

# Disability Inclusion in Higher Education Institutions in Africa

Best Practices



Scholars  
Program



**LIGHT**  
FOR THE WORLD

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# INTRODUCTION

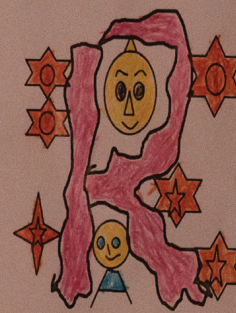
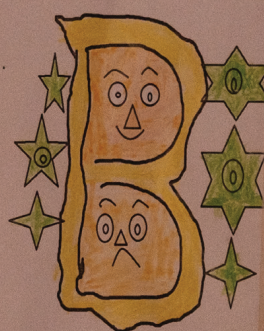


## **Disability Inclusion in the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program**

The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program is currently in an expansion phase, targeting the enrolment of an additional 15,000 tertiary level scholars, with a focus on women, displaced youth, and young people with disabilities. This phase also includes a focus on successful transition to the world of work, as well as fostering the development of transformational leadership skills in the “scholars”.

The Scholars Program in this phase will recruit, educate, prepare and transition 1,500 young people with disabilities in Africa by 2030. Although disability inclusion is relatively new to the Foundation, the Scholars Program team and most of its partners, there is a motivated and capable team in place that is committed to ensure that scholars with disabilities can participate fully; are economically self-reliant post-scholarship; and become change-makers and role models in their communities and beyond.

This asks for creative changes in the Scholars Program, backed with supportive resources and tools, and knowledge and skills within the team to be able to guide partners on the road to inclusion



Light for the World is a global disability and development organisation aiming to contribute to an inclusive society where no one is left behind. Our mission is to contribute to a world in which persons with disabilities fully exercise their rights in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Sustainable Development Goals. Persons with disabilities living in poverty are amongst the most excluded groups in society. They are at the centre of our work and they drive the change.

Light for the World, as the Disability

Inclusion partner for the Scholars Program, will support the Program's expansion to reach youth with disabilities as well as the wider inclusion agenda within the Program - which also encompasses inclusion of female scholars and those from displaced populations, working closely together with other technical partners such as World University Service Canada (WUSC). The scope of work involves development of tools and resources, delivering trainings for the Scholars Program partners and providing technical support during the Baobab summits.

## Mapping study on Best Practices of Disability Inclusion in Higher Education in Africa

Light for the World conducted a mapping study to identify and document good practices on disability inclusion in higher education institutions in Africa. The study looked at what higher education institutions on the continent were already doing to provide an inclusive learning environment for students with disabilities and to drive the inclusion agenda forward within the institutions. The study also explored how higher education institutions were leveraging technology and innovative solutions to facilitate disability inclusion in learning.

This was done through a desk study, and sources from a wider network of partners and institutions. Identified institutions

were contacted and interviews were held with staff knowledgeable about the practices of interest for the study. Information provided through these interviews, and others obtained through the desk study, have been included in this document corresponding to the phases of the Scholars Program; Recruit, Educate, Prepare and Transition.

This is in no way exhaustive of good practices on disability inclusion in higher education in Africa. It is a snapshot to offer the Scholars Program and its partners inspiration and insight into what is possible, and what good practices to draw from while making efforts to become more disability inclusive.





# RECRUIT

Statistical data on students with disabilities recruited annually into higher education institutions on the continent is not readily available due to limited literature in this realm. However, based on the attitudinal, environmental and other societal barriers faced by people with disabilities, these numbers can be assumed to be low.

Recruiting students with disabilities in higher education, more often than not, requires an additional effort from the institution and its partners. A range of strategies have been tested and implemented by various institutions. Here, we highlight the deliberate mobilisation strategies employed by the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at University of Gondar in Ethiopia and the outreach activities to pre-university education institutions by University of Ghana.

## Deliberate mobilisation of students with disabilities



### UNIVERSITY OF GONDAR, ETHIOPIA

University of Gondar in Ethiopia has, to-date, recruited over 120 students with disabilities through the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at the university launched in 2016.

The Scholars Program aims to create access to inclusive quality higher education for disadvantaged populations including talented youth with disabilities and young women from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Over a 10-year period, the Scholars Program aims to provide 450 scholarships (290 undergraduate and 160 graduate level degrees) in programs including medicine, health and social sciences, law and education, among others.

To reach a wider audience of potential scholars with disabilities, the Scholars Program at the university has used a wide range of media to send out the call for applications. The Scholars Program has also connected with pre-university educational institutions and utilized existing disability structures to spread information and grow interest about the Program in communities. During a recent survey with scholars recruited through the Scholars Program at the university, 58% of survey respondents with disabilities reported finding out about the scholars program through word of mouth from peers, and community members. 18% reported learning about the program from an Organization of Persons with Disabilities (OPD) or a disability specific organization; 14% from Internet/social media; 8% through radio and 2% from other sources.

## Traditional and digital media

The university ensured the spread of valuable information about the Program in various communities by advertising through traditional media (radio and TV) and digital media (social media and the university’s official communication pages).

Scholars reported hearing about the Program through radio or TV and finding out more information by either visiting the University physically or logging on to the university’s website.



## Disability structures

Local disability structures are a trusted source for information and opportunities to community members with disabilities and their families. Information coming from these structures is more likely to reach networks of people with disabilities, also enabling spread of information through word of mouth within this particular demographic. Scholars, in the same survey, who reported finding out about the Scholars Program from a disability structure mentioned receiving assistance from the structure in understanding the eligibility requirements, support in applying and collecting other additional documentation required. This was even more important for scholars with hearing impairment who, from the survey, depended on the disability structures for information more than scholars with visual or physical impairment.



## Education Bureaus and pre-university educational institutions

Pre-university education institutions played an essential role in not only providing information about the Scholars' Program, but also assisting applicants with disabilities in the application process. Information about the Scholars Program was reportedly spread through the school notice boards, some administrators going as far as attaching the names of students who met the eligibility criteria to the notice - a move that encouraged some of the scholars to apply. Teachers who learned of the Scholars Program informed students with disabilities in their networks; including those they directly taught and former students they kept in touch with. Education Bureaus such as the Bahir Dar city Education Bureau provided access to the application forms for the Program.

The impact of deliberate mobilisation in the case of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at University of Gondar can be seen in the numbers of scholars with disabilities recruited and those who have joined the university outside of the Scholars Program.



### UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

University of Ghana started providing support services for students with hearing and visual impairments in the mid-1990s. This led to the establishment of the Office for Students with Special Needs (OSSN) in 2005, tasked with supporting the inclusion of students with disabilities at the University.



## Out reach to Special Needs schools and Inclusive pre-university education institutions

The OSSN has outreach programs to Special Needs schools and other inclusive pre-university education institutions frequently throughout the year. Through these outreach programmes, young people with disabilities are encouraged to continue their education at tertiary institutes. Information is provided about the programs available at University of Ghana and the kind of support they would receive to facilitate their learning experience. The university has observed a steady increase in the enrolment of students with disabilities (including those with physical, visual and hearing impairments) at a rate of over 40% each year. This result that can be partly attributed to these outreach programmes.



## Collecting disability disaggregated data right from recruitment

The university application forms have a section that seeks to ascertain whether the applicant has a disability (through self-identification) and if so, what type of impairment. Once identified through these forms, applications from students with disabilities are forwarded to the OSSN which takes charge of the interview and selection process. Students who qualify are admitted within the limits of available concessions.

Alternative Phone Number

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

Address (Please state your district of residence)

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a disability?

Yes

No

Clear selection

Back
Next



## **Other recommended practices**

### **Liaising with disability structures and Organisations of People with Disabilities for support during recruitment of students with disabilities**

Disability structures and Organisations of People with Disabilities are a wealth of knowledge in relation to disability inclusion and can assist recruitment processes beyond the mobilisation of prospective students with disabilities. They can provide referrals to service providers related to disability (such as sign language interpreters), act as liaisons offering details about a particular program/university including assisting the application process for interested persons and offer awareness on inclusive recruitment procedures.

### **Affirming a university commitment to disability inclusion in recruitment**

Social exclusion and other barriers faced by people with disabilities throughout their lives leave an impact on their self-esteem and often leads to self-exclusion; where people with disabilities choose not to take up/apply for an opportunity even those they stand greatly benefit from.

Statements such as “people with disabilities are encouraged to apply”, “we are a disability committed institution”, and such, reiterate a university’s stance on disability inclusion and provide a subtle reassurance to a prospective student with a disability to take the chance and apply.

### **Having a focal person or department responsible for coordinating and managing disability inclusion**

A designated disability inclusion focal person(s) or department responsible for the overall coordination of disability support services during recruitment and beyond; as well as managing and tracking other efforts made by the university on disability inclusion ensures accountability. Having individuals that are knowledgeable (and trained) on disability inclusion will ensure meaningful inclusion and effective accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities.

### **Availing information to answer disability-related queries**

The ability to sufficiently answer queries/concerns related to support given to students with disabilities at the institution goes a long way in prompting prospective students with disabilities to apply. This can be done through developing a “Frequently Asked Questions” information document and/or Disability Support Information Tab on the institution’s website, complete with contact information for the disability inclusion focal person or designated department for disability affairs.



# EDUCATE

Providing an enabling and supportive environment for students with disabilities involves the removal of barriers that could limit their participation in learning and other non-curricular activities and events. In this section, we highlight different strategies to address accessibility and ensure meaningful inclusion of students with disabilities; also focussing on the ways that institutions have leveraged technology to break barriers for students with disabilities. This is even more important now in the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Breaking barriers to inclusion in learning

### ASHESI UNIVERSITY, GHANA



Ashesi University is a private, non-profit university that combines a rigorous multidisciplinary core with degree programs in Computer Science, Business Administration, Management Information Systems, and Engineering. Ashesi's mission is to propel an African renaissance by educating ethical, entrepreneurial leaders.

Disability inclusion was integrated in the university's mission and values from the very start. "We started off as a University with disability in mind, such that our entire campus is built in the way that people with mobility issues can access every part of the campus," said Araba Botchway, the University's Director of Admissions and Financial Aid .



## Physical accessibility of the university campus

In the design of the buildings, and overall layout of the university campus, physical accessibility was planned and catered for, allowing easy and independent movement of both students and staff with physical impairments.



Photo by Ashesi University

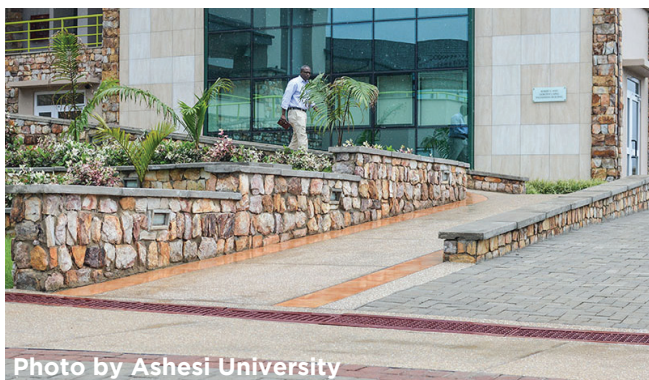


Photo by Ashesi University



*Before coming to Ashesi, I kept telling myself that there was no way a place in the middle of nowhere would be accessible. However, when I arrived here, I was just amazed to see how the place has been designed to be 100% wheelchair-accessible and friendly to people with mobility aid.*

**NATALIE N'GUESSAN**

**French as a Foreign Language Lecturer,  
Ashesi University**

## E- learning and the opportunities it presents for disability inclusion



Impairments; and those with visual impairments are able to play back lectures at their own convenience. This becoming a standard practice has the potential to create more opportunities for the inclusion of both current and future students with disabilities.

Lectures are recorded (both audio and visual) and placed in an online resource that is available to students to reference at their own convenience. This has not only enabled remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic but has leveled the playing field for students with various types of impairments at the university. Any physical accessibility challenges on campus (though already minimal) are negated for students with physical

**KYAMBOGO UNIVERSITY, UGANDA**

Kyambogo University in Kampala, Uganda has over the years gained a strong reputation as a quality provider of training for teachers and other professionals in special needs education, rehabilitation, and inclusive development through its Faculty of Special Needs and Rehabilitation.



The Faculty of Special Needs and Rehabilitation currently spearheads the University’s efforts to provide an inclusive and supportive learning environment for students with different types of impairments, including managing the Disability Resource Centre - containing support materials, devices and assistive technology catering to the various needs of students.

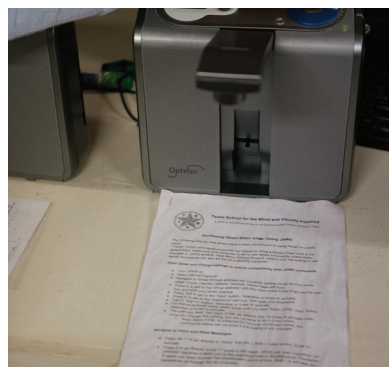
The Disability Resource Centre is further subdivided into support units that hone in on the needs of students with different types of impairments namely: the Braille and Low Vision, Sign Language, Motor and Multiple Impairment, and Dyslexia and Learning Difficulties Support Units.

**Leveraging technology for Disability Inclusion**

The ‘Visuo- Hitech Resource room’ located in the Braille and Low Vision Support Unit houses all assistive technology resources that visually impaired students at the university utilise in various capacities to aid their learning including;

**Document reader (Clear Reader)**

The Document Reader scans printed material and turns text to speech with a range of naturally sounding voices to choose from. The user has the option to archive single and multiple page documents and save audios on a flash drive for later reference.



**Screen- reader software**

Screen-reader software enables visually impaired users to read text displayed on a computer screen using a speech synthesizer or braille display. The Visuo- Hitech Resource unit at Kyambogo University currently uses Job Access With Speech (JAWS), the world’s most popular screen reader.

Using JAWS, students with visual impairments are able to read emails, surf the internet; easily navigate computers, websites and apps using a mouse; scan and read documents including PDFs; and fill out web forms with ease.

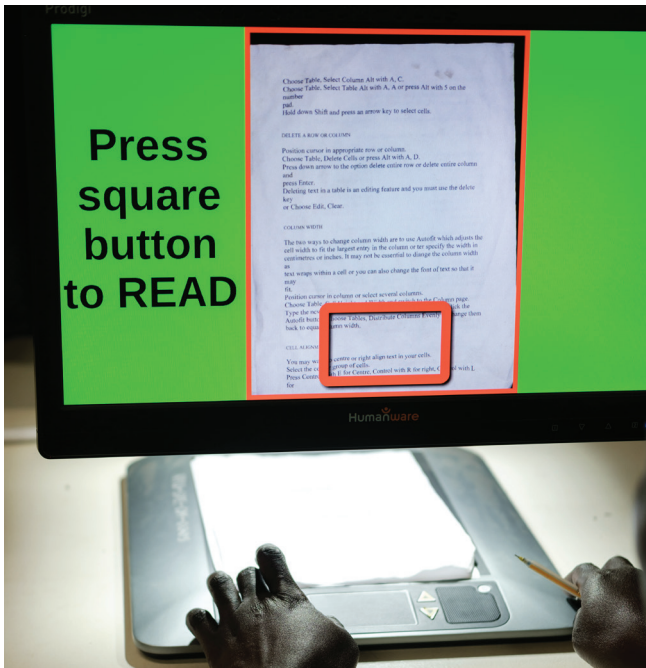




## Screen Magnifiers

Screen magnifiers enable visually impaired users (particularly those with low vision) to increase the size of a text or image to any desired size. Kyambogo University currently uses the Merlin Ultra and Prodigy brands.

Merlin Ultra, among other features, offers a full HD camera that allows for a wide field of view, displaying more text on the screen in great detail. The magnifier also provides full high-definition color and contrast, resulting in sharp, crystal clear images and vibrant color accuracy. Users are able to adjust the colour and contrast of a document, set of text or image to their convenience.



Prodigy provides both a screen magnifier for both text and images. Users are able to switch from reading documents to listening to them, with the tap of a finger. They also have the option to store photos and documents for later reference.

## Braille embosser

This is an impact printer that uses braille translation software to render text as tactile braille cells. Translated documents can then be printed on Braille paper.



## Talking Calculators

Despite looking and functioning just like common calculators, these assistive technology devices have a built-in speech synthesizer that enables each key pressed to be spoken out loud.

This helps a visually impaired user to verify that the numbers and operands have been entered correctly. The calculator also speaks the answer to the math problem.



## 3D Printer

This technological tool operates by printing one thin layer on top of another to create a 3-dimensional tactile objects. Instructors of students with visual impairments are able to print tactile maps, models of equipment and other images or diagrams that would have been challenging to describe to the students in a comprehensible way.

Students use their hands to independently explore the 3D materials, allowing them to appropriately feel images, maps and other visual information that are essential to their learning.



## Professionalising Personal Assistant services for people with disabilities

Personal Assistants are part and parcel of the daily and professional life of many people with disabilities. In Uganda, personal assistants tend to be friends or family of the person with disability and more often, have limited knowledge of the extent of their role as Personal Assistants or their rights and entitlements. In 2019, Light for the World Uganda ran the Disability Inclusion Challenge that aimed at triggering individuals both with and without disabilities, NGOs, social enterprises, disability networks, universities and student groups to bring forward realistic and innovative solutions that stood a chance at promoting inclusion and improving the lives of people with disabilities in Uganda.



Through the Disability Inclusion Challenge, Mwambu Musa, an individual with a visual impairment, proposed a concept involving creation of a professional industry out of the Personal Assistant service coupled with a university course and certification done by one of the most reputable universities in the country. Musa partnered with Kyambogo University to launch a certificate course in Personal Assistant Services for Persons with Disabilities. The inaugural class was launched in March 2021, following the lifting of the lockdown restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic with 15 students.





“

*I have worked with a person with visual Impairment before, and I have had friends at school who have visual impairment, and others with physical impairment. Sometimes, I didn't know how to give them support, and which support they need but this course has helped me understand.*

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**PAUL**

**Student, Certificate Course in Personal Assistant Services for Persons with Disabilities**

“

*This course is going to help me in my career because I am going to be professional. I will be able to provide professional services and make sure my client gets treated the way they should be. I will also know that my rights will be protected. I will be able to work with anyone, a man or a lady, someone from any tribe. It is all about professionalism.*

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**FIONA**

**Student, Certificate Course in Personal Assistant Services for Persons with Disabilities**

# Accessible Transportation

## UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY-AFRICA (USIU-AFRICA), KENYA



USIU-Africa in Nairobi, Kenya prides itself in being the most diverse university in East and Central Africa and one of the leading private Universities in Kenya representing over 70 nationalities undertaking 29 Undergraduate, Graduate and Doctoral programs. USIU - Africa's mission is to become a premier institution of academic excellence with a global perspective.

In 2019, USIU-Africa added a 40- seater accessible modern coach bus to its six-bus fleet. The addition was part of the transport fleet upgrade plan of the university, expected to lead to greater efficiency and address the growing needs of the expanding university population.



Photo by Robert Alal, HSC



The bus is accompanied by a host of features such as USB charging, a modern entertainment system, reclining seats and a more powerful turbo-charged engine, designed to make lengthy bus journeys comfortable and exciting for the students. However, the bus' most striking feature is the hydraulic platform situated at the back. The platform - arguably the first of its kind on college buses in Kenya - enables passengers using wheelchairs to be lifted to the floor of the bus without having to leave their wheelchairs. The bus has the capacity to secure and transport up to seven passengers using wheelchairs on any given journey.



Photo by Robert Alal, HSC

The accessible bus is a flagship pilot by the Administration Division of the university that takes lead in the implementation of the University's Policy for Access of Persons with Disabilities, and Other Special Needs and driving the University's objective of ensuring universal access to all campus services.

## Sign Language Support, Services and Awareness

### KYAMBOGO UNIVERSITY, UGANDA



Kyambogo University currently has 23 students with hearing impairments, all of whom have access to sign language interpreters for their learning. The Sign Language Support Unit under the department of Special Needs Education bears 100% of the cost of providing sign language interpreters for students on government scholarship and 75% for students on private sponsorship.

The department also runs a Diploma Course on Sign Language Interpretation that aims at training and qualifying sign language interpreters to meet the growing demand of the service by the increasing number of professionals with hearing impairments in the country and beyond.

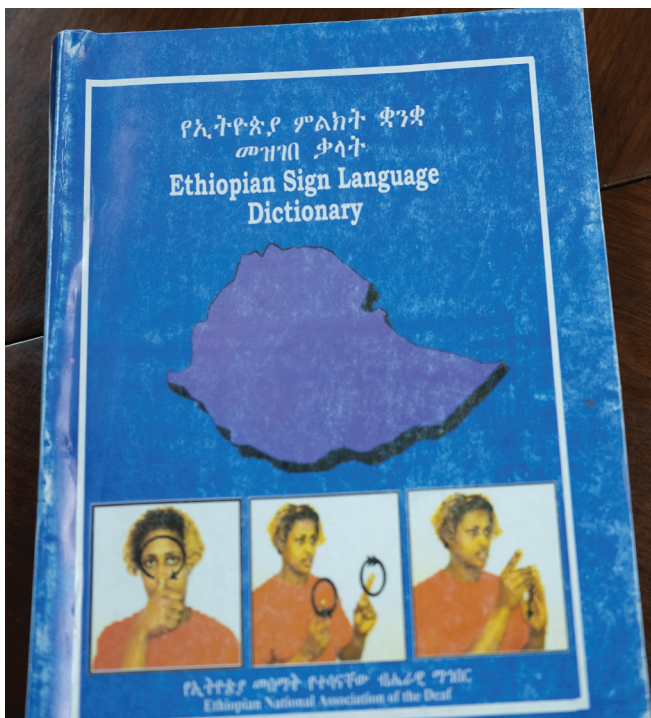




**USIU-AFRICA, KENYA**

The Sign Language Club, a student organisation at USIU-Africa launched in 2016, currently has a membership of over 65 students. The Club regularly holds awareness and fundraising events as well as performances at other campus events such as Culture Week, Black History Month, Freshmen Orientation, Counseling Centre Disability Week, among others.

The Club regularly uses such events to highlight the unique opportunities and challenges of people with disabilities with a special emphasis on the deaf community in Kenya. The Club also raise funds towards adding more disability-friendly facilities at the university campus such as accessible spectator benches, shade, washrooms and bins at the USIU-Africa sports field.



**UNIVERSITY OF GONDAR, ETHIOPIA**

As part of the measures to create an inclusive learning environment for students with hearing impairment at the university, an intensive sign language training program was conducted for Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program staff, staff from the registrar’s and students’ affairs offices and representatives from other departments.

A University Guideline is also available that incorporates the provision of sign language interpretation for students, sign language training where possible and extended time for exams as part of reasonable accommodation.



## UNIVERSITY OF GONDAR, ETHIOPIA

## Mentors and Student assistants

Lecturers and instructors from University of Gondar are selected to act as mentors to students with disabilities in the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, providing counseling, coaching and overall support. Mentors ensure that the scholars are able to navigate their studies and fit into university life with ease. They also support the psychosocial wellbeing of the scholars through guidance and counselling sessions that they provide to them as individuals or as a group. The best performing students at the university are also selected as Student Assistants, supporting the scholars in their daily tasks, studies and other extracurricular activities available at the university.

### Support from peers

Classmates of students with disabilities and other peers that they meet through the university social circles have stepped in to support them by assisting, particularly those with physical and visual impairments, to move around the university campus, and relaying information about classes and other events as needed. Getting this support has enabled students with disabilities to participate even better in learning and gain more confidence to engage in social activities.



“

*My classmates and other senior students helped me in a lot of ways. For instance, they gave me tutorials, study materials and senior students helped me to adopt the University environment. Because of their help, I was able to have full academic participation.*

#### MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLAR

**Physical impairment, University of Gondar**

### Tutorials

The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program offers twelve hours (or a third of total credit hours) tutorial program per semester, as a strategy to enhance academic performance of scholars with disabilities.

Scholars choose three difficult courses per semester where they feel they need additional support. Even though tutorials are provided for scholars with disabilities, other students with disabilities (outside of the Scholars Program) are allowed to attend at no cost to them.



# Disability Inclusion in extra-curricular activities

KYAMBOGO UNIVERSITY, UGANDA

## Disability Sports

Kyambogo University used to host and participate in the national championships for people with disabilities, which have since evolved into the Paralympics - a platform for the students with disabilities to engage in sports, and social activities. Besides the Paralympics, the university holds its own internal sporting activities that engage students with and without disabilities as well as lecturers.



The Disability Resource Center and staff at the University's Visio Hi-tech lab oversee the participation of students with disabilities in these activities, including the provision of disability sports equipment such as sport balls for students with visual impairments.

## Durabeep ball



This is an all-purpose type of ball used for both indoor and outdoor sporting activities. The ball includes a bell and directional beeper that enables users with visual impairments to locate and/or realize the direction of the ball. The ball is made with a rubber material that provides a cushion and makes physical contact less hurtful to the players.



“  
*I coach students with disabilities to prepare them for the internal sports competitions and other sporting activities. I also have my own sporting course units that I integrate in the students' learning where I coach them in different sports.*

**HASSAN**

**Visio Hi-tech lab technician and lecturer, Kyambogo University**



Sporting activities have been observed to provide a good avenue for social engagement, friendly competition, disability awareness and more interactions between students with disabilities, their peers and the rest of the university community.

## Commemoration of the International Day of People with Disabilities

The International Day of People with Disabilities celebrated annually on 3rd December usually coincides with end of semester examinations at Kyambogo University. This is the case as well for many other public and private universities in Uganda. As a result, staff and students with disabilities miss out on the national celebrations. Kyambogo University makes up for this by annually celebrating its own Disability Day.

The event brings together the entire university body, representatives from disability structures and other key stakeholders. Under a unifying theme, several activities take place including policy dialogues, campus-wide marching, and awareness raising. The event is supported by the university and all costs involved are covered in the annual budget.



## **Other recommended practices**

### **Raising awareness on disability within the wider university community**

Providing quality education for students with disabilities may require change in the institutional culture, going beyond accessibility measures and providing assistive devices and technology. Disability awareness training is needed, not only for academic staff, but also for university management, non-academic staff, and peers without disabilities. This changes the mindset around the abilities of students with disabilities, raises confidence on including students with disabilities and creates a supportive learning environment. This asks for more than a one-off training, but a range of approaches including face-to-face engagements, webinars, self-study, inclusion games, video clips and awareness events to ensure uptake and continuous learning on the topic. Where possible engagements need to be created that bring students with and without disabilities together, such as community initiatives.

### **Upgrading/adapting learning material and curricula for disability inclusion**

Students with disabilities; particularly those with visual and hearing impairments face considerable challenges while accessing higher education: most course curricula and assessment systems are traditionally linked to visual and auditory experience.

Instructors are usually unaware of adaptations they could make to adequately include these students. In addition to technical support to lecturers on adapting learning material, upgrading curricula for certain courses could ensure that students with various impairments are able to actively participate in learning. This process could start off with adaptations to a selection of courses that garner a high interest/enrolment of students with disabilities. It is important to note that upgrading/adapting course material for inclusion should not have to completely alter the curriculum or standards of training; it should instead focus on increasing accessibility of learning material and diversifying methods of instruction.

### **Utilising a systematic peer-to-peer approach to inclusion of students with disabilities**

Classmates and other peers of students with disabilities play an important role in enabling them to fit into the university community and participate more actively in learning. The process of fostering these relationships between students with disabilities and their peers could be quickened by a more structured training on disability inclusion and offering opportunities for interested students to take up more active roles as Student Assistants. This strategy can further be expanded through the provision of incentives for the students such as certificates of recognition of service/ participation and/or recommendation letters.





# PREPARE

To prepare students for the world of work, higher education institutions organize career guidance, job fairs, internships, mentoring, community service projects and other opportunities for professional development. In this section, we highlight efforts made by higher education institutions to include students with disabilities in these activities as well as additional support provided to prepare them for the next phases of their lives beyond studies.

## **ASHESI UNIVERSITY, GHANA**

Ashesi University began recruiting students under the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program in 2012. The first program evaluation in 2015 revealed that majority of the scholars (about 98%) were first generation university students (first in their families to attend university) with little or no interaction with the world of work. This number includes scholars with disabilities.

The scholars also reported feeling anxious about transition to the world of work. This prompted university officials to create a counseling team including a psychotherapist, to provide psychosocial support. What started out under the Scholars Program has now become a university-wide endeavor where every first year student is currently mandated to have a session with the counseling team, especially the career psychotherapist.

Ashesi University also has a career services team consisting of career coaches and counselors that work with the students, right from their first year of enrollment. The counselors have one-on-one sessions with students to identify their current and/or anticipated challenges at the university and in entering the workforce, and find possible solutions.



UNIVERSITY OF GONDAR, ETHIOPIA

## Career Service Center

The Career Service Center (CSC) at University of Gondar aims to empower students to develop and utilize their self-awareness, professional development skills, and proven resources to identify and pursue career employment and professional school admission. The center provides Career & Internship Advisory services, Online Career Development Tools, Resume & Application Essay Writing, Job and Internship Listings.



*Because most of our scholars, including those with special needs are first generation, we start by getting them to do job shadowing in the first year, and then internships in the second year and third year before they graduate. That's the structure we have in place to help our scholars, to prepare for and get into the workforce.*

**ARABA BOTCHWAY**

**Director of Admissions and Financial Aid, Ashesi University**

The CSC works closely with Lecturers, mentors, and Scholars Program Transition staff who are also main actors in preparing students for the world of work. The English Language Improvement Center (ELIC) also supports students to improve their interviewing skills using the Center's audio recording facilities.

During job hunting and CV writing sessions, the English Language department assists students to put together attractive and professional resumes along with cover letters.



# Building networks and giving back to communities

## The Scholars' Community

The Scholars' Community is a group formed by and for Mastercard Foundation scholars at the University of Gondar, with a mission of promoting the vision of Scholars Program – particularly the creation of transformative leaders. The Community provides scholars with a platform to share their experiences and support each other as well as advocate and be part of change within the Program, their university, and communities.

In a recent survey, 80% of scholars with disabilities and 83% of scholars without disabilities reported being actively part of the Community. Key highlights of the Community for scholars are the awareness activities, charity initiatives and peer support that they get to organize and participate in.



Photo by Melaku Tekle

“

*I am a part of the Scholar Community, and I'm so blessed to have this type of support system. We gather a lot of times to discuss and support each other. We formed different groups by telegram such as a discussion group, a support group, and a charity group. And through these groups, we share information and raise money to support other students with disabilities.*

**MASTERCARD FOUNDATION SCHOLAR**

**Physical impairment, University of Gondar**

## Summer Camp

The Summer Camp is an event held annually that brings Scholars together to reflect on their experience as part of the Program, meet and interact with guest speakers for motivation and inspiration, and take part in recreational activities. In the same survey, scholars who reported having attended the Camp greatly appreciated the experience stating that the combination of educational and recreational activities as well as motivational talks and experience-sharing sessions left them with a wealth of knowledge and lessons to apply to their own lives.

## **Other recommended practices**

### **Integrating disability-specific elements into career development services for students**

Successful transition to the world of work is a challenge for many graduates, and a point of attention for higher education institutes in Africa. For students with disabilities, the chances of finding decent work after completion of their studies is even more challenging. Growing up in an environment of low expectation and often negative attitudes affects their self-confidence and can result in low ambition. This can be addressed by holding regular trainings on job readiness skills spread throughout the academic years. Strategies such as job shadowing and internships are also important for exposure to the world of work. When organising trainings on CV writing, job searching and interview skills through expert partners or Human Resource Managers, it must be kept in mind that trainings need to be accessible and tuned to address disability-specific concerns for example; when and how to disclose one's disability, and when and how to communicate one's reasonable accommodation needs. For these specific elements, it is advised to bring in a partner with expertise on disability inclusion.

### **Building the capacity of employers on disability inclusion**

Just as it is needed to build job readiness on the side of the students with disabilities, it is also needed to ensure disability-ready workplaces. Partnering with expert organisations on inclusive employment to raise the awareness of potential employers on disability and increase their confidence on addressing the needs of people with disabilities in their workplaces is important to ensure the successful transition to work. This preparation of employers should start through the internship placements that students undertake as part of their courses.

### **Facilitating inclusive employment as a potential career path for students**

The field of inclusive employment is a new and relatively unexplored career path. This creates an opportunity for universities to develop a short course (in partnership with disability organisations and structures) on Inclusive Employment. This course could offer knowledge and skills around inclusive hiring, inclusive Human Resource policies and disability awareness in the workplace. The skills gained through the course will position students both with and without disabilities as experts or consultants in the field. Upon graduation, the students could offer these services to employers and potentially create an additional employment/career path option for themselves.

Other courses that could be considered are Sign Language Interpretation and a course for Personal Assistants. These courses raise awareness on the communication and interaction with people with disabilities, as well as a career path that responds to the growing demand for these services.





# TRANSITION

While data on people with disabilities is limited or not readily available in almost every country, specific data on their employment situation is even harder to find. However, people with disabilities experience similar challenges while accessing work globally. In developing countries, an estimated 80-90% of people with disabilities of working age are unemployed (The Washington Times, 2005). Coupled with the global youth unemployment crisis, the intersectional forces for young people with disabilities exacerbates these challenges. This makes the case for focusing on transition to work even more important.

However, transition to work for students is often seen by educational institutions as beyond their scope especially with financial and human resource constraints. In this section, we highlight different strategies taken by development initiatives and organisations to facilitate a meaningful transition to work for young people with disabilities including further skills development and access to waged-and self-employment.

## **Private sector engagement: Business and Disability Networks**

The Global Business and Disability Network (GBDN) established by the ILO provides a framework to help enterprises achieve business success while simultaneously creating equal opportunities for people with disabilities. The Network boasts of a membership of some of the world's largest multinational companies and employers, leveraging the private sector and its vast potential to put disability inclusion at the forefront of the global agenda. National branches of the Network have been established in 33 countries: 6 from the African continent.

## ETHIOPIAN BUSINESS AND DISABILITY NETWORK



The Ethiopian Business and Disability Network (EBDN), one of the first national branches of the GBDN in Africa, addresses disability as a diversity issue from a private sector perspective in Ethiopia.

The Network achieves this through information and knowledge sharing, joint action, improving technical skills of members, their networks and staff, and

through corporate social responsibility activities.



Photo by EBDN

Striving to build the business case of inclusion, the EBDN assists local companies to adapt products and services to the needs of customers with disabilities. The EBDN also fosters the development of a workforce culture that is respectful and inclusive, promoting the hiring, retention and professional development of women and men with disabilities.

## Facilitating access to employment for young people with disabilities

### MAKE 12.4% WORK INITIATIVE, UGANDA



12.4% stands for the percentage of the Ugandan population with a disability – only 10-20% of working age are employed. Inequities in education and vocational training, negative attitudes about disability and self-exclusion all continue to negatively impact the employment options available to them.

The 'Make 12.4% Work' Initiative aims to address these challenges by building a cross-sectoral momentum for disability inclusion at work. The initiative, driven by young people with disabilities (referred to as Disability Inclusion Facilitators) and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities, partners with mainstream actors across government, the private sector and civil society who sign up as members of the initiative. This commitment is then steered into action by building their capacity to include people with disabilities adequately in their workplaces and/or livelihood programmes.

Youth with disabilities are in turn connected to the opportunities created through these partnerships and given the necessary support to increase their chances of success.





A number of ‘incubator’ or small pilot projects have been implemented under the initiative with the aim of testing approaches to facilitating both waged and self employment for young people with disabilities. The most notable incubator projects under the Initiative are the Work Experience Placements and Skills development through ICT training.

## Work Experience Placements



Work Experience Placements aim at bridging the experience-employment gap, adding valuable skills to graduates with disabilities and increasing their chances of getting both waged and self-employment. The placements also simultaneously build the capacity of employers, exposing them to various aspects of inclusive employment and getting them accustomed to having staff with disabilities.

Disability Inclusion Facilitators support the entire process for each placement; from carving the position and duties to be performed by the trainee to supportive monitoring visits for both the employer and trainee to make the most out of the placement.

To date, 32 trainees have been placed with 20 members of the initiative. 45% were retained by the organisations they were placed with, 20% got other employment training opportunities while 6% are still completing their placements.



“

*We took it from the basics really. (The Initiative) helped Solar Now understand persons with disabilities; how do they communicate, what are their merits, how do we handle them around the workplace, how can we give them an environment that enables them to work, how can other staff freely interact with them and not stigmatize them or make them feel less capable of doing the work. During the trainings we worked with Disability Inclusion Facilitators.*

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**AMOS**

**Training Manager, Solar Now**

“



*Having a job has changed my life entirely. This job has changed the way I think and how I relate with people. Solar Now has given me experience. I have learned to work as a team to help others to improve their livelihoods, how to solve conflicts and challenges and how to help people find employment. I have learned how to pass interviews and help people find employment. I am able to help my family now, and the people around me. Solar Now has not just changed me as Peter, it has changed my family life, the people around me. I am hopeful that one day, I will be the best human resource person in Uganda.*

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**PETER**

**Human Resource Officer, Solar Now.**

Peter has a hearing impairment. He was retained by Solar Now after a work experience placement.

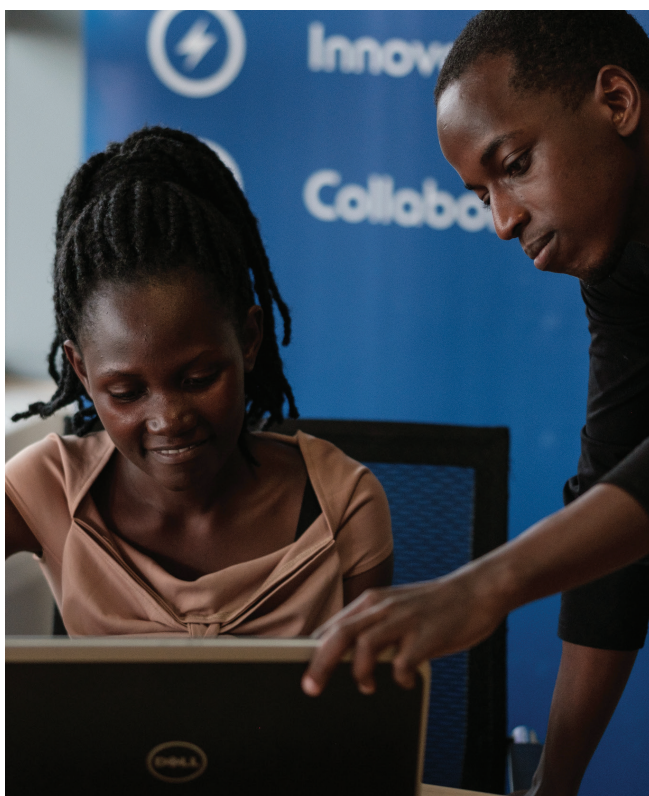


## Enhancing employability for youth with disabilities through ICT Training



the initiative supported 16 youth with disabilities to undertake ICT Training (with a focus on Graphics and Web design, and Programming).

38% of trainees currently have a full-time job or do freelance/part-time work in the ICT sector and an additional 33% have reported using their ICT skills in another job/business outside of the ICT sector.



The ICT field not only offers a lot of employment opportunities but also bridges gaps faced by many persons with disabilities, allowing them to enhance their social, cultural, political and economic integration in communities by enlarging the scope of activities available to them.

To capitalize on this, the Make 12.4% Work Initiative has partnered with Kampabits, Outbox and Tunga, three providers of ICT training, to include youth with disabilities in their programmes. In a pilot, the



*One of the game-changers we have – Scovia. Scovia has a hearing impairment. When she joined us, she did not know anything about software development, but she picked up very fast. When we shifted to remove classes, because of the COVID-19 lock-down, many of the other EDU Trainees with disabilities found it difficult to participate and some did not have personal laptops, so they had to drop out. Not Scovia! What inspired me is she saw this situation as a leveled ground - she pushed herself and worked hard. Honestly, I had never seen anything like it. If you see her programming projects, the websites she has developed, you would be super impressed.*

**MATTHEW**

**EDU Prep Instructor, Outbox**

## Inclusive Sourcing and support to entrepreneurs with disabilities

INBUSINESS INITIATIVE, KENYA



The InBusiness Initiative run by Light for the World in Kenya aims to improve the economic and social wellbeing of people with disabilities and make inclusion the norm through inclusive business and social engagements.

Existing laws and regulations in Kenya already provide basis for inclusion such as the Micro and Small Enterprises Act 2012 and The Public Procurement and Disposal Preference and Reservations Amendment Regulations, 2013 which requires all procuring entities to allocate 30% of their procurement spend for the purposes of procuring goods, works and services from micro and small enterprises owned by youth, women and persons with disability. However, prior to the initiative, women and youth took up majority of the opportunities provided by the above regulations.

InBusiness works to change this trend by creating a platform for groups of microentrepreneurs with disabilities and established companies and business development service providers to develop new business models. Through the platform, InBusiness encourages and fosters close business linkages between the micro enterprises and established companies.



Photo by EmployAble Programme

The micro-entrepreneurs then work either upstream as suppliers or downstream as vendors and salespersons. This offers the micro-entrepreneurs a more stable situation to grow and sustain their business. InBusiness currently supports 146 entrepreneurs and has linked over 70 entrepreneurs to business opportunities with larger private sector actors.





Photo by Melaku Tekle



Photo by Ashesi University

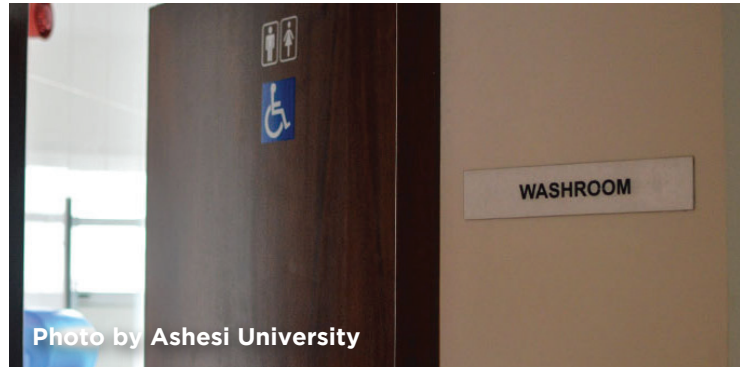


Photo by Ashesi University

# INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

To ensure an inclusive learning environment for students with disabilities and a successful transition to the world of work diversity and inclusion needs to become part of the DNA of the institution. Changes at institutional level ensure that efforts made on disability inclusion stand the test of time; outliving staff and management turnover. In this section, we highlight how inclusive policies can provide basis and strategic direction for inclusion as well as a tool developed to enable institutions benchmark and systematically track progress towards inclusion.

## Action on Disability Inclusion Through Policy

### USIU-AFRICA, KENYA

In 2020, USIU-Africa partnered with the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program; a partnership that will enable 1,000 high-performing students to receive quality education and leadership development over the next 10 years. The partnership targets 70% young women, 25% displaced or refugee youth and 10% young people with disabilities.

Aside from the partnership, USIU-Africa has taken significant strides on becoming more inclusive such as hiring staff with disabilities and developing a Policy for Access of Persons with Disabilities, and Other Special Needs. The Policy establishes minimum standards and expectations at institutional, school, program, course and individual levels at the university, in relation to the provision of quality and inclusive education for people with disabilities.

The Policy has set pace for actions taken towards disability inclusion and the such as the accessible bus mentioned in the 'Educate' section.



# Benchmarking Inclusion: Use of the Disability Inclusion Scoring Card

## LIGHT FOR THE WORLD

In January/ February 2021, Light for the World conducted a process evaluation of the Scholars Program at University of Gondar, one of the components of the evaluation was to look at institutional change. The evaluation team used the Disability Inclusion Scoring Card, a tool that has been developed to enhance the awareness of management on what changes are needed to become disability inclusive as an organisation, to benchmark inclusion and to measure progress over time. The tool looks at the following domains of the institution:

### Strategy

How is diversity and inclusion rooted in policies and strategic documents?

### Human Resources

Is the human resource policy inclusion and are people with disabilities working in the organisation?

### Accessibility

Are buildings, pathways, washrooms and water points accessible? Are events, trainings, tutorials accessible? Is the website/ online environment accessible for students with different types of impairments? Are sign language interpretation/training services available?



### Partnerships

Are structural partnerships in place with organisation of people with disabilities and disability specific organisations and service providers? Is there a network of committed and disability confident employers to relate with for job shadowing and internships?



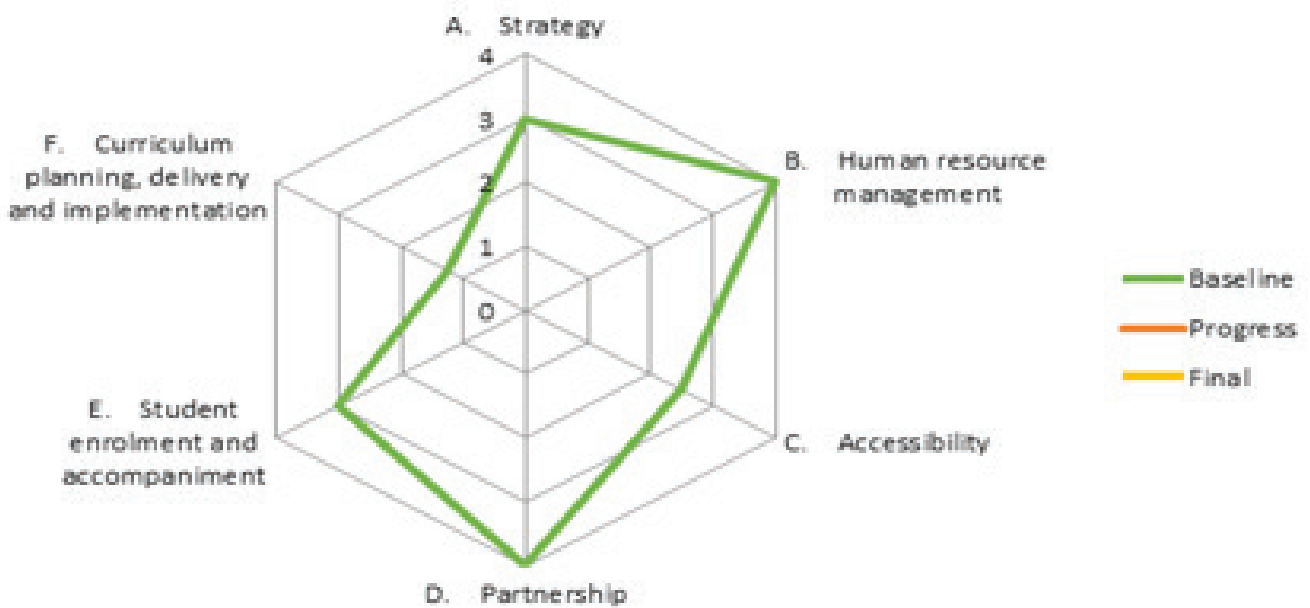
**Student enrolment and accompaniment**

This looks at the inclusiveness of enrolment criteria and recruitment process, as well as the different elements of creating an inclusive learning environment both for academic and extracurricular activities, and the availability of counseling services.

**Curriculum planning, delivery and implementation**

This domain looks at the way curricula are designed with inclusion in mind, the capacity of the lecturers to deliver content in an inclusive way, as well as the methods through which the students are assessed.

**Disability Inclusive Score Card  
*Spiderweb***



It worked well to apply the tool as a facilitated self assessment, with participation of University Management and Scholars Program staff. The tool includes a dashboard to show average scores per domain as seen in the visualisation above. The self assessment and the dashboard, was used as a basis to facilitate a reflection on areas of strength and areas that need attention. The reflection resulted in an action plan to further institutionalize disability inclusion owned by the management of the institution.

# Integrating Disability Inclusion in Institutional Processes and Systems

## **KYAMBOGO UNIVERSITY, UGANDA**

Kyambogo University has, over the years taken a number of steps to ingrain disability inclusion into its institutional process and systems. Most notably, the University passed an Institutional Disability Policy in 2014, and has since supported other universities in the country and beyond to develop their own.

The Disability Resource Center at the university is hosted under the Vice Chancellor's office which gives it both clout and visibility. Student leadership includes a position of Minister for Disability Affairs, a representation that ensures that the voices, issues and priorities of students with disabilities are included in the students' parliament. Personal Assistants, ICT technicians and sign language interpreter positions have been mainstreamed into the university's staff establishment and policy. Sign language interpreters and personal assistants for staff with disabilities have been appointed and salaries paid for by the university. A new staffing structure was recently approved containing these positions.

In collaboration with the University of Oslo and Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE), Kyambogo University has developed a web-page on sensory impairments (Visual, Hearing, and Deafblind) on the Enable Portal. The webpage is hosted both in English and Swahili, complete with accessible features. The partnership also promotes research on sensory impairments through Postdoctoral scholarships.



## **Other recommended practices**

### **To ensure sustainability, disability inclusion needs to be Institutionalized**

Disability inclusion needs to be embedded in the strategy and policy documents, with attention for the Human Resource Policy of the institution and securing the representation of people with disabilities at different levels of the organization.

Reasonable accommodation, in its entirety, also needs to be secured in policies, including additional time for examination for students with visual or hearing impairments and the right of having a sign language interpreter.

Another domain of change is the curriculum planning and implementation, where attention for accessibility of the curriculum as well as the assessment methods are at stake. Continuous efforts are needed to create a barrier free and accessible environment, guided by regular accessibility audits and consultation with the students with disabilities. Finally, the institution needs to foster partnerships with organizations of persons with disabilities, disability specific and disability expert organizations to ensure a network of collaboration, referral and learning around disability inclusion.

### **The value of budgeting for disability inclusion**

Successful disability inclusive practices ask for planning and budgeting for inclusion. Through having earmarked funding in place, universities can; provide academic support services for students with disabilities; cover costs related to addressing accessibility of university premises and student residences; as well as support inclusion in extracurricular activities. The pay-off, in the long run, being long-term institutional change and sustainable growth towards more inclusive learning environments for students with disabilities. This asks for sensitization of program and finance committees on disability inclusion and key elements like reasonable accommodation.