State of the Evidence

Description of the Evidence

Children living with disabilities are much less likely to be in school. There are a variety of inclusive education programs that may be effective at increasing access to education and learning outcomes for these children, but limited rigorous research has been conducted to understand the efficacy of any specific program. Teacher training, dedicated classrooms or schools, caregiver training, and a variety of technology-based interventions may be effective (Banerjee et al. 2020). In the absence of rigorous research, descriptive data, guidance from practitioners, and examples of existing policies may provide education systems with key principles to guide the design of inclusive education programs. Below is a non-exhaustive list of resources to get started:

- The World Bank, with support from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) and the U.K. government’s Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) launched the Inclusive Education Initiative (IEI) in 2019 to support countries aiming to improve inclusive education. A number of resources on the IEI website may be relevant for education actors who are designing inclusive education programs. These include guidance notes on topics such as collecting disability prevalence data, reports with examples of inclusive education policies and programs, toolkits that outline principles for designing instruction for children with disabilities, and more.

- USAID report which discusses non-experimental research suggesting the promise of technology to support children living with disabilities as well as how technology can be incorporated into schooling to increase accessibility and ultimately foundational skills (Banes et al. 2019)

Notes on Context

Providing support for children living with disabilities may be especially difficult in contexts where living with a disability prevents children from enrolling in or attending school. These children may not be attending school, and their caregivers may or may not have the means to provide supplementary learning for them at home.
**Equity Considerations**

Programs aimed at supporting children with disabilities should also account for other factors that may further exacerbate learning challenges. For instance, it’s likely that children with disabilities who are also girls, low-income, or otherwise disadvantaged may require additional support in school. In addition, children living with disabilities may be particularly disadvantaged in the classroom in emergency or conflict-affected settings, or in settings where families are frequently relocating or migrating.

**Operationalization**

**Research Questions**

Below are open research questions on this topic. This list is not exhaustive but rather is illustrative of the types of questions that will help education actors make more evidence-based decisions to improve learning. Education actors interested in implementing programs in this category may want to consider including a randomized evaluation alongside implementation to (1) understand the impacts of the program, and (2) add to the global knowledge base.

- Can computer-based interventions or other digital learning platforms support learning for some children with disabilities?
- What are effective approaches to train teachers, school leaders, and parents about inclusive education?
- Does having dedicated classrooms or schools for children with disabilities improve learning?

**Successful Examples**

- No known examples of randomized controlled trials of inclusive education programs

**Further Action Options**

For approaches with limited evidence of effectiveness in the literature, more evidence generation is recommended to close evidence gaps. Based on the evidence for this category, potential next steps might include:

- Connecting with researchers to identify relevant open questions that would benefit from further research;
- Other activities to think through the research needs of this evidence in your context.

If you are interested in exploring these or other options, please contact the J-PAL Education team at JPAL_Education@povertyactionlab.org, to set up an initial exploratory meeting. The team will be happy to brainstorm potential next steps.