

# Inclusive Education and Equal Rights for Children with disabilities

## An Academic Perspective

By

Prof. Eddy J Walakira

[ewalakira@gmail.com](mailto:ewalakira@gmail.com)

[eddy.wakaira@mak.ac.ug](mailto:eddy.wakaira@mak.ac.ug)

Makerere University, Department of Social Work & Social Administration  
EDUCAID, Lunch Seminar Brussels 27<sup>th</sup> April 2023



Why are we  
concerned?



# High prevalence levels

---

- **Children with Disabilities (CWDs) at the global level**
- About 15% of the world population lives with some form of disability
- Nearly 240 million children in the world live with some kind of disability, with 1 in 10 of all children worldwide having special needs (UNICEF, 2022)
- Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia account for more than half of the above population

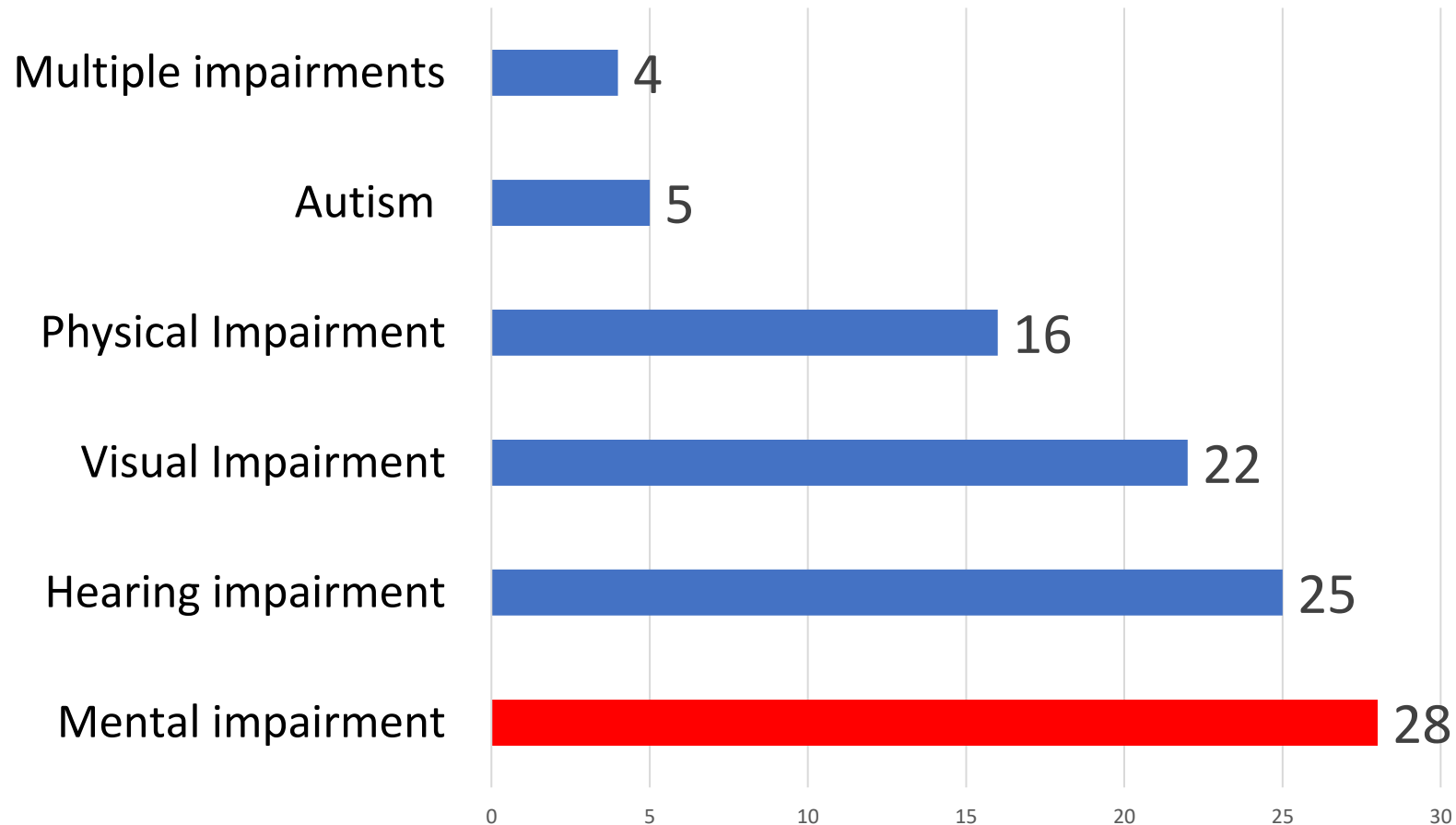
# CWDs in Uganda

---

- 45.85 million Ugandans (World Bank, 2021)
- About 12.5% (5,731,250) of persons have at least one form of disability
- Children, below 18 years (about 25m about 2m have a disability)

12.5% of adolescents (10-19 years) have a mental disorder  
(UNICEF, 2021)

# Disability Statistics for children in Uganda



Source: World Bank, 2020

# Key issues to reflect upon

---

## 1. Prevalence increases with age (UBOs, 2017)

- 17% among adults
  - 7% children 5-17 years
  - 4% 2-4 years
- Implication: Prevalence of disability can be reduced with early interventions
  - Some are born with a health condition, but others develop functional impairments due to illness, injury, poverty, poor nutrition and adverse environmental conditions

# Key issues to reflect upon...

---

2. Poverty and poor nutrition (stunting) have a potential to undermine children reaching their full developmental potential (66% Africa, 53% Asia)
3. Early childhood brain development is affected by poverty and other conditions; and a likely contributor to impaired functioning
4. Biological and environmental factors contribute to and accelerate complex disorders
5. Several neural developmental disorders often co-exist within the same child implying the complexity of care and support the child needs

# Inclusive education

---

- **Inclusive education:**
- Recognises that children with special needs have diverse needs and that they require special consideration to enable them access mainstream education
- Involves creation of an enabling environment by removing social and structural barriers undermining access to education
- The children are therefore supported to learn and achieve their potential, without discrimination and exclusion



# Why concerned?

## The children with disabilities face:

- Stigma
  - Neglect
  - Discrimination
  - Exclusion
- 
- Within family, education system and policy makers ...



# A handful are attending school

---

- 9,597 pupils enrolled in pre-primary schools and many (28%) of these had a mental impairment
- 172,864 children have special needs in primary schools
- 22.7% of these have a mental impairment  
(Ministry of Education and Sports, 2017)

# CWDs in Universal Education Programmes in Uganda

n = 19,759

**Currently in school = 15,643 (79.2%)**

**% of children in school WDs= 3.2%**

Represent 46% of the children with disabilities enrolled (if we take a disability rate of **7 percent** )

<b>Table 3.2:</b> Characteristics of school-age children		
<b>Variable</b>	<b><i>n</i> (<i>n</i> = 19,759)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	9878	50.0
Female	9881	50.0
<b>Residence/location</b>		
Rural		
Urban		
<b>Age (categories)</b>		
5-12	11268	57.0
13-17	6046	30.6
18-20	2445	12.4
<b>Proportion of children with disability</b>		
Yes	640	3.2

# An issue of rights and development

---

Right of children to education (UNCRC, Article 28)

“States Parties recognize that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community” (UNCRC, Article 23)

## **SDG Goal 4:**

“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all.”

# Uganda's efforts in promoting inclusive education

---

- The Government White Paper on Education (1992)
- The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda
  - “All persons have a right to education” (Article 34, GOU, 1995)
  - “A child is entitled to basic education which shall be the responsibility of the State and the parents of the child” (Article 34, GOU, 1995)
- The Education (Pre-primary, Primary, and Post-primary) Act 2008
  - “(g) ensure that school environment is conducive for pupils with special needs”

# Uganda's efforts in promoting inclusive education

---

- **The Persons with Disability Act (2006)**
- **Ratification of the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (2008)**
  - These instruments demand for:
    - Access, equity and quality of educational services for persons with special learning needs
- This has resulted into establishment of a **department responsible for special needs and inclusive education by the MoES**

# Department

---

Vision: Learners with special needs Accessing Quality education services equitably

Mission: To coordinate and support the provision of Special Needs & Inclusive Education

Purpose: To deliver Special Needs & Inclusive Education services in a coordinated and adequately resourced manner

# Specific objectives of department

---

- Increased enrolment, participation and completion of schooling by persons with special learning needs
- Strengthen and systematize existing initiatives/programs on SN&IE
- Enhance participation of stakeholders in the management and implementation of SN&IE programs in Uganda
- Promote sporting programs for learners with special learning needs

(Ministry of Education and Sports, 2023)

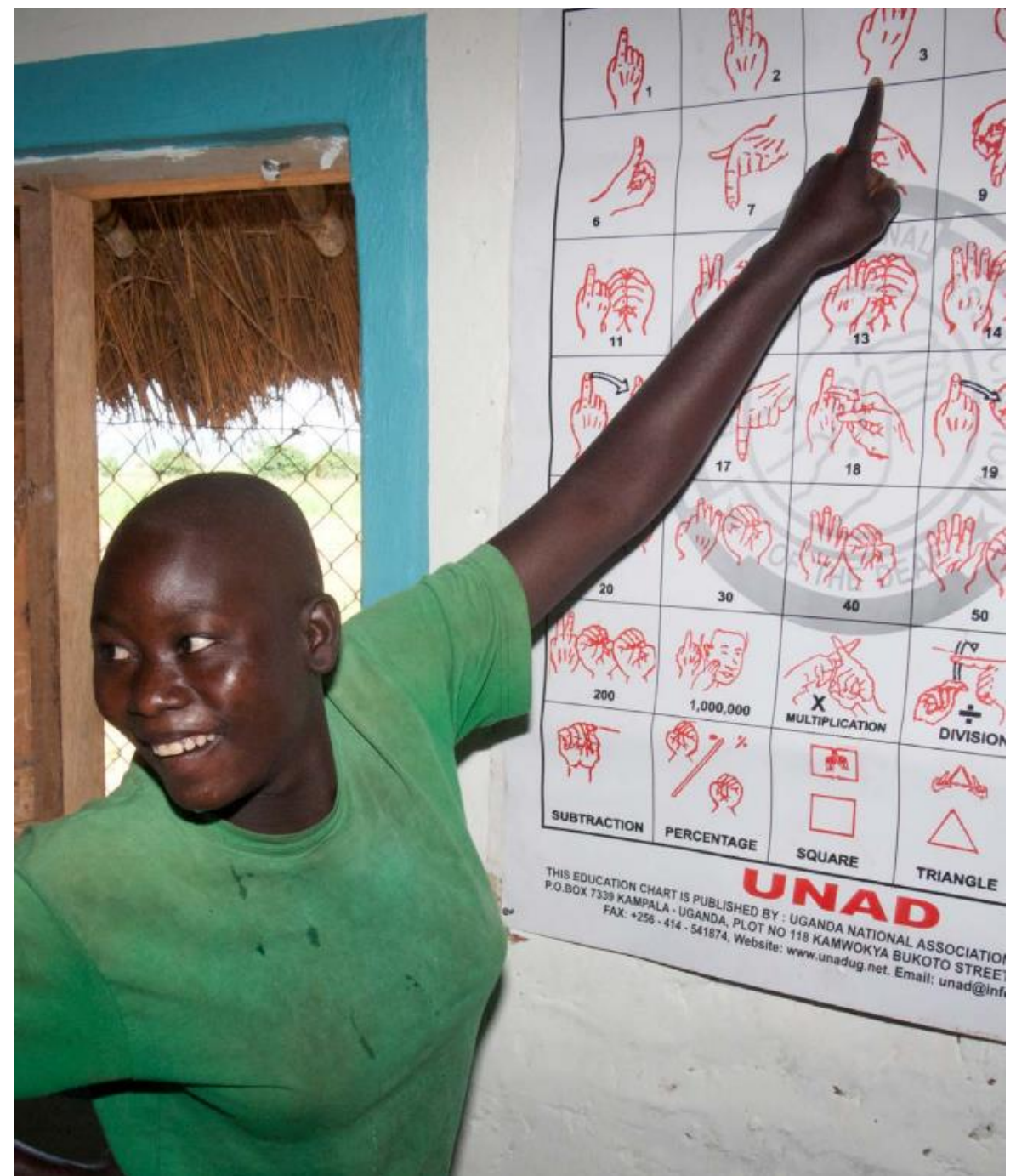


# Other existing interventions

---

- **Learning support** in schools providing special needs
- Specialised services (e.g. Sign language interpreters, Braille transcribers etc)
- Disability fund at district level

- Specialised teaching methods
- Specialised rooms



# Challenges in promoting inclusive education

---

- Uganda's National Curriculum Development Centre's (NCDC) yet to complete the development of an inclusive learning package (Save the Children, 2020)
- Lack of statistical data
- Limited qualified teachers

# Challenges in promoting inclusive education

---

- Limited schools providing specialised services
- Inadequate funding of the education sector
- Lack/ limited infrastructure for children with special needs in schools
- Lack of inclusivity for children with different types of special needs

# Unmet unique needs of CWDs in school system

---

- Many special needs children can hardly fit into the mainstream education because of the following:
- Children need one-on-one support which they are not able to get
- Many teachers are not trained to handle children with disabilities

**Assistive devices**  
are still inaccessible  
to majority of  
children who need  
them **(e.g. Braille**  
**machines, stand**  
**supports, hearing**  
**devices...**



# Unmet unique needs of CWDs in school system...

---

- The children (e.g. with cerebral palsy, ecliptic, autistic etc) need access to continuous medical care; yet medication is too expensive
- Others need facilities (diapers –e.g. children with spina bifida, urine removal equipment –catherisation, bowel wash ...) hardly available in school settings
- Private sector actors not supported

# Need for innovative models

- There is a need to innovate new models of care that do not only rely predominantly bio-medical solutions, but those that build a strong social model of care for especially children with complex disabilities



Thanks for your  
attention

