tell Us?*

In Benin, ensuring access to justice for women and girls with disabilities faces formidable challenges alongside notable progress. These persons encounter numerous obstacles, from inaccessible court buildings to a pervasive lack of disability rights awareness among legal professionals. Societal stigma further deters them from seeking justice, while traditional justice systems may inadequately protect their rights. Mainstream international organizations, including USAID in 2023, often overlook women and girls with disabilities in programs combating gender-based violence, exacerbating their vulnerability at the intersection of gender and disability.



Photo: Focus Group Discussion in Cotonou, an Urban Community in Benin.

The Federation of Associations of Persons with Disabilities in Benin has highlighted widespread discrimination against them, particularly in employment, healthcare, education, and access to justice. While legislative efforts, such as the Act on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities, signify progress, enforcement often falls short, especially for women and girls with disabilities. They remain marginalized in decision-making, necessitating policies addressing their unique challenges.

Partnerships between national and international allies, like Humanity & Inclusion, are gaining momentum in bridging the legal access gap. OPDs lead advocacy, shedding light on legal rights and bolstering their quest for justice through strategies like community sensitization and professional training. Elevating OPDs' role in legal reform dialogue is crucial for fostering inclusivity. By enhancing their capacity, Benin can remove barriers hindering access to justice, allowing women and girls with disabilities to navigate the legal system confidently. Cultural norms and gender roles inhibit their participation in education and employment, emphasizing the need for initiatives addressing these challenges, notably in combating child marriage. While international organizations and local advocacy groups play pivotal roles, bridging policy development and implementation gaps remains essential.

- *What do Women and Girls with Disabilities Tell Us?*

Challenges are evident in both rural and urban areas. In rural areas, there is a lack of awareness about rights among women and girls with disabilities, compounded by the absence of legal defense structures specifically tailored to their needs. In urban settings, the challenges primarily revolve around the inaccessibility of courts and the lack of sign language interpreters, hindering effective participation in legal proceedings.

Regarding best practices and ease of access, rural areas have seen legislative progress with the enactment of Act No. 2017/06. However, there are concerns about the insufficient implementation of this legislation, which limits its effectiveness in addressing the needs of women and girls with disabilities. Conversely, Law No. 2017-06 has been enacted in urban areas, along with provisions for sign language interpreters during trials to enhance accessibility and inclusivity within the justice system.

The role of OPDs is pivotal in both rural and urban contexts. OPDs focus on educating women and girls with disabilities about their rights, advocating for inclusive justice practices, and working towards operationalizing equal opportunity cards to ensure fair and equitable access to justice for all persons, irrespective of their disability status. Through these efforts, OPDs contribute significantly to promoting awareness, advocating for systemic changes, and fostering inclusivity within the justice system in Benin.

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| The narrative reports capturing the rich discussions in the focus groups offer the opportunity for mining data to inform design during SPADRA II and implementation during SPADRA III. Refer to Annexure B. |
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- *What do OPDs Tell Us?*

OPDs demonstrate strengths in forging strategic partnerships and conducting legal education campaigns, highlighting their proactive engagement in advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities within the legal system.

However, weaknesses arise from a scarcity of detailed outcomes, indicating potential gaps in assessing the effectiveness of their initiatives and advocacy efforts.

Nonetheless, opportunities abound for OPDs to enhance their impact through detailed impact assessment methodologies and capacity-building initiatives within the legal system. These opportunities could strengthen their advocacy and service provision, ensuring better access to justice for persons with disabilities.

Nevertheless, significant threats persist, including societal and systemic barriers that hinder the effective realization of legal rights and access to justice for persons with disabilities in Benin.

Addressing these threats requires concerted efforts to overcome societal prejudices and systemic challenges, thereby fostering a more inclusive and equitable legal framework for all citizens, including those with disabilities.

- *Which Organizations are Active in Access to Justice?*

1. **COLOMBE HIBISCUS.** Access to justice saw little direct mention in Colombe Hibiscus's responses, suggesting a lesser focus or an area ripe for development. Nonetheless, access to justice remains critical for upholding the rights of women and girls with disabilities.
2. **CREDEL.** CREDEL acknowledges the importance of access to justice for women and girls with disabilities but lacks detailed action or data on access to justice initiatives. Nonetheless, there's potential for impactful work in advocating for the rights of women and girls with disabilities, although systemic challenges such as insufficient legal frameworks may pose threats.
3. **FEDERATION DES ASSOCIATIONS.** The Federation advocates for the rights of women and girls with disabilities, collaborating with organizations focused on women with disabilities. However, specifics on how data has influenced access to justice initiatives are lacking. Nonetheless, a well-provided legal framework offers opportunities for comprehensive access to justice, although a lack of emerging trends or policy changes is a potential threat.
4. **FODDEB.** FODDEB acknowledges the importance of access to justice, although detailed advocacy initiatives or outcomes are lacking. Nonetheless, there is an opportunity to develop targeted advocacy campaigns and partnerships to

enhance legal support and access to justice for persons with disabilities. However, societal prejudices and systemic legal barriers remain threats.

5. **ICOG.** ICOG Benin is committed to improving access to justice for women and girls with disabilities, engaging in media activities, and partnering with Social Watch. However, specific outcomes or impacts of these efforts remain unspecified, raising questions about their effectiveness. Nonetheless, there's potential to influence public opinion and policy reform through media advocacy, although lack of engagement with legal institutions may pose threats.
6. **LA CHRYSALIDE.** La Chrysalide advocates for equitable access to justice for people with disabilities, collaborating with organizations like the Union of Disabled Persons of Ouidah and Le RONE RBC BENIN. However, the effectiveness of their advocacy actions and partnerships in improving access to justice for women and girls with disabilities is not detailed. Despite this, their engagement in advocacy and partnership activities provides a strong foundation for potentially impactful work in this area. However, the absence of specific policies for the access of women and girls with disabilities to justice may hinder efforts.
7. **ONG ACTIONS INCLUSIVE.** Advocacy initiatives aimed at addressing abuse and rape of women with disabilities demonstrate ONG ACTIONS INCLUSIVE's crucial recognition of intersectional challenges. However, details on the implementation and effectiveness of these initiatives are lacking, leaving uncertainties about their impact. Further training on national and international laws presents opportunities, although societal stigma and lack of awareness pose threats.
8. **ONG BROPEs.** ONG BROPEs advocates for access to justice but lacks specific initiatives or outcomes. Nonetheless, there's potential for impactful work in partnership with legal institutions and human rights organizations, although broader systemic issues may pose threats.
9. **ONG CRI D'AMOUR SARC.** While acknowledging advocacy for improved access to justice for women and girls with disabilities, Ong cri d'amour sarc lacks detailed information on specific initiatives or partnerships related to access to justice. Nonetheless, there is potential for impactful work in promoting legal rights and support for persons with disabilities, although socio-cultural beliefs and systemic legal barriers may threaten these efforts.
10. **ONG LE LAURIER.** ONG Le Laurier advocates for equitable access to justice for people with disabilities, collaborating with organizations such as the Union of Disabled Persons of Ouidah. However, specific outcomes of their advocacy initiatives are not detailed, leaving room for impact measurement and communication improvement. Their engagement in advocacy and partnerships provides a foundation for potentially significant impacts on access to justice for

women and girls with disabilities. However, no emerging trends or policy changes threatening access to justice are reported.

11. **ONG RACINES.** ONG RACINES advocates for access to justice but lacks detailed information on partnerships and monitoring. Nonetheless, advocating for specialist inclusion in courts presents an opportunity, although systemic legal barriers are threats.
12. **ORGANIZATION INTERNATIONALE.** The Organization emphasizes equality under the law but lacks specific actions related to access to justice. There's potential for impactful advocacy, although sociocultural and institutional barriers may pose threats.
13. **PERSONNE PHYSIC.** Identifying needs and adaptation awareness in judicial procedures are strengths, but detailed advocacy initiatives are lacking. There's an opportunity for training and sensitization, although cultural and systemic hurdles may pose threats.
14. **RÉSEAU DES ASSOCIATIONS DE PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES DU LITTORAL.** Acknowledging the importance of legal equity for persons with disabilities, Réseau des associations de personnes handicapées du Littoral lacks detailed information on advocacy initiatives or services provided to improve access to justice for women and girls with disabilities. However, developing targeted advocacy campaigns and forming strategic partnerships can enhance access to justice despite threats from systemic legal barriers and societal prejudices.
15. **RESPESD BENIN.** RESPESD advocates for access to justice, but specific outcomes or impacts of their efforts are not detailed. Nonetheless, ongoing advocacy provides a platform for further engagement, although institutional and socio-cultural challenges may pose threats.
16. **SOLDATIC BENIN.** Soldatic Benin acknowledges the importance of access to justice for people with disabilities by partnering with the Persons with Disabilities Network. However, a lack of specific initiatives or actions to improve access to justice suggests a possible oversight or resource limitation. Strengthening advocacy capacity and improving physical and informational accessibility of legal services present significant opportunities for advancing access to justice. In contrast, societal stigma, lack of awareness, and insufficient legal support are threats to achieving equitable access.
17. **TERRE ROUGE BENIN.** Terres Rouges Bénin ensures all children in their care have access to justice, but specific initiatives for women and girls with disabilities are not detailed. Their acknowledgment of every child's right to access justice lays a foundation for advocacy, although lacking targeted advocacy or services could pose threats.

## Ghana

- *What does the Literature Review Tell Us?*

Access to justice for women and girls with disabilities in Ghana presents a multifaceted challenge encompassing legal, social, and cultural dimensions. While the legal framework, notably the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715), lays the groundwork for their rights, implementation often falls short, leaving them facing significant barriers. These include physical inaccessibility to courtrooms, lack of sign language interpreters, and pervasive stigma and discrimination. Furthermore, a notable gap exists in legal awareness among this demographic, exacerbating their vulnerability to abuse and discrimination.

Despite these challenges, various initiatives strive to improve access to justice. The Legal Resources Centre (an NGO) in Ghana provides legal aid and advocacy support, while international organizations like the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) enhance the legal capacity of women and girls with disabilities. Formal avenues for accessing justice include Regular Courts, Traditional Council Judicial Committees, quasi-judicial bodies like CHRAJ, and administrative complaints. Informal options involve community-based dispute resolution and faith-based systems. Appiah K's "Report on Access to Justice" details these avenues but highlights specific challenges faced by women, especially those with disabilities, including limited legal knowledge and discrimination.

Civil society organizations play a vital role in addressing these challenges. Through legal aid services, paralegal training, legal literacy education projects, and legal research, organizations like FIDA-Ghana, WiLDAF, and LAWA-Ghana empower women to assert their rights. Monitoring initiatives by the Ghana Integrity Initiative and the Civic Foundation ensure accountability within the judiciary. Networking and partnerships among CSOs further amplify efforts, exemplified by initiatives like WISE6, which provide comprehensive support to victims of violence.

OPDs, like the Ghana Federation of Disability Organizations and Inclusion Ghana, advocate for better access to justice through awareness campaigns, legal education programs, and engagement with policymakers. Inclusion Ghana, with support from The Disability Rights Fund, facilitated the inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities in the justice system. However, OPDs encounter challenges related to funding and capacity building, highlighting the importance of sustained support and collaboration with government and international partners to advance the rights of women and girls with disabilities in Ghana.

- *What do Women and Girls with Disabilities Tell Us?*

Women and girls with disabilities in Ghana highlight distinct challenges based on their location, whether rural or peri-urban. In both settings, discrimination and neglect are pervasive issues, but peri-urban areas report more direct instances of corruption and bribery within law enforcement, exacerbating the barriers to justice.



Photo: Focus Group Discussion in a Peri-Urban Community in Ghana

However, interventions by disability movements like the Ghana Federation of Disability Organizations (GFD) provide some support in both rural and peri-urban areas, although their impact may be limited.

The role of OPDs is crucial in both contexts, emphasizing the importance of public awareness campaigns and legislative advocacy to address systemic injustices and promote disability rights. Intersectional experiences further underscore systemic injustices, with peri-urban areas highlighting workplace injuries and discrimination in public transport.

Rural areas face significant challenges, indicated by a "Red" rating, while peri-urban areas exhibit a mixed rating of "Red" and "Orange," signifying varying degrees of opportunity and systemic barriers.

Critical areas for intervention include enhancing legal literacy among persons with disabilities, improving law enforcement training on disability rights, and conducting public awareness campaigns to foster a more inclusive and accessible justice system for women and girls with disabilities across Ghana's rural and peri-urban landscapes.

The narrative reports capturing the rich discussions in the focus groups offer the opportunity for mining data to inform design during SPADRA II and implementation during SPADRA III. Refer to Annexure B.

- *What do OPDs Tell Us?*

In the domain of access to justice in Ghana, insights gleaned from OPDs shed light on various aspects. OPDs exhibit strengths in fostering strategic collaborations and conducting education and awareness campaigns, which are instrumental in promoting the rights of persons with disabilities within the legal framework.

However, a notable weakness identified is the lack of detailed data regarding the specific challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities in accessing justice. This lack of information hampers the formulation of targeted interventions and policy advocacy efforts. Nevertheless, there are opportunities for improvement, including enhancing data collection mechanisms to capture a more comprehensive understanding of the barriers encountered and the needs of this demographic group.

Additionally, the provision of legal support services presents an avenue for empowering women and girls with disabilities to navigate the justice system effectively.

Despite these opportunities, threats persist in systemic and societal barriers, encompassing institutionalized discrimination, societal prejudices, and inadequate accessibility measures. Overcoming these threats requires concerted efforts from various stakeholders to dismantle barriers and ensure equal access to justice for all persons, regardless of disability status, in Ghana.

- *Which Organizations are Active in Access to Justice?*

1. **GHANA ASSOCIATION OF PERSONS WITH ALBINISM (GAPA):** GAPA's initiatives aim to eliminate cultural prejudices and ensure fair hearings for persons with albinism, focusing on dismantling systemic barriers to justice. However, the lack of independent monitoring and data collection regarding access to justice initiatives may limit effectiveness.
2. **GHANA BLIND UNION:** The Ghana Blind Union engages justice institutions and educates members on legal rights, demonstrating efforts to improve access to justice for women and girls with disabilities. Collaboration with Ghana Somubi Dwumadie for advocacy engagement strengthens the Union's capacity to address justice issues.
3. **GHANA FEDERATION OF DISABILITY ORGANIZATIONS (GFD):** GFD's efforts to raise awareness and capacity-building for women and girls on their rights and legal resources signify a vital step towards empowering them to access justice. However, the absence of targeted data collection on access to justice for women and girls with disabilities poses challenges.

4. **INCLUSION GHANA:** Inclusion Ghana's advocacy efforts to improve access to justice and collaboration with relevant organizations and government departments aim to ensure that legal systems are accessible and fair to women and girls with disabilities, particularly those with intellectual disabilities.
5. **MENTAL HEALTH SOCIETY OF GHANA (MEHSOG):** MEHSOG's initiatives to educate women on their rights and seek justice indicate an active role in empowering women and girls with disabilities to advocate for themselves. However, the absence of data monitoring on changes in access to justice remains a challenge.
6. **GHANA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF (GNAD):** GNAD advocates for the rights of deaf persons within the justice system, emphasizing the importance of sign language interpreters in legal processes. Their initiatives to train deaf women and girls on their rights and strategies for seeking redress showcase a proactive approach to improving access to justice.
7. **NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (NCPD):** The NCPD's advocacy for the Persons with Disabilities Bill 2023 and collaboration with various organizations demonstrate a commitment to improving access to justice for women and girls with disabilities. However, specific details about their impact on access to justice remain unspecified.
8. **YOUNG VISIONARY LEADERS OF GHANA:** The organization advocates for improved access to justice for women and girls with disabilities. However, specific initiatives in this area were not detailed. Nonetheless, systemic barriers and societal attitudes may impede progress.

*Other:*

9. **UNICEF:** UNICEF Ghana's engagement in advocating for improved access to justice, partnerships, and support for capacity building in disability data collection and analysis is crucial. However, challenges persist in translating initiatives into measurable impacts on access to justice.

## Malawi

- *What does the Literature Review Tell Us?*

Access to justice for women and girls with disabilities in Malawi remains a pressing concern, reflecting broader issues of equity and human rights within the country. Despite legislative efforts such as the Disability Act of 2012 and constitutional guarantees of equality before the law, significant barriers persist. The Joint Submission to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review: Malawi by Disabled Women in Africa (DIWA), in collaboration with Women Enabled International,

highlights the widespread denial of access to justice, attributing factors within the criminal justice system such as resource shortages, flawed investigations, and lack of evidence. These challenges persist due to inadequate implementation of crucial provisions of the Disability Act, which fails to address access to justice explicitly.

Discrimination against women with disabilities in accessing justice perpetuates stereotypes and stigma within Malawian legislation rather than providing safeguards against discrimination, particularly for victims of gender-based violence. Physical barriers to courtrooms, lack of sign language interpreters, and societal stigma compound the challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities. Furthermore, a UNDP report found that the most vulnerable, including those with disabilities, remained marginalized in accessing justice.

In response, national and international organizations have initiated programs to support access to justice for women and girls with disabilities in Malawi. The Federation of Disability Organizations in Malawi (FEDOMA) advocates for the rights of persons with disabilities and provides awareness-raising efforts and support in accessing legal services. Internationally, organizations like UNDP and the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) support initiatives to enhance legal capacity and improve access to justice through training, advocacy, and legal aid services.

However, challenges related to funding, capacity, and societal attitudes persist, emphasizing the need for continued commitment from both the government and the international community. Strengthening the responsiveness of the judicial system to the needs of persons with disabilities, increasing public awareness, and empowering women and girls with disabilities through education and advocacy are crucial steps toward ensuring their full access to justice in Malawi. Collaboration between government entities, civil society, and international organizations is essential to address the discrepancies between legal frameworks and practical implementation, particularly in the face of economic constraints.

- *What do Women and Girls with Disabilities Tell Us?*

Women and girls with disabilities in Malawi face common challenges irrespective of their urban or rural contexts.

A significant obstacle is the profound lack of awareness about their rights and freedoms. While urban areas may have slightly better access to awareness programs, the accessibility to legal recourse remains hampered by systemic barriers in both settings.

However, glimpses of best practices are emerging, particularly in urban areas. Initiatives such as workshops facilitated by organizations like the Women's Action Group (WAG) offer potential strategies for raising awareness among women and girls with disabilities about their rights.

Additionally, the role of OPDs is crucial in advocating for accessible legal services and policies. There is a shared need across both urban and rural contexts for legal services and policies to be presented in formats that are accessible to all forms of disabilities.



By addressing these challenges and leveraging best practices, Malawi can work towards ensuring that women and girls with disabilities have equitable access to justice across all settings.

The narrative reports capturing the rich discussions in the focus groups offer the opportunity for mining data to inform design during SPADRA II and implementation during SPADRA III. Refer to Annexure B.

- *What do OPDs Tell Us?*

One notable strength of OPDs lies in their initiatives on legal awareness and capacity building, which aim to empower persons with disabilities by enhancing their understanding of their rights and the legal mechanisms available for seeking justice.

Additionally, OPDs provide specialized training to legal professionals and stakeholders, equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively address the needs of persons with disabilities within the justice system.

Opportunities for further improvement exist, particularly in the full domestication of provisions outlined in the UNCRPD.

OPDs play a crucial role in advocating for policy changes that align with the principles of the UNCRPD, thereby fostering a more inclusive and equitable legal framework for persons with disabilities in Malawi.

However, specific threats loom over these efforts, such as underreporting cases due to familial preferences. This underreporting may hinder the accurate assessment of the extent of injustices faced by persons with disabilities, thus impeding the development of targeted interventions and support mechanisms.

Despite these challenges, the proactive stance of OPDs in Malawi underscores their commitment to advancing access to justice and promoting the rights of persons with disabilities within the legal system.

- *Which Organizations are Active in Access to Justice?*

1. **CHIMWEMWE DISABILITY AND COMMUNITY CARE ORGANIZATION:** The organization's affirmative response to advocating for and/or providing services for improved access to justice for women and girls with disabilities indicates a proactive stance, although specific initiatives are not detailed. The absence of detailed information on advocacy initiatives or outcomes related to access to justice highlights a potential area for improvement in documentation and impact measurement. Collaboration with the District Disability Forum (DDF) suggests that there are opportunities for collective advocacy efforts to improve access to justice for women and girls with disabilities, indicating potential for leveraging existing networks for broader impact. No specific emerging trends or policy changes that threaten access to justice for women and girls with disabilities are mentioned, which may indicate either a stable legal environment or an area for closer monitoring.
2. **DIWODE:** DIWODE's initiatives in knowledge building, capacity development, and support for victims of abuse underline its comprehensive approach to enhancing access to justice for women and girls with disabilities. The absence of data monitoring and collection on changes in access to justice might limit the organization's ability to evaluate impact and identify areas for improvement. Increasing awareness campaigns could raise the profile of justice issues faced by women and girls with disabilities, potentially attracting more support and collaboration. Legal and systemic barriers and societal discrimination pose significant challenges to achieving meaningful improvements in access to justice.
3. **SPINAL INJURIES ASSOCIATION OF MALAWI:** SIAM's involvement in advocating for access to justice at the Commonwealth Law Ministers meeting highlights its capacity to engage in high-level advocacy effectively. The organization notes a lack of specific monitoring and data collection regarding access to justice for women and girls with disabilities, indicating a need for enhanced efforts in this area. There is an opportunity to expand training for

judicial officers on disability rights and to raise awareness among women and girls with disabilities about their legal rights and justice processes. Negative attitudes, lack of training on disability rights within the judiciary, and the absence of standardized accessibility guidelines are significant threats to improving access to justice for women and girls with disabilities.

4. **THE VOICE OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITY IN MALAWI:** Advocating for an access to justice policy and establishing special needs desks and courts of law represents a solid commitment to improving legal access for women and girls with disabilities. The lack of data collection on access to justice for women and girls with disabilities is a notable weakness, affecting the ability to advocate based on evidence. Advocating for changes in justice policies to include specialists in all courts of law offers an opportunity to make the legal system more accessible and responsive to the needs of women and girls with disabilities. The current legal system's inaccessibility and potential lack of specialized support for women and girls with disabilities threaten their ability to achieve justice on an equal basis.
5. **VIHEMA DEAFBLIND MALAWI:** VIHEMA Deafblind Malawi's advocacy work aims to improve access to justice for women and girls with disabilities, although specific initiatives are not detailed. Their commitment to advocating for accessible legal services is evident, showcasing a proactive stance in addressing legal rights. The lack of detailed information on advocacy outcomes or partnerships specifically aimed at enhancing access to justice for women and girls with disabilities indicates a need for focused effort in this area, particularly in documentation and impact measurement. Collaboration with other organizations on disability rights could strengthen their advocacy for accessible legal services, creating opportunities for collective action and shared resources. A lack of awareness about policy changes affecting access to justice for women and girls with disabilities suggests a potential vulnerability to adverse shifts in the legal landscape, emphasizing the need for ongoing monitoring and adaptation.
6. **YOUNG GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES ADVOCATE:** While YOGDA's specific initiatives regarding access to justice are not detailed in the provided information, access to justice remains a critical area for any organization focused on disability rights, offering both challenges and opportunities for advocacy and service provision.

**Other:**

7. **BEIT CURE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF MALAWI:** The hospital engages in capacitating government and NGO community health workers, which, while not directly related to legal advocacy, contributes to a broader understanding and support system for people with disabilities that can indirectly support their access to justice. The document suggests a limited focus on direct advocacy or service

provision for improving access to justice, specifically for women and girls with disabilities, highlighting a potential area for development. Partnering with organizations like MANAD, MACOHA, PODCAM, and FEDOMA to improve access to justice indicates an opportunity to leverage these relationships further in advocating for legal reforms and ensuring that legal services are accessible and inclusive. The document identifies socio-cultural beliefs about disabilities as a threat to access to justice, which can lead to discrimination and exclusion from legal processes and support services.

## Zambia

- *What does the Literature Review Tell Us?*

Ensuring access to justice for women and girls with disabilities in Zambia is paramount for upholding their rights and promoting an equitable society, aligning with international human rights instruments like the UNCRPD, CEDAW, ACRWC, Maputo Protocol, and ADP, which advocate for their rights and inclusion. However, the Director of Human Rights Watch in Zambia highlighted significant challenges faced by this demographic, including vulnerability to discrimination and violence, especially within their immediate circles, compounded by factors such as age and disability type.

While the legal framework, including the Persons with Disabilities Act No. 6 of 2012, theoretically supports their rights, practical implementation faces obstacles like physical barriers to judicial facilities, lack of disability awareness among legal professionals, and societal prejudices discouraging legal recourse.

Despite notable efforts by entities like ZAFOD and UNDP-supported initiatives to improve the legal framework and institutional capacities, challenges such as consistent implementation and adequate funding persist. Specialized training for legal practitioners, awareness campaigns for women and girls with disabilities, and adaptations for accessible legal processes offer promising strategies.

Strengthening OPDs' capacities and fostering collaboration among government, civil society, and international partners are crucial steps toward realizing inclusive justice and dignity for women and girls with disabilities in Zambia, which aligns with international principles. While legislative advancements lay a foundation for inclusivity, comprehensive strategies are needed to overcome funding shortages, infrastructure deficits, and societal biases on the journey toward fully inclusive education and accessible justice.

The Ministry of Education, in addition, in its completed survey, notes the threat of underreporting of cases, where the tendency for families to resolve issues internally without resorting to formal legal processes threatens the effectiveness of access to justice for women and girls with disabilities.

- *What do Women and Girls with Disabilities Tell Us?*

Women and girls with disabilities face notable challenges in accessing justice in both urban and rural contexts in Zambia. Inadequate resources and training for inclusive education are prevalent issues, with urban areas potentially possessing slightly better physical infrastructure than rural areas.

Efforts must concentrate on the development and implementation of accessibility standards that cater to the unique needs of women and girls with disabilities in both urban and rural settings to address these challenges.

OPDs can contribute significantly to advancing inclusive education and access to justice for women and girls with disabilities in Zambia.



Photo: Focus Group Discussion in a Rural Community in Zambia

The narrative reports capturing the rich discussions in the focus groups offer the opportunity for mining data to inform design during SPADRA II and implementation during SPADRA III. Refer to Annexure B.

- *What do OPDs Tell Us?*

In the realm of access to justice in Zambia, insights from OPDs shed light on various aspects. OPDs exhibit strengths in capacity building concerning legal issues and advocating for legislative reforms, showcasing their commitment to enhancing access to justice for persons with disabilities.

However, weaknesses are identified in the realm of case reporting, suggesting potential areas for improvement in documenting and addressing instances of injustice or discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities.

Nevertheless, opportunities lie ahead for OPDs to capitalize on, including enhancing data collection mechanisms to understand their constituents' challenges better.

Additionally, improving family engagement can play a pivotal role in ensuring that the rights and needs of women and girls with disabilities are effectively advocated for within the legal system.

Despite these opportunities, OPDs also face threats stemming from systemic and societal barriers, which may impede their efforts to secure justice and equality for persons with disabilities.

Overcoming these challenges will require concerted efforts from OPDs, governmental agencies, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to create a more inclusive and accessible justice system for all in Zambia.

- *Which Organizations are Active in Access to Justice?*

1. **DOWN SYNDROME FOUNDATION OF ZAMBIA:** Advocacy efforts to review disability legislation, such as Statutory Instrument number 87 and the Disability Act, to better accommodate persons with intellectual disabilities indicate a focus on improving legal frameworks. While advocacy efforts are noted, specific challenges in accessing justice for women and girls with disabilities and how these are being addressed were not detailed. The foundation's emphasis on developing instruments for quality monitoring of justice and strengthening disability legislation points to opportunities for systemic improvements in access to justice. Without specific mention of threats to access to justice, general concerns may include inadequate legal representation, lack of awareness among the judiciary and legal professionals about intellectual disabilities, and societal biases.
2. **MENTAL HEALTH USERS NETWORK OF ZAMBIA:** MHUNZ's partnership with Human Rights Watch for implementing the Mental Health Act demonstrates its effectiveness in legal advocacy and facilitating access to justice for persons with psychosocial disabilities. Similar to social protection, there's a lack of detail regarding the organization's efforts to monitor and collect data on changes in access to justice, which is crucial for evaluating effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement. Expanding legal services and support for women and girls with disabilities in accessing justice presents an opportunity to further influence social protection policies and practices toward community-based support. The absence of identified emerging trends or policy changes that

threaten access to justice might indicate a need for enhanced focus on anticipating and preparing for future challenges in this area.

3. **ZAMBIA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE HEARING IMPAIRED (ZNAHI):** ZNAHI's provision of sign language interpreter services in court cases highlights direct support for access to justice for persons with hearing impairments. A detailed account of monitoring and data collection efforts related to access to justice is not provided, indicating potential gaps in evaluating the effectiveness of their initiatives. Building on the success of providing interpreter services, there's an opportunity to advocate for standardized accessibility in legal settings across Zambia. Limited accessibility in legal settings and digital divides pose significant barriers to justice, alongside societal stigma and discrimination that could deter women and girls with disabilities from seeking legal recourse.
4. **YOUTH IN ACTION FOR DISABILITY INCLUSION IN ZAMBIA (YADIZ):** YADIZ's involvement in media advocacy campaigns and press statements, as well as its partnership with Human Rights Watch (HRW), demonstrate an active role in advocating for improved access to justice for women and girls with disabilities. The lack of detailed information about the specific focus of advocacy campaigns or the impact of these efforts leaves unanswered questions about the effectiveness of YADIZ's actions in enhancing access to justice. The collaboration with DRW and other organizations offers a robust platform for collective advocacy that could lead to significant improvements in the legal and judicial system's responsiveness to the needs of women and girls with disabilities. Mention of the Zambian constitution as a potential threat suggests there are structural or legal barriers that could impede progress toward ensuring equitable access to justice for women and girls with disabilities.
5. **ZAEPD:** ZAEPD has engaged in providing services such as sign language interpreter services at court in GBV cases and made referrals to partner organizations for further support, demonstrating their commitment to improving access to justice. The organization acknowledges that it has not been involved on a larger scale except for its data, indicating a need for broader engagement and advocacy in access to justice issues. Collaboration with Disability Rights Watch (DRW) and ZAFOD enhances ZAEPD's potential to impact access to justice for women and girls with disabilities through collective advocacy and support. A significant threat to access to justice is the underreporting of cases, as families often prefer to resolve issues internally, hindering legal recourse for women and girls with disabilities.
6. **ZNAPD:** ZNAPD's involvement in advocating for the Zambia Disability Act showcases its capability to drive legislative changes that protect the rights of women and girls with disabilities. While ZNAPD collaborates with ZAFOD to monitor access to justice, a more detailed account of their direct involvement and the application of collected data could indicate areas for growth. Enhancing the

advocacy, monitoring, and data collection capabilities of ZNAPD members could significantly improve their effectiveness in promoting access to justice. Persisting systemic barriers within the justice system, including discrimination and lack of accessibility, continue to threaten the effectiveness of access to justice for women and girls with disabilities.

## **Section 5: Food for Thought and Considerations for SPADRA II**

## 5. Food for Thought and Considerations for SPADRA II

### 5.1 Principles for the Design Phase: Through an African Lens

To truly transform the lives of women and girls with disabilities in Benin, Ghana, Malawi, and Zambia, a multi-faceted approach is essential. This includes enhancing the implementation of existing laws and policies, increasing funding and resources for inclusive education, social protection, and access to justice, and shifting societal attitudes towards disability and gender. Aligning national efforts with the obligations outlined in international human rights treaties provides a roadmap for creating more inclusive, equitable societies where women and girls with disabilities are empowered to lead fulfilling lives unhampered by discrimination or barriers to participation.

The research illuminates that OPDs can and must contribute significantly to realizing the rights of women and girls with disabilities in Africa through tailored, culturally sensitive, and inclusive strategies that address both the systemic barriers and the specific needs arising from the intersection of gender and disability.

Designing and implementing activities in SPADRA must be grounded in understanding local contexts, including the prevalent social norms, economic conditions, and institutional frameworks. The principles underscore the importance of a nuanced approach that respects diversity, promotes inclusivity, and seeks sustainable, rights-based solutions to the challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities across Africa, and offer a foundational guide for shaping effective, respectful, and impactful continental and local partnerships and collaborations through an African lens -

#### 1. *Emphasizing Community and Family Engagement:*

Efforts to improve the standard of living for women and girls with disabilities should involve community leaders, families, and local organizations to ensure culturally appropriate and widely accepted initiatives.

#### 2. *Strengthening Local Capacity and Empowerment:*

Empowering women and girls with disabilities involves education, skills training, and support for local disability and women's rights organizations, which play a crucial role in advocacy and service delivery.

#### 3. *Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers with Local Solutions:*

Programs should leverage local resources, traditional knowledge, and low-cost solutions to improve economic status, including sustainable agricultural practices and local entrepreneurship.

#### 4. *Leveraging Traditional and Community-Based Systems:*

Traditional and community-based support systems must be made more inclusive to improve access to justice and social participation.

5. *Integrating Traditional Knowledge with Modern Interventions:*

Interventions must blend traditional knowledge with modern approaches to ensure accessibility and acceptability.

6. *Prioritizing the Voices and Experiences of Women and Girls with Disabilities:*

SPADRA interventions must prioritize the voices and experiences of women and girls with disabilities, ensuring that their stories are narrated by them, not for them, and empowering them in the process.

7. *Inclusivity and Representation:*

All voices, especially those of women and girls with disabilities, must be heard and valued in the partnership process, with direct input from OPDs.

8. *Equity and Accessibility:*

Efforts should address varied barriers faced by persons with disabilities, ensuring equal opportunities and access to services.

9. *Cultural Sensitivity and Respect:*

Projects should respect local norms and values while promoting rights and inclusion in culturally resonant ways.

10. *Sustainability and Local Ownership:*

Initiatives should be sustainable and locally owned, with capacities built within communities.

11. *Collaboration and Partnership:*

Strong partnerships between stakeholders should aim at pooling resources, knowledge, and expertise to achieve common goals.

12. *Rights-Based Approach:*

All interventions should uphold the dignity and rights of persons with disabilities as enshrined in international and African human rights instruments.

13. *Context-Specific Interventions:*

Tailored interventions should address specific needs, challenges, and opportunities within each country or community.

14. *Mutual Learning and Knowledge Sharing:*

Platforms for mutual learning and exchange of best practices should be created to strengthen capacities through shared experiences.

## 5.2 Cross-Cutting Thematic Priorities

Based on the overview of the SPADRA project report provided, the most cross-cutting thematic priorities that emerge, especially concerning advancing the rights and inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in Benin, Ghana, Malawi, and Zambia, revolve around three main areas:

- *Gender Equality and Disability Rights Integration:* A cross-cutting theme throughout the report is the integration of gender and disability rights. This approach recognizes the intersectionality of discrimination and barriers faced by women and girls with disabilities and advocates for strategies that address both gender and disability-specific challenges.
- *Capacity Building of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs):* Strengthening the capacity of OPDs emerges as a thematic priority, crucial for advancing both gender and disability rights. By enhancing the ability of these organizations to advocate, implement, and monitor rights-based initiatives, the SPADRA project aims to foster a more inclusive and equitable societal framework for persons with disabilities.
- *Partnerships for Advancement:* The emphasis on cross-disability and mainstream partnerships reflects a strategic priority to leverage collective action in advancing the rights of women and girls with disabilities. These partnerships are vital for pooling resources, sharing knowledge, and influencing policy at both Pan-African and national levels.

## 5.3 Country-Specific Priorities

Given the country-specific FGD reports of Benin, Ghana, Malawi, and Zambia and their unique set of priorities based on the local context, existing gaps, and opportunities for advancement in the areas of social protection, inclusive education, and access to justice for women and girls with disabilities, the country-specific priorities indicate:

|               |                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Benin:</b> | The focus might be on enhancing social protection mechanisms due to socio-economic factors that particularly impact women and girls with disabilities.                                   |
| <b>Ghana:</b> | Priorities could include advancing inclusive education, given the country's strides in education and the need to ensure these systems are fully accessible to persons with disabilities. |

**Malawi:** With ongoing efforts to improve health and social services, Malawi might prioritize access to healthcare and social protection for women and girls with disabilities.

**Zambia:** Given Zambia's legal and policy frameworks on disability rights, the focus might be on strengthening access to justice and legal recourse for women and girls with disabilities, ensuring their rights are protected and upheld.

It's important to note that while these inferences align with the broader themes of the SPADRA project, the specific priorities for each country would ideally be detailed in the project's findings and recommendations, based on the comprehensive analysis of the baseline survey data, including direct input from stakeholders and beneficiaries within those countries.

## 5.4 Strengthening OPDs for Sustainable and Meaningful Impact

A key focus of SPADRA is strengthening OPDs in Benin, Ghana, Malawi, and Zambia to effectively support the human rights of women and girls with disabilities in social protection, inclusive education, and access to justice.

Several strategies are proposed as food for thought for OPDs to enhance their capacity, advocacy efforts, and service delivery to achieve this.

Firstly, **collaborative advocacy** is encouraged, emphasizing the importance of coalitions with other civil society organizations and international bodies to amplify the voice and impact of advocacy efforts.

OPDs are urged to **actively engage in policy formulation processes** to ensure that the rights and needs of women and girls with disabilities are adequately represented in national policies and legal frameworks.

**Capacity building** is another crucial aspect, with suggestions to develop training programs for OPD members on advocacy, legal rights, and resource mobilization to equip them with essential skills.

Additionally, there's a focus on improving **data collection and impact assessment** to inform evidence-based advocacy and program design.

**Direct service provision** is emphasized, urging OPDs to ensure that programs and services are fully inclusive and address specific needs identified through SWOT analysis.

Furthermore, efforts to foster inclusive education and economic empowerment are highlighted, including **barrier removal in educational and employment settings** and

offering **vocational training** tailored to the abilities of women and girls with disabilities.

Enhancing access to justice is also crucial, with recommendations to **provide legal assistance and sensitize the judiciary on disability rights**.

Lastly, **community sensitization and awareness-raising campaigns** are proposed to challenge stigma and promote respect and inclusion for women and girls with disabilities by highlighting their achievements and contributions.

## 5.5 Partnerships: Initiatives and Organizations

The selection and collaboration of organizations and institutions (OPDs (affirmed), women and disability-focused NGOs, government agencies and ministries, human rights institutions, and iNGOs) must support and advance inclusivity, expertise, transparency, synergy, and community participation. Some principles that could guide the selection and collaboration process include:

### 1. *Representation and Diversity:*

Ensure selected organizations and institutions represent diverse perspectives within the disability community, including gender, age, disability type, and geographical location, to ensure inclusivity and responsiveness to varied needs.

### 2. *Expertise and Experience:*

Prioritize organizations and institutions with demonstrated expertise and experience in disability rights and inclusive development, ensuring they bring valuable insights and knowledge to the partnership. This expertise may encompass legal advocacy, policy formulation, service provision, and community mobilization, drawing on the collective experience of OPDs, NGOs, government entities, and international partners.

### 3. *Accountability and Transparency:*

Select partners committed to accountability and transparency, with clear governance structures, financial management practices, and stakeholder engagement and feedback mechanisms. This includes adherence to ethical standards, reporting requirements, and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, ensuring transparency in decision-making and resource allocation.

### 4. *Complementary Capacities:*

Identify partners with complementary capacities and resources, fostering collaboration and synergy to maximize impact in addressing the diverse needs of women and girls with disabilities. This involves leveraging the strengths of each partner, including technical expertise, networks, funding sources, and advocacy platforms, to achieve common goals and enhance the effectiveness of SPADRA initiatives.

## 5. *Community Engagement and Participation:*

Prioritize partners that focus on community engagement and participation, ensuring the voices and perspectives of women and girls with disabilities and their communities are central to decision-making and program design. This involves meaningful consultation, participation, and leadership opportunities for women and girls with disabilities, supported by OPDs, NGOs, government agencies, and international partners, to ensure programs are responsive to local priorities and context-specific needs.

The desktop review identified several iNGOs active in the four targeted countries across the targeted domains of social protection, inclusive education, and access to justice.

### Benin

- **UNPRPD (2018-2021):** <https://unprpd.org/program/benin/>

The project in Benin focused on enhancing the implementation of the National Policy on the Protection and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (2012-2021), from which SPADRA Phase II designing and planning can learn and build. Key outcomes included the improvement of national legal and policy frameworks in education, health, employment, and gender equality sectors. Additionally, the capacities and awareness of stakeholders were strengthened, particularly in four vulnerable communes (Malanville, Karimama, Za-Kpota, and Cotonou), ensuring enhanced access to community-based rehabilitation services for Persons with Disabilities, including children and women.

- **Handicap International (Belgium)**

#### ***SAHA regional program***

Handicap International (HI)'s local inclusive development initiative made significant strides in Cotonou by establishing norms for minimum accessibility standards in municipalities and reigniting the process of formulating an inclusive building code, solidifying "HI's position as an authority on accessibility."

The economic inclusion of persons with disabilities involved local employment assessments, capacity-building for the National Employment Agency, disability awareness for companies, and establishing a company support fund.

Inclusive governance efforts included assessing the capacities of disability organizations, conducting local participatory diagnoses of citizen participation and barriers to accessing basic social services, organizational strengthening, BRIDGE training, and advocacy by OPDs and Civil Society Organizations. Efforts were made to identify organizations demonstrating best practices in addressing violence

against women with disabilities, followed by the implementation of a capacity-building plan for these organizations.

The inclusive education focus emphasized advocacy for including children with disabilities in national education policies, consultations with care providers, and teacher training and support.

- **Plan International**

***The Impact-Elle project*** (<https://plan-international.org/benin/>)

The program supports girls to take control of their futures through education and the knowledge they need to protect themselves against pregnancy and early marriage. With the support of Plan International and its partners in the Atacora, Atlantic, and Coastal regions, girls are overcoming the obstacles that prevent them from claiming their rights. Logistical arrangements are made to encourage the enrolment of pupils with disabilities. School staff and parents are provided with inclusivity training so that children with disabilities and girls can attend school without fearing discrimination.

- **CBM**

[http://www.cbm.org/en/tree/CBM\\_EV\\_EN\\_baumbart\\_15249.html](http://www.cbm.org/en/tree/CBM_EV_EN_baumbart_15249.html)

Based in Lomé, Togo, CBM-AFWC oversees various disability-inclusive development projects in nine countries: Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

CBM supports advocacy for greater inclusion of persons with disabilities in decision-making bodies' laws, policies, and programs, promotes inclusive eye health and rehabilitation services for physical disabilities, and ensures the integration of community-based inclusive development (CBID) in all areas of their lives.

- **Caritas**

Activities supporting persons with disabilities include leather making, skill development, income-generating activities, home health training, and the constitution of community-based rehabilitation committees and support groups.

Other initiatives and projects include:

- **Making It Work:** [https://www.makingitwork-crpd.org/leave-no-woman-behind](https://www.makingitwork-crpd.org/leave-no-woman-behind/#DisabledWomenEngage)
- **Action Education.** <https://action-education.org/en/our-projects-education-2/support-for-governance-and-initiatives-relays-for-quality-education-in-benin-act/>

To contribute to the improvement of educational provision in response to the needs of disabled and/or vulnerable girls and boys in Benin. Improve access to and retention in primary education for girls and boys aged 5 to 11, who are most at risk of dropping out, through the implementation of a package of adapted services; Improve school performance and its sustainability in the project's intervention areas; Strengthen the synergy of actors in the local dynamics of education governance.

- **The P20 Initiative** – data to leave no one behind in Benin. <https://devinit.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/the-P20-Initiative---data-to-leave-no-one-behind-in-Benin.pdf>
- **COC Netherlands – International.** <https://international.coc.nl/supporting-lgbti-people-living-with-a-disability-in-benin/>
- **Supporting LGBTI people with disabilities in Benin.** <https://international.coc.nl/supporting-lgbti-people-living-with-a-disability-in-benin/>  
Power of Pride Program: CBO Les Flambeaux has been in contact with nearly 300 LGBTI people with physical disabilities in various areas of Benin (Center, North, South).
- **World Education.** <https://worlded.org/celebrating-our-work-in-benin/>  
Making education more accessible for children with disabilities.
- **Global Information Society Watch (GISWatch)** <https://giswatch.org/en/country-report/infrastructure/benin>  
Universal Access to Information and Communication Technologies Project. Adapting the PNPG to the ICT sector and putting women and people with disabilities at the center of community initiatives. Setting up the community ICT telecentres aimed to increase access to the internet and its services for marginalized groups such as women, young people, and people with disabilities.
- **World Bank.** <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/183171606230224321/pdf/Benin-Youth-Inclusion-Project.pdf>  
Benin Youth Inclusion Project (not confirmed whether funding was granted.)

## Ghana

- **UNPRPD (2022-2024):** <https://unprpd.org/program/ghana/>  
In Ghana, the UNPRPD promotes and sustains gender-sensitive disability-inclusive data collection frameworks to inform national development.

- **Sightsavers.**

[https://options.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/cbr\\_in\\_ghana\\_0.pdf](https://options.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/cbr_in_ghana_0.pdf)

Ghana Somubi Dwumadie (Ghana Participation Program) is a four-year CBR disability program in Ghana that focuses explicitly on mental health. This program is funded with UK aid from the UK government. The program aimed to improve access to health services, advocate for disability-inclusive legislation and policies, and tackle stigma and discrimination around disability and mental health conditions.

- **Sightsavers.**

<https://www.sightsavers.org/reports/2018/10/ghana-disability-data-disaggregation/>

Ghana Disability Data Disaggregation Pilot Project

A pilot project in Ghana was established to understand how data may be collected in a system where community members were responsible for delivering interventions and collecting data on intervention uptake.

- **ALMT: AfricaKids.**

<https://www.almt.org/projects/tackling-disability-in-north-ghana-2/>

The primary goal of this project is to end harmful spirit child practices that lead to child rights violations in 38 communities in Northern Ghana.

- **UNICEF Ghana.**

<https://www.unicef.org/documents/championing-inclusive-practices-children-disabilities-ghana>

Championing inclusive practices for children with disabilities (Ghana)  
UNICEF, the Ghana Education Service, and Inclusive Development Partners piloted a program from 2019 to 2021 with 15 first-grade teachers, headteachers, and district-level staff in Ada West and West Gonja Districts. Based on the Universal Design for Learning principles, the project helped improve teachers' knowledge of inclusive practices and bolstered support to all early-grade learners, especially those with disabilities.

- **Institute on Community Integration (ICI).**

<https://ici.umn.edu/news/in-ghana-learning-to-end-stigma>

The first disability studies certificate program in West Africa begins this month at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) in Ghana, the result of a nearly two-year partnership formed to train disability services professionals in a region where stigma still keeps many people with disabilities from education, employment, and other aspects of community life.

[Enlightening and Empowering People with Disabilities in Africa](#) (EPPD Africa), the University of Vermont, and the Institute on Community

Integration at the University of Minnesota partnered with UCC to design the International Certificate in Disability Studies, a one-year program. It is modeled on disability policy and services certificates offered at ICI, the University of Vermont, and the Institute's work in Kenya.

- **World Education.**

<https://worlded.org/project/strategic-approaches-to-girls-education-stage/>

The Strategic Approaches to Girls' Education (STAGE) project lowers girls' barriers to achieving an education by providing formal and nonformal education tracks. The initiative operates in six regions of Ghana, targeting districts and communities where high levels of extreme poverty, in combination with deep-seated traditional and social norms, negatively impact women and girls. STAGE focuses on girls who are highly vulnerable and systematically marginalized due to factors such as early marriage, pregnancies, disabilities, and others.

**Malawi**

- **UNPRPD (2018-2021)**

<https://unprpd.org/program/malawi/>

The Malawi project targeted various aspects, including strengthened monitoring and public reporting on disability rights, awareness campaigns, training on the UNCRPD, and improved collection and analysis of disaggregated data on disability. Emphasis was placed on meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in development and political decision-making processes, particularly women, and enhanced capacity for their inclusion in sexual and reproductive health services.

- **CBM**

<https://www.cbm.org/en/simple-worldwide/africa-east-and-south/>

The CBM Africa East and South (AFES) Regional Hub operates in Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa, and Zambia. The regional office in Nairobi, Kenya, supports these countries in implementing CBM's initiatives in Inclusive Eye Health, Community-Based Inclusive Development (CBID), and Inclusive Humanitarian Action. CBID encompasses five areas: Ear and Hearing Care, Physical Rehabilitation, Inclusive Education, Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction, and Livelihoods. In East and Southern Africa, 95 CBID projects are currently being implemented by 53 partners.

- Embrace Ability**  
<https://www.embraceability.org.uk/get-educated/new-project-launched-in-malawi>  
 The Inclusive Education program in Phalombe, Malawi, focuses on improving access to education for disabled households who cannot afford school fees and materials. EmbraceAbility predominantly supports single-female-headed families that may have been abandoned or left due to the stigma attached to having a child with a disability.
- Able Child Africa.**  
<https://ablechildafrica.org/where-we-work/malawi/>  
 Able Child Africa will work with FEDOMA to strengthen their authority with these change-makers, ensuring that they and their members are the technical lead on how best to include children with disabilities within a Malawian context. FEDOMA is interested in delivering work in inclusive justice and social protection for children with disabilities, and its projects are focused on the economic empowerment of young people with disabilities, alongside rolling out our current work on inclusive early childhood education (ECD).
- Education Out Loud.**  
<https://educationoutloud.org/project/inclusive-malawi-project>  
 The Inclusive Education project addresses the challenge of limited access and retention of children with disabilities and girls in the Mzimba and Mangochi districts in Malawi.
- Butterfly Space Disability Centres**  
<https://butterflyspacemalawi.com/disability-centres/>  
 Community hubs for persons with disabilities that provide access to education and inclusive support services - we support two disability centers outside of Nkhata Bay in rural villages that offer educational support and promote self-advocacy, enabling access to quality education, skill sharing, and income generation. Vocational skills are taught to those who likely have not had the opportunity to attend school, creating a means of living and a sense of greater purpose and belonging in their community. Both centers support people with all types of physical and mental disabilities. Both centers provide a hub for regular meetings, access to information, microfinance support groups, and a place where medical professionals can see multiple patients simultaneously to offer advice and support to members and their families.
- World Bank.**  
<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/538901518434131367/malawi-promoting-inclusion-of-children-with-disability-into-basic-education-for-all-program>  
 Promoting the inclusion of Children with Disability into Basic Education for All Program for Malawi will test innovative methods to promote the enrollment of

children with disabilities currently excluded from mainstream schools and influence the development of an inclusive education policy.

- **Sightsavers.**

<https://www.sightsavers.org/from-the-field/2021/09/malawi-inclusive-pre-schools/>

Leave No Child Behind Project- An inclusive education project in Malawi that challenges stigma and changes lives by enabling young children with disabilities to attend preschool alongside their peers.

- **African Vision Malawi. Project4Africa.**

<https://www.africanvision.org.uk/projects/project4africa/>

We are working with AVM on a new project that focuses on providing quality educational opportunities for children and adults with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in the rural areas of North West Lilongwe District and Dowa District in central Malawi. The specific site for the SEND Support unit will be within the M'bang'ombe area in 3 locations: Sam's Village (AVM's training center); M'bang'ombe Health Clinic; and M'bang'ombe TDC (Teaching Development Centre) & Primary School.

- **Ripple Africa.**

<https://rippleafrica.org/project/disabilities-and-rehabilitation-in-malawi-africa/>

We run a disabilities and rehabilitation program that provides a lifeline to more than 150 children, adults, and their families in 35 villages near our base at Mwaya Beach.

- **Spark Inclusive Rural Development.**

<https://sparkinclusion.org/learningcentre/24-disability-inclusion-facilitators-certified-in-india-malawi-and-mozambique/>

SPARK aims to put people with disabilities in the lead.

Together with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Procasur, national partners, and organizations of people with disabilities (OPDs), Light for the World is using a systemic action learning approach to impact the lives of at least 7,000 people with disabilities through the SPARK program.

Disability Inclusion Facilitators (DIFs) are trained to include people with disabilities in projects, livelihood, and agricultural value chain programs and raise community, local, and national awareness about the rights and needs of people with disabilities.

- **Habitat for Humanity (Great Britain)**

<https://www.habitatforhumanity.org.uk/blog/2022/06/suitable-housing-for-people-with-disability/>

Accessible Housing for People with Disabilities

Habitat for Humanity Malawi ([HFHM](#)), in partnership with the Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA), conducted a joint monitoring visit to view houses

constructed under the Empowering Families of People with Disabilities (EPWD) project in Salima. This project is implemented with financial support from Hope and Healing of Canada and Habitat for Humanity Canada. The project aims to improve the physical living conditions of families of people with disabilities.

- **International Centre for Evidence in Disability**

<https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/media/23671>

The Malawi Key Informant Child Disability Project. Five hundred Key Informants (KIs) from the community were trained in identifying the different impairments/epilepsy included in this study, as well as case-finding methods and disability sensitization. Identified children were listed on a registry and invited to attend a screening camp where they underwent assessment by medical professionals.

**Zambia**

- **UNPRPD (2018-2020)**

<https://unprpd.org/program/zambia/>

In Zambia, the project capitalized on existing norms to protect the rights of persons with disabilities, focusing on health and well-being. Efforts included changing attitudes, building community capacity, engaging with traditional and religious leaders, and providing accessible services in selected districts in Luapula. The project served as an entry point for the UN to strengthen disability inclusion and provided lessons for scaling up approaches at provincial and district levels under the disability pillar of the UN Joint Program on Social Protection.

- **CBM**

<https://www.cbm.org/en/simple-worldwide/africa-east-and-south/>

The CBM Africa East and South (AFES) Regional Hub operates in Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa, and Zambia. The regional office in Nairobi, Kenya, supports these countries in implementing CBM's initiatives in Inclusive Eye Health, Community-Based Inclusive Development (CBID), and Inclusive Humanitarian Action. In East and Southern Africa, 95 CBID projects are currently being implemented by 53 partners.

- **Sightsavers**

<https://www.sightsavers.org/programs/zambia-inclusive-education-project/>

Zambia inclusive education project. As part of the Tusambilile Chapamo: Let's Learn Together initiative, working with the Zambia Federation of Disability Organisations (ZAFOD), the Zambian Ministry of Education, and the Chinsali Youth Resource Centre, the initiative aims to improve educational opportunities for children and young people with disabilities, from pre-school through to secondary and tertiary education, and help them transition from education to employment. It mainly focuses on empowering young women and girls who experience high levels

of discrimination and exclusion. The four-year project, which will run until January 2025, ensures teachers have the skills to support students with disabilities and encourages schools to make classrooms and other areas more inclusive. It also helps stakeholders and policy-makers to advocate for inclusive education by spreading the message about the importance of disability inclusion.

- **Able Child Africa.**

<https://ablechildafrica.org/where-we-work/zambia/>

Together with our partner, the Zambia Association of Parents for Children with Disabilities (ZAPCD) plans to conduct a national review of the availability and accessibility of Early Childhood Education (ECE) services for children with disabilities in Zambia. We will identify the common barriers children with disabilities face, what successful approaches for inclusive early childhood education in Zambia exist, and what are perceived as the most sustainable solutions for furthering inclusive early childhood education in the current context. We are looking forward to including children with disabilities themselves, parents of children with disabilities, community leaders, Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), government officials, teachers, and other education professionals in our research.

- **Liliane Fonds**

<https://www.lilianefonds.org/project/zecrep>

The Zambia Enhanced Community Based Rehabilitation Program (ZECREP) Project aims to improve the quality of life of children with disabilities in Zambia by 2030. It is run by Cheshire Homes Society of Zambia (CHSZ) through its local implementing partners, Archie Hinchcliffe Disability Intervention (AHDI) Lusaka, Twatasha Disabled and OVC Organisation in Kafue, and Holy Family Centre in Monze, with support from Liliane Foundation (LF).

- **Bethany Children Trust**

<https://www.bethanychildrenstrust.org.uk/zambia>

Wukwashi supports children with disabilities and their families – seeing dramatic changes in their conditions – and advocates for the rights of children with disabilities within churches, through denominational networks, and using local media. Wukwashi oversees sixteen support groups for children with disabilities, run by volunteers from local churches. At these support groups, children receive physiotherapy, play therapy, and (when appropriate) mobility aids, and their parents gain advice and all-important support. The Wukwashi team equips the volunteers through ongoing advice and training, ensuring that the support offered through these groups continues to be excellent.

- **Celim Educare**

[https://www.celim.it/en/progetto/edu-care\\_zmb/](https://www.celim.it/en/progetto/edu-care_zmb/)

The project targets children and young people with disabilities in the districts of Lusaka and Ndola by promoting their socio-economic inclusion. Four hundred seventy-nine (479) boys and girls will be offered inclusive and special education and recreational activities, job opportunities, and better diagnosis and treatment for autism and epilepsy. Action will be taken to make school and recreational spaces more accessible, training will be offered to teachers and doctors, and awareness will be raised among entrepreneurs and communities.

- **Anglican Alliance**

<https://anglicanalliance.org/project/lusaka-disability-project/>

Lusaka disability project - To provide wheelchairs for people with disability.

## 6 Conclusion

The intersectionality of gender and disability magnifies the vulnerabilities experienced by women and girls with disabilities, relegating them to the margins of society and impeding their access to justice and education. A concerted effort is needed to address these disparities, involving OPDs, women's organizations, and international partnerships. Adopting a multi-faceted and inclusive approach that respects cultural values and leverages local strengths is crucial. By collaborating with communities, governments, and international partners, environments conducive to the well-being and inclusion of women and girls with disabilities can be created, marked by dignity and equal opportunities.

The SPADRA project's engagement in Benin, Ghana, Malawi, and Zambia offers a pivotal opportunity to tackle these challenges head-on. Through empowering OPDs and fostering cross-disability collaborations, the project aims to catalyze change in the human rights landscape for women and girls with disabilities. Drawing on international human rights frameworks like the UNCRPD, ADP, CEDAW, and ACRWC, the SPADRA project advocates for a future where discrimination and violence against women and girls with disabilities are eradicated, and access to education, healthcare, legal, and social support is guaranteed.

In conclusion, while the obstacles are substantial, the potential for positive change is vast. Through collective advocacy, legal reform, and international collaboration, the SPADRA project and its stakeholders can significantly enhance the rights and lives of women and girls with disabilities in these countries. By building on existing successes, addressing identified challenges, and advocating for inclusive policies and practices, tangible progress can be made toward creating more inclusive and equitable societies for all. This baseline survey is crucial for guiding future interventions and fostering more inclusive environments.

## **Annexures**

**Part A: Literature Review**

**Part B: Focus Group Discussion Tools and Responses**

**Part C: Survey and Focus Group Data Analysis Reports**

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