



Experiences of inclusive education amongst girls and boys with disabilities, their parents, and teachers in schools in Senegal and Cameroon

Presenter: Sapana Basnet

Co-authors: Vladmir Pinto, Cheikh Ibrahima Seck, Emma Jolley, Elena Schmidt

CIES 2024



Study Background/Context

In Senegal and Cameroon children with disabilities are twice as likely to have never attended school and those attending have poorer attainment and learning outcomes .

Sightsavers, in partnership with Ministry of Education in Senegal and Cameroon, implemented an inclusive education project focussing on strengthening the education system and developing school-level inclusion practices. These included:

- **Identifying children with disabilities who were missing out on or excluded from education**
- **Training schoolteachers**
- **Motivating parents**
- **Educating and mobilising local communities**
- **Physically adapting the infrastructure of schools**

The overwhelming majority of children with disabilities who attended these project schools had vision impairments.

Objective

Objective

Inclusive education experiences of boys and girls with disabilities, carers, and teachers in the inclusive education schools supported by Sightsavers in Senegal

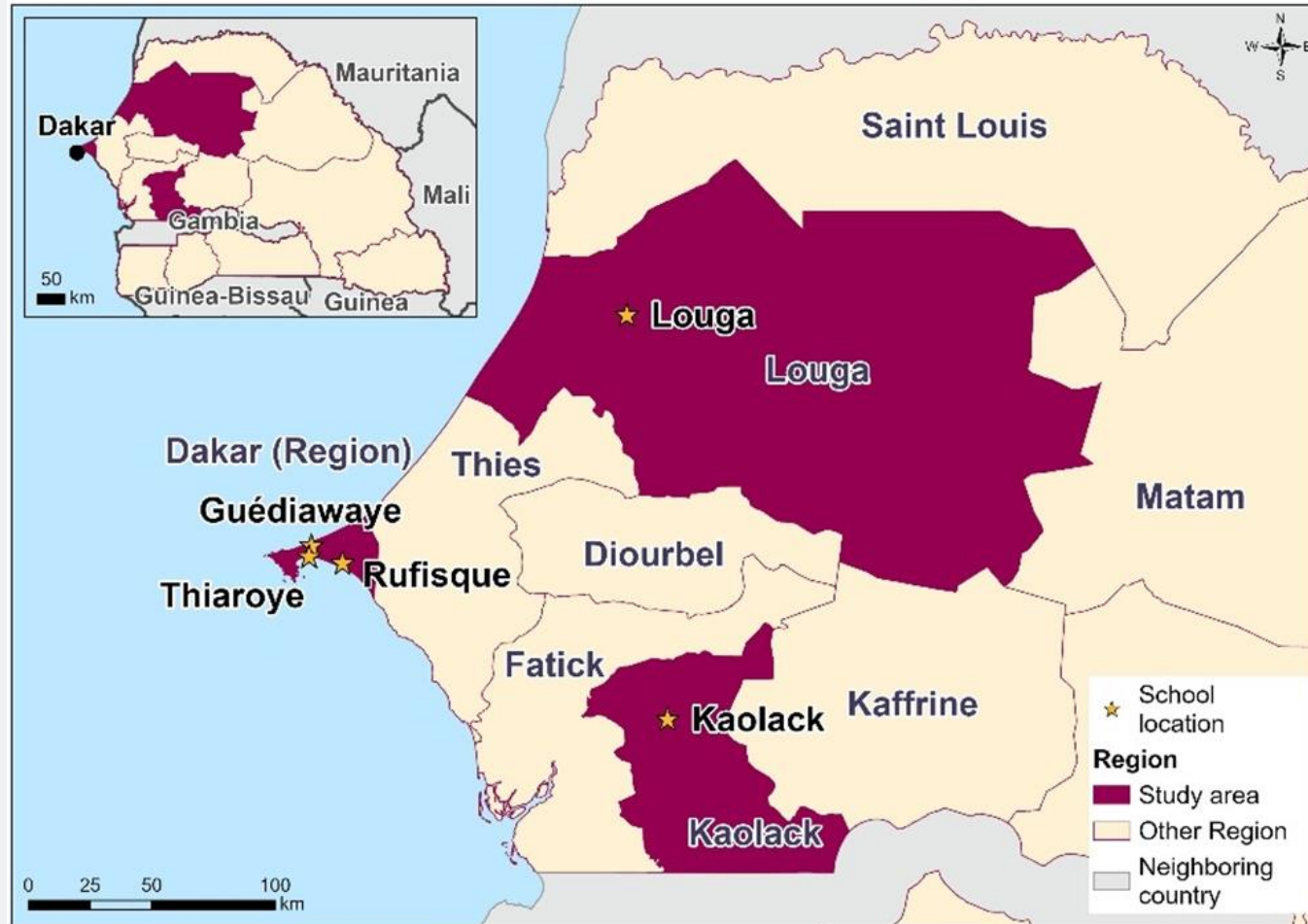
More specifically, the study aimed to understand:

- The experiences of children with disabilities in accessing and remaining in education, including during the Covid-19 pandemic
- The experiences of parents/carers of children with disabilities and other community members on inclusive education practices and the education of children with disabilities in local schools
- The perspectives of teachers and education stakeholders on inclusive education practices
- Views on how gender affects experiences and learning of boys and girls with disabilities

Study location – Senegal

The study took place in five schools in Senegal, located in three regions:

- **Dakar:** Pikine 23 B school in Guédiawaye, Malick Diop in Thiaroye, Sherif 1 in Rufisque
- **Kaolack:** Alioune Cissé school
- **Louga:** Regional school 1



Study location – Cameroon

The study took place in Six schools in Cameroon, located in three regions:

- Southwest Region: Buea, Muyaka, Kumba
- Far North Region: Maroua
- Central Region: Yaounde, Mbalmayo



The study had two interrelated phases. The first phase took place in early 2018, soon after the inclusive education project was initiated, and second phase took place in 2022/23

Study design

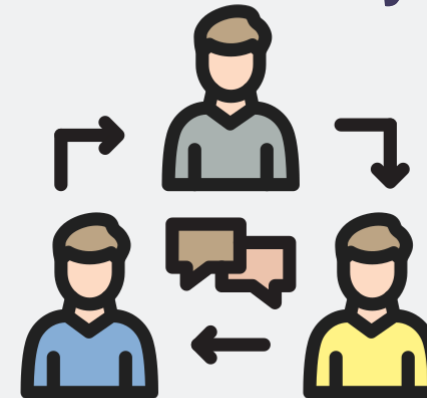
The study used qualitative Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR).



The CBPR aims to improve knowledge and understanding of the situation under consideration, through respectful collaboration with the community using non-hierarchical mutual dialogue, shared decision-making and ownership approach, where community members actively participate in planning, collecting, analysing, and disseminating data.

Peer research

5 teachers & 5 members of community



Focused group discussion

45 learners, 40 parents/carers and 10 teachers in each country



Study design

Peer researchers are members of the community where the study is conducted. They are not professional researchers but work closely with a professional researcher.



Findings: What worked well

Learner's' experiences of inclusive education

- Improved access to education
- Increase in enrolment and reduction in dropouts
- Closing learning gaps
- Enhanced perception of safety within school environment
- Commute to school has improved

“the increased number of girls with disabilities in schools made us ‘feel normal’, we were ‘not isolated’ anymore, and we felt ‘important and included.’

Findings: What worked well

Teachers' experiences of inclusive education

- **Adaptation in teaching techniques & seating arrangements**
- **Improved access to accessible devices & education materials**
- **Improved community sensitisation that reduced discriminatory behaviours**

'Snapping or clicking fingers to encourage visually impaired children to express they want to answer a teacher's questions.'

Findings: What worked well

Parents' experiences of inclusive education

- Support for parents to send their children to school
- Allowance for regular parent teacher communication
- Training in disability-specific skills (e.g. braille)
- Travel allowances to support regular school attendance

'Without the credit, I would not have been able to know how my child is doing at school and especially not be able to support with learning at home during school [Covid] closure.'

Findings: What continued to be challenging

- **Small classroom sizes and overcrowded school premises; noise during lessons**
- **Inadequate number of toilets & water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities**
- **Insufficient accessible teaching and learning resources**
- **Insufficient time allocation during tests**

“Lessons based on numerical and pictorial information, such as mathematics, geometry, geography, and sciences, remained a major challenge”

Findings: What continued to be challenging

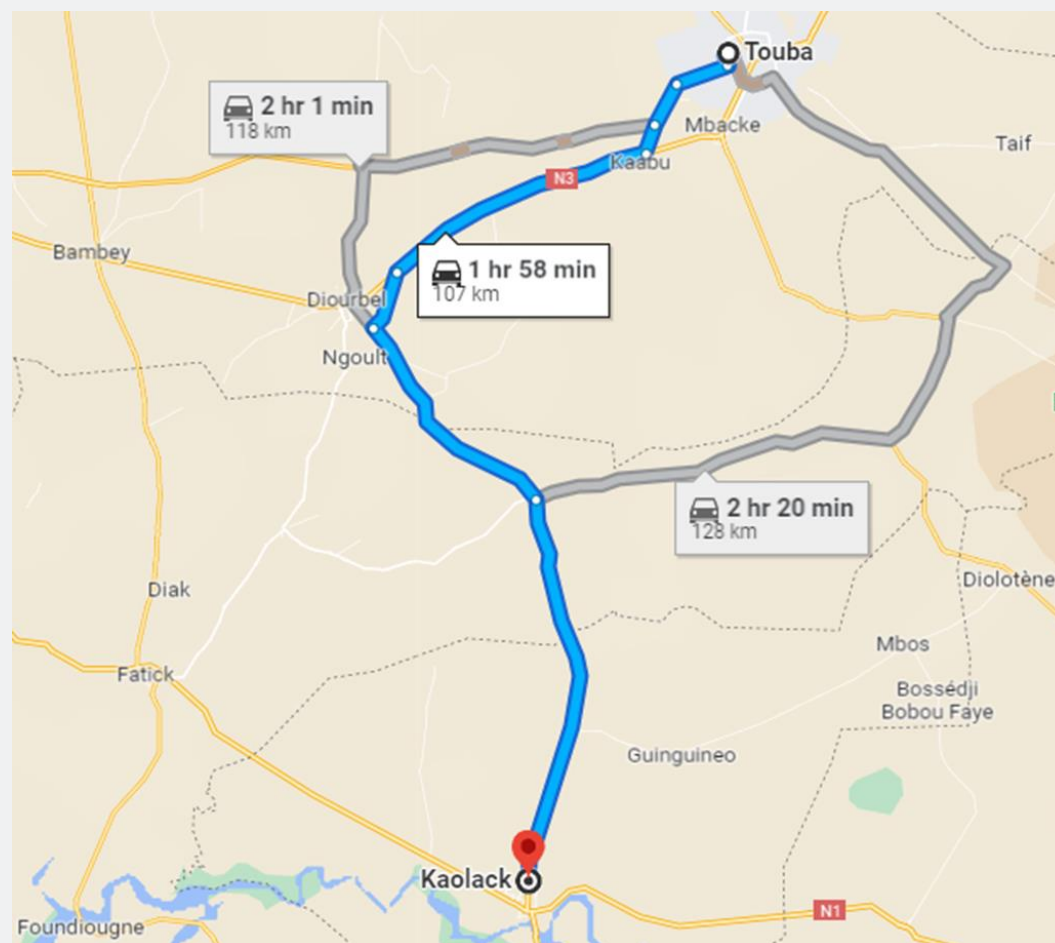
- Inability to provide boarding at school for learners with disabilities living far away
- Insufficient teachers trained in inclusive pedagogy; no continuous professional development training
- Commute to school remained challenge for learners taking certain routes, road safety was major concern

'A motorcycle, Jakarta, ran over a blind child from my community. It is very difficult to stay safe for a blind person.'

Findings:

Students' experiences of commute to school

'I leave Touba very early to come and study. When I come, I spend the day at the guard's house, that's where I stay. If there was a possibility to be accommodated here, in the school, and a restaurant to eat for people like me, who come from far, it would be very good for us.'



Recommendations

- **Need for visible warning signs such as white canes or visibility vests.**
- **Develop guidelines for the appropriate ratio of toilets and WASH in schools.**
- **More spacious classrooms to accommodate increased numbers of students.**
- **Review of teacher training curriculum in the light of teachers' experiences.**
- **Review and improve the availability of books and other educational materials.**
- **Review teaching curriculum and ensure guidelines for adaptation of all subjects.**
- **Make tests and examination accessible, making adaptations based on the universal design principles.**
- **Develop mechanisms for follow-up in the community on children who regularly miss classes or drops out.**
- **Review transport requirement and develop strategies for safe and accessible school transportation, with specific focus on safety of girls with disabilities.**

Thank you Sapana Basnet



For more information:

Email: sbasnet@sightsavers.org

Visit : <https://research.sightsavers.org/project/inclusive-primary-education-in-west-africa-through-a-gender-lens/>

X (Twitter): @sapanabasnet LinkedIn: Sapana Basnet

Acknowledgement

Special thanks to government education officers and stakeholders for their input during the finding validation workshop. Many thanks to Irish Aid for their financial contributions to this study.

Peer researchers

Maguette Dioum Thiam, Bineta Ba, Oumou Kalsoum Ndiaye, Abdou Aziz Diop, Aissatou Pouye, Oumou Makham Sy, Abdou Arame Samb, Amy Diaby Sene, Aita Diallo, Marcel Konaté, Alioune Sene, Fatou Ndoeye, Magatte Gadje.