

2025 Annual Review



We are the Able Child Africa Network.

We are a coalition of African-founded and -based organisations dedicated to improving the lives of children with disabilities across the continent.

Established in 2023, the network operates under the shared vision of creating a world where no child with a disability is left behind. It brings together nine organisations of persons with disability across seven countries in East and Southern Africa.

- Our goal is to **collaborate, share expertise, and advocate collectively** for the rights and inclusion of children with disabilities.



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Welcome from the Chair of the Executive Council



Bahati Satir Omar
Network Chair

Dear friends and partners,

It is with great pride and gratitude that we welcome you to the 2024 Annual Report of the Able Child Africa Network. The first of its kind.

This past year has been a powerful testament to the strength, resilience, and innovation that defines our network. As a collective of organisations committed to advancing the rights of children with disabilities across Africa, our purpose has never been clearer: to amplify local voices, build inclusive systems, and ensure every child with a disability is valued, supported, and able to thrive.

In 2024, we made significant strides towards this vision, expanding our network, deepening our partnerships, and strengthening our shared capacity to deliver change.

- We held our second General Assembly in Kampala, Uganda in March, bringing together all Network members to share best practices, discuss challenges and build relationships.
- We successfully designed a capacity strengthening programme, equipping our members with tools and knowledge to drive localised, inclusive development.
- We conducted a consortium-based survey across East and Southern Africa highlighting human rights concerns from over 1,000 children with disabilities.
- And we facilitated peer learning and exchange visits that inspired innovation, built solidarity, and reaffirmed our shared commitment.

At the heart of this progress is our network's belief in collaboration—one that honours local leadership and prioritises child participation. The achievements outlined in this report are not just numbers or milestones; they are stories of hope, change, and possibility made real by the dedication of our members across the continent.

As we look to the future, we remain committed to building a stronger, more inclusive Africa, one where no child is left behind. Thank you for walking with us on this journey.

With appreciation and solidarity,

Bahati Satir Omar
Network Chair

Why we **exist**

Nearly 29 million children in East and Southern Africa are children with disability.

A significant proportion of these children live in poverty without access to basic services including education and health care. They are disproportionately vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse, and many children continue to spend much or all of their lives in institutions, away from their families.

Children with disabilities are:

1 Twice as likely to **never attend school.**



2 Four times more likely to experience **physical violence.**

3 Three times more likely to be **sexually assaulted.**



4 17 times more likely to be **institutionalised.**



For girls with disabilities, the situation is even worse. They are 10 times more likely to experience gender-based violence than those

without disabilities, and an estimated 70% of girls with intellectual disabilities will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday. **They are being forgotten, hidden and left behind.**

Despite the decades of work since the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention of the Right of Persons with Disabilities, many of the 29 million children living with disabilities in East and Southern Africa continue to be excluded, discounted and discriminated against.





The ongoing exclusion of children with disabilities in Africa from climate action is becoming a more urgent problem as the climate crisis intensifies.

Children with disabilities are disproportionately affected by climate risks, facing issues such as reduced mobility, increased poverty, and higher health vulnerabilities. Despite their heightened vulnerability, their unique challenges are often overlooked in climate initiatives, leaving them unprotected and their needs unaddressed.

Organisations working for children with disabilities in Africa often lack the visibility needed to influence change. Our members are therefore often excluded from key decision-making spaces, leading to the systematic exclusion of the voices of children with disabilities.

African organisations working for children with disabilities specifically also struggle to compete for funding in the already under-funded disability sector, especially compared to adult-focused Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), meaning they lack the resources to ensure no child with a disability is left behind.



Who we are

Working together to support **children with disabilities** across Africa.

The Able Child Africa Network is a coalition of African-founded and African-registered organisations dedicated to improving the lives of children with disabilities across the continent. Established in 2023, the network operates under the shared vision of creating a world where no child with a disability is left behind. It brings together nine organisations of persons with disability across seven countries in East and Southern Africa, to collaborate, share expertise, and advocate collectively for the rights and inclusion of children with disabilities.

The Network members

The Network member organisations are fully founded and run by local leaders. This grassroots structure ensures that interventions are deeply rooted in and responsive to the specific cultural, social, and economic contexts of their communities. These organisations possess an intimate understanding of the nuances of disability within their societies, enabling them to tailor solutions that are both relevant and effective. This localisation also fosters sustainability and empowers local communities to drive change from within.

The nine member organisations are:

Action Network for the Disabled (**ANDY**)
Child Support Tanzania (**CST**)
Uganda Society for Disabled Children (**USDC**)
UWEZO Youth Empowerment (**UWEZO**)
Zambia Association of Parents of Children with Disabilities (**ZAPCD**)
Parents of Disabled Children Association of Malawi (**PODCAM**)
Federation of Disabled Organisations of Malawi (**FEDOMA**)
Zimbabwe Parents of Handicapped Children Association (**ZPHCA**)
The Action Foundation (**TAF**)



Examples of our Members' work

Improving child safeguarding in Rwanda:

Uwezo Youth Empowerment (UWEZO) are creating more inclusive child protection and safeguarding systems in Rwanda.

As part of their project is funded by Euromoney Institutional Investors, they have worked closely with existing child protection services in Kigali to identify and address areas for improvement, to make them more disability inclusive.

Young people with disabilities have led this work as child protection champions and mentors. They provide mentoring to children with disabilities to inform them of their right to be kept safe. They have been delivering 'positive parenting' workshops to parents of children with disabilities to reduce the risk of abuse occurring and equipping them with the knowledge of how to report concerns when they do. This project has drawn on UWEZO's expertise to enable more disability-sensitive responses to child protection cases.

Supporting children with disabilities' access to education through an inclusive play programme:

Zambia Association of Parents for Children with Disabilities (ZAPCD) are adapting an inclusive play programme that was initially developed with Action Network for the Disabled (ANDY) for rollout Kenya. The project brought together teachers and education officials to develop the play programme and guide, aligning it with the Zambian Early Childhood Education (ECE) curriculum.

The government's District Education Board have been instrumental in both the development and delivery of teacher trainings. This has fostered maximum government support in championing the power of inclusive play. To date, almost 300 children with disabilities have benefited from the inclusive play programme. The children's teachers continue to monitor its impact, but it is clear that play has had a transformative effect, where all children play and learn in a fun and interactive way side-by-side.

Amplifying the voices of young people with disabilities in Uganda refugee settlements:

Uganda Society for Disabled Children (USDC) have finalised the implementation of a project designed to support both children and young people with disabilities living in refugee settlements in northern Uganda. The young people with disabilities reached through this project, funded by Educational Opportunity Foundation, were provided with mentorship training which has supported them to become inclusive education champions for children with disabilities in the settlements.

The mentors have helped establish Child Rights Clubs, bringing children with and without disabilities together to understand their rights and find their voices. With so little support available for children and young people with disabilities in refugee settlements, the project's activities have given them the information and confidence to demand more support, standing together to advocate for change.

What we do

The **power** of the Network



Delivering high-quality programmes,

and building best practice for children with disabilities.



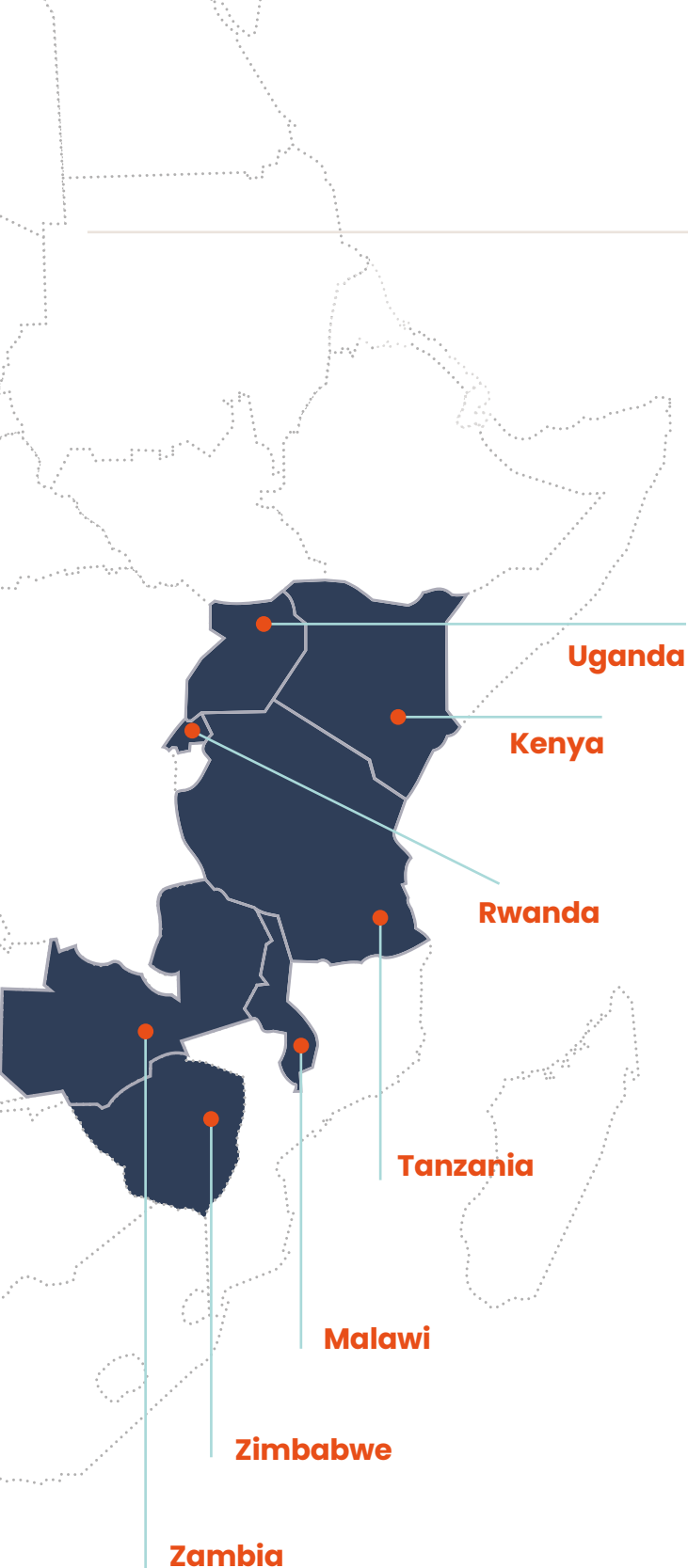
Generating data and evidence

of what works for children with disabilities in Africa.



Standing up for the rights

of children with disabilities, amplifying their voices to create change.



The Able Child Africa Network is a vital force for change on the African continent. As the only network in East and Southern Africa solely dedicated to the rights of children with disabilities, it holds a unique and crucial position. In a region where this vulnerable population's needs often go unaddressed and unheard, the network champions their rights and advocates for their inclusion.

The network operates in three main ways:

- 1 By combining resources, network members have greater capacity to **implement high-quality programmes and initiatives for children with disabilities**. This collaborative approach facilitates the sharing of technical and operational knowledge, while fostering innovation and best practices in inclusive programming. And by speaking with one voice, the network's influence is amplified, enabling it to engage more effectively with governments, donors, and international allies.
- 2 The network actively **amplifies the voices of children with disabilities**, a perspective that is often marginalised or absent in policy discussions. By creating platforms for these children to share their experiences, the network fosters a more inclusive and rights-based approach to disability advocacy. This direct engagement ensures that interventions and policies are informed by the lived realities of those they intend to serve.
- 3 The Able Child Africa Network is pioneering in its commitment to **generating data** that is specific to children with disabilities within the region. This data is crucial for understanding the prevalence, challenges, and successes related to disability, informing evidence-based advocacy, and holding stakeholders accountable. The network's commitment to this data-driven approach distinguishes it as a unique resource, providing insights that have historically been unavailable.

'We share a common vision of a world in which no child with a disability is left behind.'

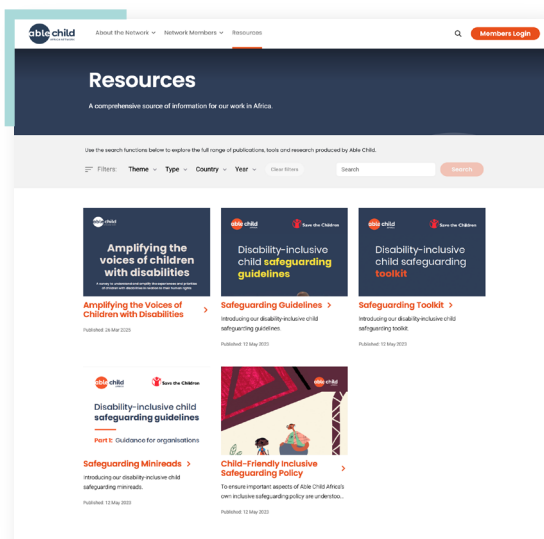
Delivering high quality programmes

At the heart of our mission is the concept of "delivering together."

This strategic objective focuses on providing high-quality, inclusive programming for children with disabilities across all the countries we operate in. We've moved beyond delivering programs in isolation, with multiple organisations now collaborating to develop, innovate, and scale impactful programs.

Our collaborations create evidence-based models that demonstrate success, which allows us to build best practices for inclusive education that can be replicated globally. By participating in joint-funded projects and consortium-based initiatives, our members amplify our collective impact.

Through these collaborations, we not only strengthen our expertise but also position ourselves as a leader in inclusive programming for children with disabilities. These coordinated efforts also allow us to engage with powerful global allies, such as donors, governments, and international organisations, advocating for systemic changes in disability inclusion policies and practices.



One of our key successes in delivering together has been our first consortium project, funded by Comic Relief. This project helped us develop a resource hub that provides programmatic tools, guides, and advocacy materials to our members and the wider sector.

We are also co-creating an Inclusive Education Toolkit. The toolkit is currently being reviewed and finalised, and will be shared with the wider sector in 2025. It will be a comprehensive, open-access resource that consolidates our collective technical expertise and methodologies into one practical guide for all.

In addition to creating these resources, we have been working on consortium-level proposals. A recent example is the development of a cross-country exchange program between Kenya, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. This collaborative effort aims to share learning and enhance early years education and inclusive education approaches.

Initiatives like this show the power of joint delivery and learning. Moving forward, this focus on collaborative programming and fundraising will continue to drive our strategy.

Generating data and evidence

A lack of data on children with disabilities has long contributed to their exclusion from aid and humanitarian programs. That's why building a strong evidence base is a core objective of our Network. This year, we're proud to have delivered our first large-scale data report.

Amplifying the voices of children with disabilities

This research provides crucial insights into the lives of children with disabilities in East and Southern Africa.

To create this groundbreaking report, we conducted a survey of over 1,000 children with disabilities across seven countries in East and Southern Africa. Our members collaboratively developed the survey to ensure it was culturally relevant and child-friendly. Data was collected through guided interviews, prioritising ethical considerations and disability inclusive child safeguarding.

The report, published earlier in 2025, has received global recognition. Here are some of the key findings from our survey:

A significant majority of children with disabilities enjoy attending school, with 92% expressing positive sentiments. However, their reasons for enjoyment and the challenges they face vary by disability type, age, and location.

The survey assessed children's understanding of their rights, revealing a strong belief in equality, yet a significant gap exists between this belief and their lived experiences. Many children report feeling unequal treatment, particularly in rural areas.

The majority of children with disabilities report feeling happy at home, largely due to love and care from family, but some experience feelings of neglect or unsafety. Variations exist based on disability type and region.

The survey highlights how adverse weather conditions affect children with disabilities, creating barriers to mobility, access to necessities, and social interactions. Children call for improved infrastructure and support during extreme weather.

A significant majority of children with disabilities remain optimistic about their future, although this optimism declines with age. While 71% believe they share the same dreams as their peers, 29% feel limited by their disabilities, with notable differences across countries and disability types.

Children with disabilities express a strong desire for social inclusion, safety, and equal access to education as key changes they wish to see in the world. Their responses highlight the importance of emotional wellbeing and support in their lives.

Children's responses reflect their aspirations for a more inclusive and supportive environment, emphasising education, societal attitudes, and basic needs. Their voices highlight the barriers they face and the changes they envision. The findings suggest targeted interventions and further research to address the unique needs of children with disabilities. Recommendations include enhancing safeguarding measures, improving educational access, and fostering community support.

The full survey is available at <https://ablechildnetwork.org/resources/amplifying-the-voices-of-children-with-disabilities/>



What's next

A new survey will be conducted in 2025/26 on climate change and disability so as to delve deeper into the effects of climate change especially among children with disabilities. This report is expected to be published later in 2025.

Standing up for the rights of children with disabilities



A united front for advocacy

We believe that our united advocacy is crucial for lasting change. There's a significant need for a strong, collective voice to amplify the voices of children with disabilities in global conversations, and our strength lies in our many voices. A united front is far stronger than individual efforts in delivering tangible benefits for children with disabilities.

Raising our profile

A major advocacy milestone was our official online launch in 2025. This high-profile event drew strong international interest in our vision. The launch introduced us to stakeholders, promoting our Network as a dedicated platform to champion the rights of children with disabilities across the region.

Our members have further boosted our profile through various platforms. Notably, our Network Manager spoke at the Africa Philanthropy Network General Assembly 2024. She explored the collective power of pan-African and feminist philanthropies in crisis response, incorporating a crucial child-led and disability perspective across East and Southern Africa.

Data underpins all our advocacy work, ensuring that **our efforts are evidence-based and effective.**



This year, we have significantly advanced our advocacy efforts, establishing ourselves in global forums and attending two key events to ensure the voices of our network members are heard at an international level.

International Development & Disability Consortium (IDDC) General Assembly 2025

Our participation in the IDDC General Assembly provided opportunities to promote the further involvement of children and young people with disabilities, while also strengthening our relationships with other organisations in the disability sector. We joined the IDDC Board last year and still co-chair the IDDC's Child Rights Task Group. This strengthens our capacity to integrate our priorities, and the priorities of our members, into international conversations.

Global Disability Summit (Berlin, Germany)

Our Network Manager attended the Global Disability Summit in April 2025. Network Members from The Action Foundation, Child Support Tanzania, and FEDOMA were also present. The group used the event to build new connections and champion global disability-inclusive development for children with disabilities. The summit was also the platform for the launch of our groundbreaking report, 'Amplifying the Voices of Children with Disabilities', which was published earlier in 2025.

Able Child Africa's international advocacy team is a crucial partner in championing our voice on the global stage. They ensure that we, as Network members, and the children with disabilities we serve, are the ones leading our advocacy efforts. Their priority is to create space for our representatives, and they never speak on our behalf unless absolutely essential. This empowering support helps us leverage our collective knowledge and drive impactful, locally-led change, fostering a strong African civil society.

Working with Able Child Africa, we have driven meaningful change for children with disabilities at both national and global levels. They support us in challenging the barriers to participation and equipping us to become global leaders. They work to support us in 3 different ways:

- Publishing and sharing resources, knowledge, and expertise to strengthen the wider sector's capacity to include children with disabilities (as outlined on pages 16 and 17).
- Securing a platform for the Network's voice to be heard internationally through participation in global forums and partnerships.
- Supporting members to advocate locally by providing resources and data.



We have also been actively participating in other global campaigns and joint publications:

Global Charter for Family-based Care

Child Support Tanzania's CEO represented us at the Charter's launch during the Global Disability Summit. We ensure children with disabilities are central to this campaign, with their voices heard in consultations and the Charter's development, advocating for an end to institutionalisation.

Fairer Funding campaign

Our visibility has been elevated through our participation in the Fairer Funding campaign. Our Network Manager played a pivotal role, advocating for more inclusive and equitable funding models. We now serve as a benchmark for other funders committed to supporting locally led, disability-focused initiatives.

Contributing to climate evidence

Our members, ANDY and ZPHCA, contributed to the "Unequal Climate Justice for People with Disabilities" report, a joint initiative by BOND and IDDC. This publication draws on global data, highlighting the disproportionate impact of climate change on people with disabilities. Our members provided crucial evidence on how climate change specifically affects children with disabilities.

Our members have been instrumental in driving meaningful change at the local level. Through projects delivered together, we have secured significant commitments from governments and other stakeholders to support the inclusion and wellbeing of children with disabilities. This impact is detailed with the other main activities on the following country pages

Blessing — a 5-year-old
with **Big Dreams**



Blessing's story

At just five years old,
Blessing is the youngest
of four siblings.

➤ He was diagnosed with left hemiparalysis and hydrocephalus — conditions that limit his movement and make everyday activities like walking, eating, and dressing a daily struggle. Added to this, Blessing also experiences low blood sugar, making regular and nutritious meals essential for his wellbeing.

Caring for Blessing was overwhelming for his mother, who didn't know where to turn to for help. Like many parents in similar situations, she was unaware of the rights her son was entitled to — or of the opportunities that could support his development.

**That all changed when
Able Child Africa Network
member ZAPCD, stepped in.**

Through ZAPCD's inclusive Early Childhood Education (IECE) project, Blessing's parents discovered not just a programme — but a lifeline. **They learned how IECE could help Blessing develop critical life skills through play, connection, and support.** The project didn't just help Blessing — **it also supported his family.** With new income-generating opportunities, they could afford the essentials Blessing needs for proper care.

And the difference has been remarkable.

Blessing is now attending school, making friends, and thriving in an environment designed to support his needs. Thanks to transport reimbursements and other forms of assistance, his family is feeling the support they once thought was out of reach.

"So far, so good!" his mother shares.

This is the power of inclusive education — and the strength of a community that cares.

"The project has contributed to the wellbeing of the family, and it has imparted great knowledge on us. Many things that we used to not know, such as the rights of children with disabilities has now changed. We want Blessing to achieve his education and as parents we will now advocate for his rights and the rights of other children with disabilities."

- Blessing's parents



Uganda

Uganda Society for Disabled Children (USDC) have been working in Uganda since 1984 supporting children with disabilities and their families to break down the barriers to inclusion.

Many people living with disabilities in Uganda lack resources and access to services. Where we work in northern Uganda, 80% of people with disabilities have been identified as **living in chronic poverty**. Despite significant progress at a policy level in Uganda, there is an implementation gap. With a policy of Universal Primary Education, school enrolment has reached 90%. However, this is not the case for children with disabilities, where **only 2% are graduating to secondary level**.

What USDC have achieved this year

Through funding from the Mercers Company, USDC undertook a transformative project in northern Uganda, to significantly improve access to inclusive education for children with disabilities. Using a range of interventions, this initiative empowered local communities and schools to create more accessible and supportive learning environments for their children. The result has been increased enrolment and better educational outcomes for children who previously had faced significant barriers, fostering a more inclusive educational landscape in the region.

USDC are also proud to be pioneering the creation of an innovative digital toolkit for Early Childhood Development (ECD) in Uganda through funding from the Lewin Trust. This initiative is empowering educators and caregivers with accessible, technology-driven resources, significantly enhancing early learning experiences. The successful implementation of this digital solution marks a crucial step towards improving ECD outcomes across Uganda, demonstrating the power of digital innovations in education.



Advocacy

Uganda Society for Disabled Children (USDC) has played a pivotal role in promoting the mainstreaming of a combined assessment and individualised learning plan tool nationally. Responding directly to government requests, USDC have begun creating a digitalised version of this tool, engaging with officials in its design and will continue to demonstrate its effectiveness to support the integration of tool into national education strategies.



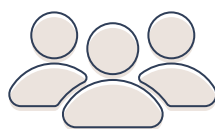
Examples of USDC's success

60 children with disabilities

living in refugee camps were supported, as part of a groundbreaking project in northern Uganda.

400 community members

were engaged on disability inclusion, early identification and early intervention for children with disabilities.



Achol's journey to the front of the class



Achol, a bright 10-year-old with a hearing impairment, initially struggled profoundly in her refugee settlement school. Despite her love for learning, the absence of teachers able to use basic sign language left her feeling isolated and unable to understand lessons. This led to Achol frequently missing school. Even after transferring to one of the project primary schools, communication barriers caused her peers to distance themselves, further deepening her withdrawal.

The turning point arrived when her mother connected with a teacher who had been trained by our programme at the school, funded by Educational Opportunity Foundation. This teacher was able to provide crucial support, placing Achol at the front of the class to aid visual learning. Slowly, her participation and confidence grew, particularly in her favourite subject, science.

The other introduction of child play days proved transformative, fostering connections and leading to a strong bond with a new friend. This buddy not only helped with classwork but also ensured consistent school attendance, with Achol now eagerly arriving first each morning. While challenges with peer understanding persist, teacher mentors continue to provide counselling, fostering a truly inclusive and supportive environment where Achol is no longer alone.

This teacher was able to provide crucial support, placing Achol at the front of the class to aid visual learning. Slowly, **her participation and confidence grew**, particularly in her favourite subject, science.

Kenya

Action Network for the Disabled (ANDY) and **The Action Foundation** (TAF) are working in Kenya to support children and young people with disabilities to be included in all aspects of their lives.

Very few children with disabilities have access to early childhood education in Kenya, and their systematic exclusion often means that young people with disabilities are less likely to be employed and are more likely to be living in poverty. With limited access to education, healthcare and other services, these young people continue to face injustices, stigma and are at higher risk of abuse and violence.

What ANDY and TAF have achieved this year

ANDY are in the first year of implementing a two-year programme, funded by the EA Foundation, which has already yielded remarkable success. Through this project, parents and caregivers receive vital entrepreneurship training, empowering them to generate income to better support their families. This training was complemented by crucial mental health support, increasing caregiver confidence in fostering the development of their children with disabilities.

Importantly, the project also facilitated comprehensive training for practitioners across other health and educational sectors, enhancing their capacity to effectively collaborate with parents of children with disabilities. These holistic interventions have demonstrably strengthened families, improved child development outcomes, and fostered a more inclusive support system.



Advocacy

Action Network for the Disabled (ANDY) has made strides in influencing the climate action space. Through their inclusive climate change and adaptation project, ANDY was actively involved in the World Environment Day, facilitating tree planting while highlighting the impact that climate change has on children with disabilities to relevant government officials. **The Action Foundation** (TAF) joined over 200 stakeholders at the Global Disability Mini-Summit in Kenya, which provided a platform to assess progress, reaffirm commitments and chart a path forward for disability inclusion across Africa.



Dunstan – A father's journey of caregiving

In a society where caregiving is predominantly viewed as a woman's responsibility, **Dunstan**, a person with a disability, stands as a powerful testament to breaking gender norms. Raising three children, including one who has cerebral palsy, Dunstan has courageously embraced his role as a primary caregiver, at the same time managing a small barbershop to provide for his family. His journey highlights the immense societal pressure and stigma male caregivers often face. **Yet with unwavering dedication, he has taken full responsibility for his children's wellbeing.**

Dunstan was identified and enrolled onto ANDY's entrepreneurship training programme, which proved to be a pivotal intervention in his life. Through the project, Dunstan was able to enhance his understanding of business management, which was crucial for expanding his small business. But beyond that, the programme connected him with other caregivers, where he was able to develop a sense of community. The training environment empowered Dunstan to gain confidence in challenging the entrenched gender norms in his community, allowing him to fully embrace his caregiving role with pride.

Looking ahead, Dunstan's aspirations are clear. He aims to expand his barbershop, securing a more stable financial future for his family, while continuing to provide dedicated care for his children. He hopes to inspire other men to actively participate in caregiving, demonstrating that with the right support and encouragement, men can confidently balance family responsibilities with building sustainable livelihoods.

The training environment empowered Dunstan to gain confidence in challenging the entrenched gender norms in his community, allowing him to fully embrace his caregiving role with pride.

Examples of ANDY & TAF's success

344 parents and caregivers

were equipped to support the early childhood development of their children with disabilities.

218 young people with disabilities

were given entrepreneurship and vocational skills training.



Tanzania

Child Support Tanzania

(CST) are working in Tanzania to change the lives of children and young people with disabilities through inclusive education.

85% of children with disabilities in Tanzania are outside the education system, with increasing numbers of children dropping out of school due to a lack of support, which is severely lacking and poorly resourced. Although primary education is free in Tanzania, children with disabilities are continually left behind when it comes to accessing the school system and fail to develop the basic early learning skills needed to succeed.

What CST have achieved this year

CST have achieved remarkable success in enhancing access to inclusive education for children with disabilities in their own inclusive Early Childhood Education centre. With funding from Rangoonwala Foundation, CST have adopted a comprehensive programme that integrates vital occupational therapy and physiotherapy services. Through strategic partnerships with Educational Support Resource Assessment Centre experts and medical professionals, CST conducted medical assessments for children with disabilities, determining their rehabilitative and health needs.

While some received medical services such as speech, occupational, and physical therapy, others underwent functional assessments for appropriate educational placement and support. This holistic approach ensured tailored intervention to each child, significantly improving the health outcomes and educational integration for these vulnerable children.



Advocacy

Child Support Tanzania (CST) was represented by the Executive Director, Noelah Msuya, at the Global Disability Summit in Berlin, Germany. Noelah spoke on a panel to highlight the need for children with disabilities' participation and voices in the Care Reform Campaign. Drawing on CST's expertise in Tanzania and speaking on a global stage provided an incredible opportunity to achieve greater impact for children with disabilities.



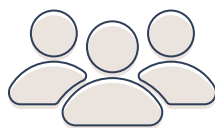
Examples of CST's success

191 children with disabilities

were supported through access to quality physiotherapy and other rehabilitative services.

105 parents of children with disabilities

were supported through Parent Support Groups and physiotherapy training.



Jessica – A mother's unwavering dedication

Solomon navigates life with multiple disabilities, including physical and intellectual challenges, and low vision. Yet, despite the stigma surrounding her son's disability and immense financial pressures of her mobile hairdressing work and, his mother **Jessica's** commitment to her children remains steadfast, displaying remarkable resilience in raising her son.

Solomon arrived at CST's inclusive school three years ago and has thrived. This is testament to the dedicated support from teachers and the entire CST team.

Driven by her gratitude and a deep desire for Solomon to continue receiving his education and support services, **Jessica volunteers her time at CST's Inclusive School.** Since August 2024, she has embraced her role with the seriousness of a paid job, assisting with cleaning, kitchen support, and ensuring the children's wellbeing and feeding during school hours. This self-initiated contribution **allows her to offset school expenses, a common challenge for many parents from low-income families, and ensures Solomon's consistent access to vital physiotherapy and education.**

Jessica's unwavering dedication is a shining example of the project's profound impact, transforming parental perception and fostering community engagement. **Her commitment not only directly benefits Solomon but also inspires other parents to volunteer, creating a collaborative environment where every child can flourish.** Jessica's story is a powerful reflection of how parents, with the right support, can challenge norms and significantly enhance the quality of life and access to rehabilitative services for children with disabilities.

Jessica's unwavering dedication is a shining example of the project's profound impact, transforming parental perception and fostering community engagement.

Rwanda

Uwezo Youth Empowerment

(UWEZO) have been working in Rwanda since 2014 empowering children and young people with disabilities to access inclusive services.

Children and young people account for half of all people with disabilities in Rwanda. Two thirds of these are not in education or employment, and over 90% fall below the national poverty line. While Rwanda has a good track record of inclusive policies, many children with disabilities are still unable to access basic services and face damaging stigma and discrimination.

What UWEZO have achieved this year

UWEZO are delivering a project funded by Sir Halley Stewart Trust to enhance children with disabilities' access to vital mental health support. Addressing the critical lack of provision for children with disabilities, who are highly vulnerable to mental health issues, the project has established crucial support systems for the children supported by this project. This vital intervention is now improving the psychosocial and wellbeing outcomes for the children, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment where their mental health needs are being addressed for the first time.

UWEZO are also implementing a project funded by Euromoney, which is successfully enhancing access to crucial child rights and protection services for children with disabilities. Addressing a critical gap, the initiative has empowered these vulnerable children to understand and claim their rights, while also strengthening child protection mechanisms. This targeted support is creating safer environments and ensuring that children with disabilities can access the essential services needed to protect their wellbeing and secure their fundamental rights.



Advocacy

Uwezo Youth Empowerment (UWEZO) have engaged with government officials to create lasting change. For example, they have delivered trainings with officials and collaborated to identify gaps in child protection systems and services, so that they can be improved. Government officials now have a better understanding of how to address the needs of children and young people with disabilities in accessing child protection services, and why this work is so important.



Examples of UWEZO's success

85 children with disabilities

were provided with
one-to-one mentoring
from a young person
with a disability.

68 parents of children with disabilities

were trained on positive
parenting and child
protection.



Mwiza – a story of resilience and inclusion

Mwiza, a 15-year-old girl with a physical impairment, faced considerable adversity in her early life. Frequent health issues kept her in and out of the hospital, delaying her recovery and causing her to regularly miss school. Starting primary school at age 11 meant that she was significantly older than her peers, most of whom were six years old. By her third year, this age gap led to feelings of inadequacy and isolation, causing her to withdraw from her classmates.

A pivotal moment arrived when **she joined one of UWEZO's wellbeing clubs as part of a funded project**. Mwiza quickly became an enthusiastic participant, often the first to arrive and actively recruiting other students to join. This engagement provided a **much-needed sense of belonging and significantly boosted her self-esteem, motivating her to interact more openly with her classmates**. Her newfound confidence translated into academic success. She continued to excel in her studies, earning recognition from teachers as one of the school's best students.

Mwiza's involvement in the wellbeing club ignited a clear vision for her future.

"I want to become a health worker when I grow up so that I get to teach people about inclusion... I know my mother will be proud of me,"

Mwiza's journey is a powerful example of the project's ability to transform the lives of children with disabilities, fostering not only academic achievement but also social integration, self-confidence, and the development of future aspirations where she can have a positive impact on her community.

Malawi

The Federation of Disability Organisations in Malawi

(FEDOMA) and **Parents of**

Disabled Children

Association of Malawi

(PODCAM) are working in Malawi to improve children with disabilities' access to Early Childhood Education.

Children under 18 account for more than 50% of the total population in Malawi. Malawi has one of the highest pre-term birth rates globally, resulting in many children being born with a disability. 70% of children with disabilities are not in any form of education and their needs have not been prioritised.

What FEDOMA and PODCAM have achieved this year

PODCAM are delivering a project funded by the Allan and Nesta Ferguson Trust promoting Early Childhood Development services for children with disabilities by upskilling teachers in learning centres and making the learning centres themselves more inclusive through specific modifications.

PODCAM also in the final phase of implementation of their first project funded by the Vitol Foundation. The project has been instrumental in supporting more children to access inclusive Early Childhood Development (ECD). Fostering shared learning among Network members, FEDOMA has worked closely with PODCAM to build their capacity to implement the project, sharing their expertise of an inclusive play programme for younger children. Through this collaborative approach, we are fostering knowledge exchange between Network members and promoting best practices.



Advocacy

Federation of Disability Organisations in Malawi (FEDOMA) and **Parents of Disabled Children Association of Malawi** (PODCAM) supported children and youth with disabilities to advocate for their inclusion and involvement in climate planning and decision making. The group met with government officials to discuss the impact of climate change on person with disabilities, and continue to engage closely to ensure the voices of children with disabilities are heard.



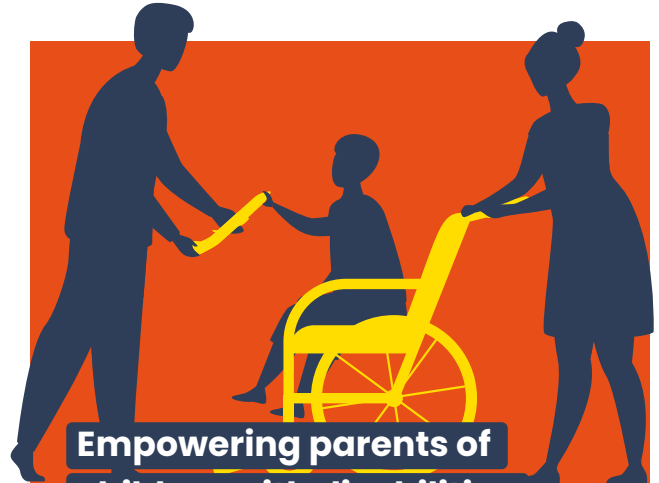
Examples of FEDOMA and PODCAM's success

254 parents of children with disabilities

were enrolled into inclusive
Parent Support Groups.

48 teachers

were trained on disability
inclusive practices.



Empowering parents of children with disabilities

For **Maria**, a mother of two children, one of whom has severe disabilities, life often felt isolating and financially strained. Like many parents of children with disabilities, she grappled with limited resources and the immense demands of caregiving, often feeling overlooked by community support systems. The prospect of improving her household income and securing her children's future seemed distant.

Once enrolled in the project run with PODCAM, Maria experienced a profound shift. **She received seed capital, a vital injection of funds to boost her small business, which offered a tangible pathway to improving her family's financial stability.** The implementation of a home-based care approach in the project resonated deeply with her: "We no longer feel side-lined," Maria shared, highlighting how this tailored support has made her feel seen and valued. It has also **ensured her child received the support she needs to reach her educational milestones.**

The project's commitment to inclusive play has not gone unnoticed. When play materials were distributed to centres, Maria's child along with other children with disabilities, were fully included in the inclusive play programme. This reinforced the project's dedication to leaving no child behind, empowering parents like Maria to feel truly supported and integrated within their community.



"We no longer feel side-lined," Maria shared, highlighting how this tailored support has made her feel seen and valued.

Zambia

Zambia Association of Parents for Children with Disabilities (ZAPCD)

are working in Zambia to understand and address the barriers that children with disabilities face when accessing education.

Despite primary and secondary education being free in Zambia, only 63% percent of all children transition from primary to secondary school and learning outcomes are generally poor. For children with disabilities, the number completing secondary education is estimated to be as low as 12%. With as few as 22% accessing Early Childhood Education, there is a great need for children with disabilities to be fully considered in government plans, with national data and evidence desperately needed to inform and influence the government.

What ZAPCD have achieved this year

This year ZAPCD is proud to have supported children with disabilities to access Early Childhood Education (ECE) for the first time, tackling the complex barriers they face. The delivered projects have had a significant impact on the lives of the children in the project, increasing access to essential services, including education, healthcare, and rehabilitative support.

Through a variety of projects and funders, ZAPCD has successfully delivered teacher trainings, created Parent Support Groups, and improved community awareness raising. Through these valuable partnerships, they have delivered targeted interventions such as community-based rehabilitation, parent empowerment initiatives, and advocacy campaigns with government officials, ensuring that children with disabilities in the communities where they work receive the appropriate care and opportunities for development.



This collaborative approach is proving instrumental in fostering greater inclusion, reducing stigma, and ultimately improving the overall wellbeing and future prospects of these vulnerable children and their families across Zambia.



Advocacy

Zambia Association of Parents for Children with Disabilities (ZAPCD) invited government officials to visit the site of one of our project's schools to demonstrate what an accessible structure should look like, and the importance of accessible schools for children with disabilities. A 'hand over' ceremony also took place, with over 300 present, including the Chief and District Commissioner, where all six of the modified schools were presented back to the Ministry of Education.



Examples of ZAPCD's success

286 children
with disabilities

were enrolled into
inclusive Early
Childhood Education

**6 Early
Childhood
Education
Centres**

received accessibility
modifications to make
them safer and more
inclusive for children
with disabilities.



David's journey to school

For years, **David's** daily journey to school was an immense challenge for his mother, Maria. Maria recounted the arduous task of physically carrying David to and from the inclusive Early Childhood Education (ECE) centre each day, a testament to her dedication but also a stark reminder of the mobility barriers David faced. This constant struggle not only impacted David's ability to attend classes regularly but also placed a significant physical and emotional burden on his mother.

The project's intervention brought a profound sense of relief and hope. **Maria expressed heartfelt gratitude for the provision of a wheelchair for David.** "It has been such a challenge to take him to school, always carrying him," she shared. "Now that my child has been given a wheelchair, it will really ease his mobility so he can attend classes regularly." This simple yet life-changing mobility aid has **transformed David's access to education, granting him newfound independence and ensuring consistent participation in his classes.** It clearly illustrates how targeted support can dismantle barriers and unlock a child's potential.



"It has been such a challenge to take him to school, always carrying him," she shared. "Now that my child has been given a wheelchair, it will really ease his mobility so he can attend classes regularly."

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe Parents of Handicapped Children Association (ZPHCA), are

championing the rights and inclusion of children with disabilities in Zimbabwe.

As with many countries globally, reliable data that captures the prevalence of disability is scarce in Zimbabwe. Despite launching a national disability policy in 2021, there are several issues with its implementation and children with disabilities are among the most marginalised and under-represented. Due to facing several barriers alongside stigma and discrimination, they are routinely excluded from mainstream health, education and other services.

What ZPHCA have achieved this year

This year, we welcomed ZPHCA as the newest member of the Able Child Africa Network. To celebrate, our Network Manager visited ZPHCA's office in Harare, Zimbabwe for the first time. This presented a fantastic opportunity to meet the team, collect imagery and stories of children with disabilities that have been supported by ZPHCA, and develop some exciting new project ideas together.

ZPHCA is currently developing two innovative projects, which they are actively seeking funding for. The first is a project focused on tackling the acute challenges children with disabilities and their families are experiencing as a result of climate change. The other would see the creation of a community information hub and vocational skills centre, where ZPHCA would also base their offices to enable them to provide vital support and services to enhance the lives of children and young people with disabilities, and their families.



Advocacy

Zimbabwe Parents of Handicapped Children Association (ZPHCA) has been involved in the National Disability Expo, raising awareness on prominent issues affecting children with disabilities in Zimbabwe and building stronger networks within the sector to enhance collaboration.



Shining a light on ZPHCA's work

Arthur is nine years old and has a condition that causes him to have brittle bones. Having broken his legs multiple times and without access to good healthcare, Arthur experiences difficulties walking. His mother struggled to get the help she needed for Arthur, and she wasn't aware of any support mechanisms to guide her. Despite this, Arthur's mother was steadfast in her determination for Arthur to get an education. She learnt of a local support group for parents of children with disabilities, which had been established by ZPHCA, and she hasn't looked back.

Through the support of this group, she began to better understand Arthur's rights, including his right to an education. Since Arthur does not have a wheelchair, she committed to carrying Arthur to school each day and waits there until he finishes so that she can take him home. His mother struggled to earn an income as a result, which caused huge strain on the family. **Yet thanks to the support group, which has an established savings and loan scheme, this has provided welcome financial support, providing the family with greater reassurance.**

While ZPHCA, together with other members of the support group, are working hard to secure a wheelchair for Arthur, his mother's dedication alongside his own self-determination **has resulted in a drastic improvement in his happiness and development.** Arthur has a special talent and enjoys making toys on wheels, which are made using thick pieces of wire. He has made lots of new friends this way and even makes a small income from his endeavours. Arthur's parents are extremely proud of him and remain dedicated to securing a bright future for their son.

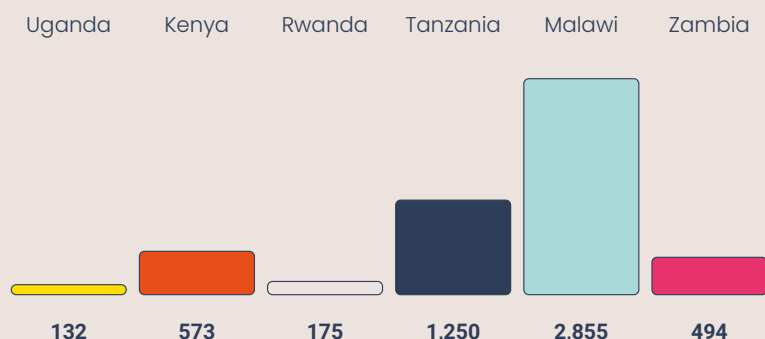
Arthur has a special talent and enjoys making toys on wheels, which are made using thick pieces of wire.

Our impact

In 2024/25, our Network members have been delivering projects across **seven countries in Africa** to improve the lives of children and young people with disabilities, so they are able to thrive.

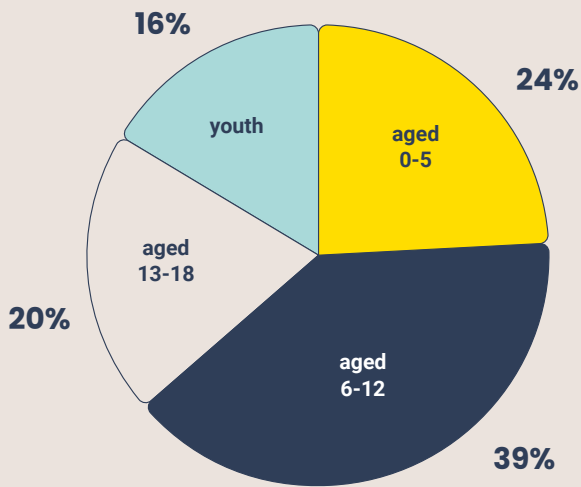
Children and young people with disabilities directly supported

Total **5,479**

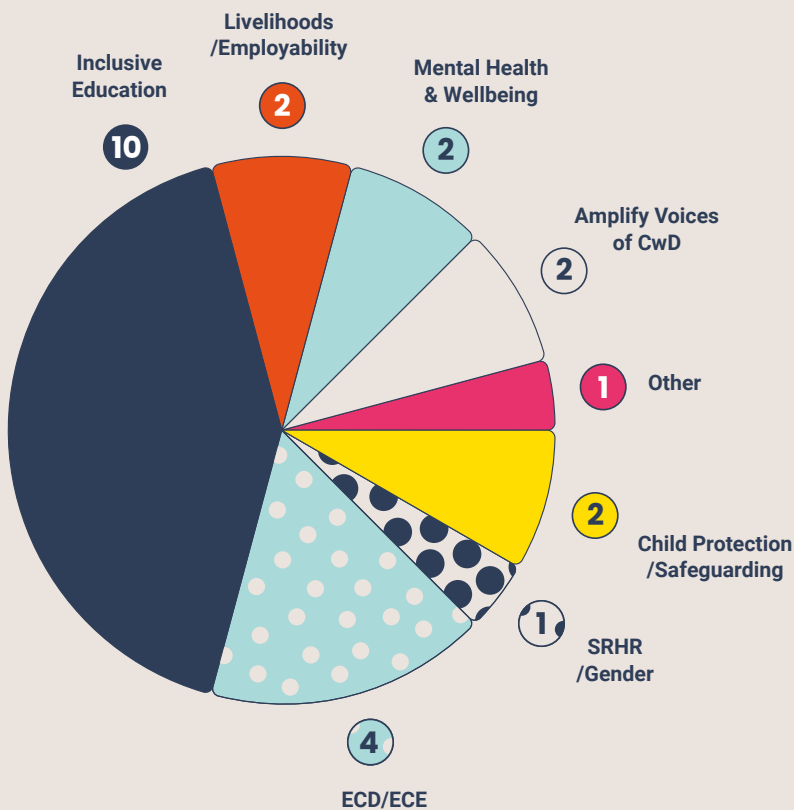


Our Network members directly supported children and young people with disabilities by implementing early identification tools, enrolling out-of-school children into schools, making school environments more accessible, establishing peer-to-peer mentorship schemes and supporting young people with disabilities to access employment.





This year, two-thirds of **our Network's work** **focused on supporting children aged 0-12**. This emphasis on early childhood development sets us apart, making us unique in our focus on this crucial age group within the disability sector.



While Inclusive Education is a primary focus, **Network members are actively working to expand their efforts in SRHR, Mental Health, and amplifying the voices of children with disabilities**. We expect these numbers to become more balanced over time.

Protect

No. of social workers engaged

259



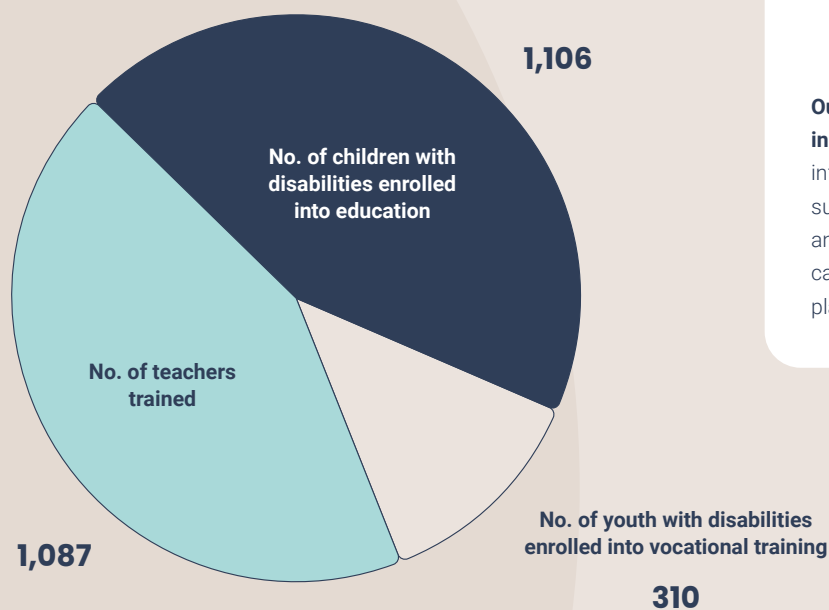
No. of parents reached

4,122



With two flagship programs on inclusive child safeguarding and one on SRHR, **the Network is a leading voice in disability-inclusive child protection**. Across our members, we are building a strong body of evidence and best practices to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children with disabilities

Educate



Our Network members trained teachers in inclusive teaching methods, providing information and tools to help teachers support all children in the classroom, and ensuring children with disabilities can participate effectively in lessons and play activities alongside their peers.

Amplify

No. of awareness
raising events held

76



No. of community
members reached

27,367



Our Network members engaged 574 government officials across seven countries, influencing policy change at local, regional, and national levels. Our members collaborate with government officials to advocate for disability inclusion in the development and implementation of public policies and programs, using their own work to provide evidence of effective methods to achieve this.



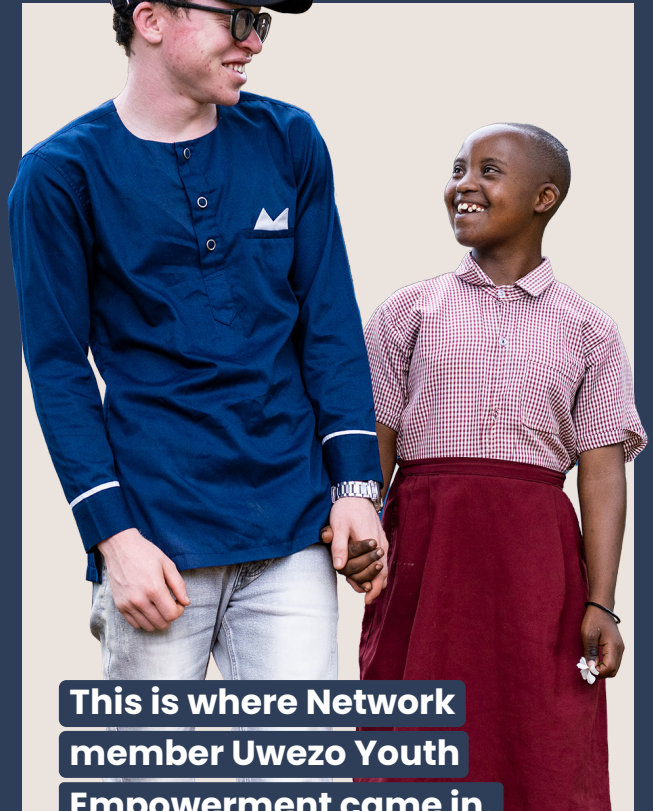
Meet 15-year-old
Naomi – **gaining
confidence** everyday

Naomi's story

Naomi is 15 years old and lives in Rwanda. **She has Down Syndrome**, which is a genetic condition that can affect the way the brain and body develop.

➤ When she was younger, Naomi would often face stigma and discrimination due to her disability. She didn't understand why she was treated differently to other children, and this made her dread going to school. Naomi's confidence was low, and she was in danger of becoming isolated, and drifting further away from her peer group.

Children with disabilities, like Naomi are at an elevated risk of mental health issues and psychosocial disabilities due to the high levels of stigma and exclusion they experience. Despite this, there is very little mental health provision for children and young people with disabilities in the countries where we work.



Uwezo Youth Empowerment, began supporting child protection and mental health systems to be more sensitive to the needs of children with disabilities, particularly girls.

We started working with parents of children with disabilities through 'positive parenting' workshops to ensure they are better supported to prevent abuse. And we began training young people with disabilities to mentor children with disabilities to inform them of their rights and to better support their mental health.

Through the mentorship programme, **Naomi was given support and companionship from a young person with a disability who she could relate to**, someone who empathised with her in a more meaningful way. Her mentor had not only been in her position before but had also received support as a mentee when they were younger.

This relationship provided a platform for Naomi to share her experiences and receive advice from someone who had walked the same steps before. Now several years into the programme, **Naomi has grown in confidence, is better equipped to understand her potential and now, is beginning to thrive.**

Where We Are on Our Journey

As we reflect on the journey of the **Able Child Africa Network**, it is inspiring to see how far we have come in such a short time.

From a bold vision to a dynamic regional collaboration, the Network has taken off this year, positioning itself as a leading voice for children with disabilities across East and Southern Africa. Over the past year, the Network has grown in strength, visibility, and collective impact. A key highlight brings the launch of our region-wide survey, engaging over 1,000 children with disabilities to understand how their lives are impacted and what support they need. This evidence-based approach is building a strong foundation for future advocacy and policy engagement.

Our advocacy efforts are also growing, with a major campaign planned for the coming year. We'll be launching a climate survey with children with disabilities to amplify their voices and ensure they are heard in climate conversations. This campaign will align with the theme for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPWD), "Amplifying the leadership of persons with disabilities for an inclusive and sustainable future." This makes climate change a strong focus for the Network in the year ahead.

In line with our commitment to learning and accountability, we have initiated the collection of annual impact data from all member organisations. This is the beginning of a journey to better measure



the Network's achievements and the difference we are making in the lives of children with disabilities across the region. We're committed to supporting our members through this process, and we look forward to improving our data collection and analysis in the years to come.

A major step forward this year has been the development of the Network Knowledge Hub. This platform is a central space where members can share resources, tools, and experiences. In the coming year, we will be focusing on populating the hub with valuable content, encouraging peer-to-peer learning, and using it as a springboard for member-led "Training of Trainers" initiatives.

This hub will also be a key resource for the wider community, enabling others to draw on the Network's learnings and data to improve the lives of children with disabilities. Additionally, we will produce a series of impactful position papers on critical topics such as Psychosocial Disabilities among children with disabilities, Climate Change and Disability, and Inclusive Play and Recreation.

The coming year will also see increased opportunities for regional and global representation, giving our members a platform to share their work and learn from others engaged in disability inclusion around the world.

The Able Child Africa Network is moving with purpose and unity, guided by the voices of children with disabilities and powered by the commitment of its members. Our strategic direction is bold yet grounded ensuring that we continue to advocate, influence, and grow together as a collective force for change.

Our thanks

As we reflect on another year of growth and progress, we extend our deepest gratitude to all those who have stood alongside the Able Child Africa Network. This journey would not have been possible without the unwavering support, dedication, and belief in our vision from each of you.

To our partners and donors—thank you for your steadfast commitment to our mission. Your continued support has not only sustained our work but has propelled us forward, enabling us to expand our impact and strengthen our collective voice for children with disabilities across Africa.

To the members of our network—your tireless efforts, resilience, and unwavering dedication have been the backbone of our success. Through your collaboration, innovation, and shared determination, the network has not only endured but has evolved into a strong, independent entity, ready to meet the challenges ahead.

We offer special thanks to those supporters who have relentlessly championed our visibility within the donor community and among global disability stakeholders. Your advocacy has ensured that the network remains not just active, but influential, playing a pivotal role in shaping inclusive agendas and securing the rights of children with disabilities.

Together, we are building a more inclusive world—one where every child has the opportunity to thrive. So, thank you for being an essential part of this journey.





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