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## Working Paper

Disability inclusive social protection in West Africa (people-centered, community-driven, and human rights-based), 29 July to 3 August 2024

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# SOCIAL POLICY IN DEMAND

A Working Paper Series

Strategy Brief

2024/05

## **Disability Inclusive Social Protection in West Africa (People-centered, community-driven, and human rights-based)**

**29 July to 3 August 2024**

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## Introduction

This brief summarizes insights from a seminar event on disability-inclusive social protection systems in West Africa, held in Cape Coast and Accra, Ghana. Guided by a community-based inclusive development framework, it suggests goals and objectives for people-centered, community-driven, and human-rights-based social protection systems that ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities across West Africa.

Social protection systems in West Africa are evolving but often face challenges such as limited coverage and funding<sup>1</sup>, which hinder their effectiveness. Programs like cash transfers, health insurance, and social insurance are particularly affected by resource constraints and administrative inefficiencies. Persons with disabilities (PWDs) encounter significant barriers, including inaccessible facilities, insufficient community participation, and cultural stigma. Therefore, it is crucial to collect data on disability to mainstream it across social protection schemes.<sup>2</sup>

The event, *Advancing Social Protection in West Africa - Smart Solutions Developed by H-BRS Alumni Towards an Inclusive Society*<sup>3</sup>, was held from July 29 to August 3 at the University of Cape Coast and in Accra, Ghana. It brought together 25 international alumni from the Master of Science (MSc) Social Protection program<sup>3</sup> of the University Bonn-Rhein-Sieg of Applied Sciences in Germany, along with experts from Sub-Saharan Africa, and national and international stakeholders, including the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection, and the National Council for Persons with Disability (NCPD) in Ghana. The goal of the seminar was to explore and develop inclusive social protection solutions for persons with disabilities. Funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the German Federal Ministry for Development Cooperation (BMZ), the seminar included expert presentations, field trips, and collaborative sessions.

Drawing from the presentations and discussions, this strategy brief outlines key insights from the Alumni seminar and translates them into actionable recommendations. The inputs draw from successful examples primarily from the Sub-Saharan region, as well as from other countries of the Global South, such as India, Turkey, and Brazil. Recognizing the strengths and challenges in West Africa, the recommendations emphasize community-based solutions, labor market and education policies, and financing and adequacy of social protection systems. As such, the brief provides a roadmap for creating more equitable and effective social protection systems in West Africa. The ultimate goal is to foster an inclusive society where persons with disabilities have equal access to opportunities and resources, driving sustainable change and social justice in the region.

## STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### A. Community-based Solutions:

Promote **inclusive community development** to ensure that persons with disabilities are integrated and supported within their local environments, enhance the accessibility of public spaces and services to improve their quality of life

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<sup>1</sup> ILO (2021) Africa Regional Social Protection Strategy, 2021-2025: Towards 40 % – a social protection coverage acceleration framework to achieve the SDGs

<sup>2</sup> Global Voices (2023). Why West Africa civil society organizations are urging ECOWAS to prioritize disability inclusion.

<sup>3</sup> The international Master programme offers an inter-disciplinary and in-depth study of social protection systems: Read more about the programme: <https://www.h-brs.de/en/sv/study/master/socialprotection>

1. Enhance **community sensitization and awareness** to remove the stigma and misconception through campaigns and empowerment of civil society organizations, and to inform community members about social protection programs for vulnerable groups.
2. Maximize **community participation of persons with disabilities in local authorities** for all, as well as infrastructure (accessibility, appropriateness, adequacy, adaptability) to remove physical barriers.
3. Form **Community Welfare Assistance Committees** to set up identification and accountability mechanisms for persons with disabilities and partnerships and collaborations with higher authorities to represent PWDs and advocate for their rights.
4. Foster **informal social protection networks** for community health insurance, community centers, community banking, food banks, community farming, and cooperatives for community-based production of assistive devices for persons with disabilities.

#### **B. Labor Market and Education:**

Increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities to ensure participation in education and vocational training, and foster a supportive and inclusive environment in workplaces and educational institutions

1. **Awareness campaigns:** Develop and distribute educational materials and workshops in partnership with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community leaders, and the media. Include disability education in school curricula.
2. **Employment policies:** Implement policies that provide positive incentives for employers to hire PWDs. Work with government agencies to effectively design and monitor these policies.
3. **Mentoring programs:** Develop tailored mentoring and capacity-building programs within technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions and workplaces. Partner with businesses, educational institutions, and NGOs to design and implement programs.
4. **Accessibility standards:** Create a checklist and guidelines for institutions to assess and improve accessibility. Secure funding from government and international partners to support these adaptations.
5. **Trade union involvement:** Work with trade unions to establish trained disability officers who can represent persons with disabilities in labor negotiations and policymaking.

#### **C. Financing and Adequacy:**

Ensure sufficient and sustainable funding for social protection systems that effectively support PWDs, and enhance their financial independence and security through targeted investments and incentives

1. **Social Protection Management System:** Invest in and implement an integrated social protection management information system, accessible to all stakeholders, to ensure proper resource allocation and service delivery to persons with disabilities.
2. **Dedicated disability fund:** Establish a dedicated disability fund within the social protection framework, securing a guaranteed percentage of all funding and incorporating blended funding models to address unforeseen economic challenges.
3. **Accessibility investment:** Allocate targeted budgets for retrofitting public buildings and enforcing inclusive building codes, with a focus on improving rural infrastructure and incentivizing local governments.
4. **Employment incentives:** Develop and promote policies that incentivize the employment of PWDs across sectors, ensure decent working conditions, and encourage savings by persons with high support needs to increase their financial independence.

#### **Stakeholder Engagement and Action Delivery Plans:**

1. Identification of key stakeholders with their roles in advancing inclusion in social protection is crucial to translating recommended strategic goals into an actionable regional strategy.

2. Coordination at vertical and horizontal levels can ensure policy coherence and communication between relevant stakeholders for effective implementation.
3. Creating cross-country learning spaces and coordination platforms in the Sub-Saharan region of good practices is necessary to promote disability inclusion in West Africa.
4. Investing in an integrated Social Protection Management Information System is crucial to ensure sustainable and accessible social protection for persons with disabilities.
5. Improving fund allocation and service delivery by accurately assessing disability-related costs enables the system accessible to all stakeholders
6. Achieving sustainable financing requires a mix of government budgets, donor contributions, and taxation, along with a dedicated disability fund to secure a portion of social protection funds.
7. Blended funding models and targeted investments in accessible infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, are essential.
8. Policies should incentivize PWDs to employment in various sectors, ensure decent work conditions, and promote financial independence through savings programs through government-initiated individual development accounts for persons with disabilities.
9. Implementing affirmative action and positive incentives (tax breaks, subsidies) for employers is significant in increasing the employment of PWDs.
10. Mandating and enforcing accessibility standards for educational and workplace environments can enhance accessibility.
11. Trade Unions should incorporate disability inclusion by creating roles and activities within their areas of advocacy
12. Mentoring and capacity-building programs on disability inclusion into TVET curricula and corporate social responsibility can play an enabler role in linking education with employment.

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

1. Identification of Key Stakeholders
  - **Performance Area:** Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement
  - **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regular review of stakeholder engagement status, annual assessments of roles, and stakeholder level of engagement
2. Investment in Integrated Social Protection Management System
  - **Performance Area:** Implementation and Accessibility
  - **Monitoring and Evaluation:** User feedback surveys, and progress reporting on accessibility
3. Improved Fund Allocation and Service Delivery for persons with disabilities
  - **Performance Area:** Disability Fund Allocation Management and Cost Assessment
  - **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Audits of cost assessment and fund allocation, administrative reviews
4. Incentives for Employment of Persons with Disabilities
  - **Performance Area:** Decent Work Engagement of persons with disabilities and Financial Independence
  - **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Employment Statistics and impact assessment of incentives, surveys with persons with disabilities on their employment conditions and status, annual review of trade union activities on their representation
5. Mentoring and Capacity Building Programs
  - **Performance Area:** Education, and Employment Integration

- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Assessment of skills developments, review of job placement rates, and labor market participation rates of persons with disabilities.

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The success of the event reflects the dedication and collaborative efforts of the participants at the conference. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the organizers and to the distinguished panelists and speakers whose insights and expertise are highly valued. We also appreciate the active participation of all attendees, whose engagement and feedback enriched the discussions and helped pave the way for actionable solutions.