

**2023**

# Annual Review

Celebrating **39 years** of changing lives





Educate. Educate.

Amplify. Amplify.

Protect. Protect.

Educate. Educate.

Amplify. Amplify.

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Educate. Educate.

Amplify. Amplify.



# We are **Able Child Africa**

We work towards a world in which no child with a disability is left behind.

We do this by bringing together a network of organisations that **protect,** **educate** and **amplify** the voices of children and young people with disabilities, so they are able to thrive.

We work across Africa, breaking down barriers to inclusion so that children with disabilities are safe, thriving and heard.

## **We are:**

### **Collaborative.**

We believe we can achieve more by working together.

### **Courageous.**

We are bold and agile, with the courage to innovate.

### **Accountable.**

We are accountable to the children we work with.

> And we use the expertise we have built up across Africa over the last 40 years **to make lasting change for children with disabilities.**



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# Welcome from our Chair



**Jim Sellars**  
Chair

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to our 2023 Annual Report. Over the last year, Able Child Africa continued its vital work to protect, educate and amplify the voices of children with disabilities across Africa. We supported over 1,000 children and worked with over 1,750 parents, teachers and government officials across Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Malawi and Zambia.

Last year represented the first time the organisation has raised over £1 million in charitable funds. This is a fantastic achievement and a testament to all the hard work of the team, our partners and network members. While this has been a long-term goal though, there is still much more work to do.

Children with disabilities continue to be left behind. Through no fault of their own, they are consistently excluded, discounted and discriminated against in all walks of life, leading to health inequalities, a lack of basic education and financial deprivation.

As part of our desire to enhance our impact and ultimately support more children, we are launching a new 2030 Strategy. We are excited to announce that this year we will launch the Able Child Africa Network, where eight of the leading organisations working with children with disabilities in Africa will be coming together as the founding members. Able Child Africa is starting a journey to further put decision making in the hands of those who are closest to the work we do. Not only do we believe this the right thing to do for the children we work with, we also believe this supports the organisation's ambitions to reach many more children and triple in size by 2030.

Able Child Africa's past and future success is driven by our past partners and new network members with their commitment, vision, and knowledge; without them none of our work would be possible. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the organisations we work with in Africa for everything they have done this year and throughout our many years of successful partnership.

Our heartfelt thanks go out to the entire Able Child Africa team. Karl, our CEO, and Lauren, our Director of Impact and Advocacy, provide inspirational leadership to the whole organisation and drive the long-term vision of Able Child Africa. We are also indebted to the Board of Trustees, whose diverse skillsets and experiences have been crucial in navigating the challenges of operating a charity.

Despite the organisation reaching £1 million in fundraising last year, the external fundraising environment remains difficult. We do not underestimate the challenge ahead, and our final thanks are reserved for all our donors, whether individual, corporate or institutional, small and large. Your generosity is the organisation's lifeblood, and we remain indebted to your continued support. This has enabled Able Child Africa to deliver all the work described in the following pages and to continue our vital mission to protect, educate and amplify the voices of children with disabilities.

We are really excited about the future and sincerely hope you will continue to feel moved to support us in our vital work.

Best wishes,  
**Jim Sellars**

# Why we exist

**1 in 10 children** globally have a disability – that is 240 million children, and this number is expected to double by 2050.

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, children with disabilities continue to be left behind. Through no fault of their own, they are consistently excluded, discounted and discriminated against in all walks of life, leading to health inequalities, a lack of basic education and financial deprivation.

The impact for children with disabilities is devastating.



Children with disabilities are:

- More likely to live **in poverty**.
- Twice as likely to **never attend school**.
- Three times more likely to be **underweight**.



Children with disabilities are also less safe. They are:

- Four times more likely to experience **physical violence**.
- Three times more likely to be **sexually assaulted**; and
- 17 times more likely to be **institutionalised**.

**Girls with disabilities** are at particular risk of violence. An estimated 70% of girls with intellectual disabilities will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday, which contributes to girls with disabilities being 10 times more likely to experience gender-based violence than those without disabilities.

## In Africa...

In low-income countries in Africa, the situation is worse. It is predicted that up to 80% of children with disabilities from these countries will not live to be five years-old. The ones that do are 10 times less likely to be in school, four times more likely to experience abuse or violence.



Children with disabilities are not a homogenous group. Each child is unique and lives with a distinct set of circumstances which determines their ability to thrive.

A child's age compounds with their socioeconomic background, gender, and race to deepen and complicate the exclusion they experience, and their perceived naivety means they are given little opportunity to communicate their needs or determine the types of support they receive.

Services for children with disabilities still fail to recognise or respond to the intersectional barriers children with disabilities face. Healthcare, education and social protection services remain inaccessible with physical, communication and attitudinal barriers limiting their participation and allowing children with disabilities to fall through the cracks.

We know that these inequalities can lead to additional and lifelong psychosocial barriers. Over 41% of children with disabilities are more likely to feel discriminated against, over 51% of children with disabilities are more likely to feel unhappy and 1 in 5 children with disabilities are less likely to have expectations of a better life. The emotional impact of exclusion can embed feelings of inadequacy which silence and disempower children with disabilities all the way through adulthood.



**Able Child Africa exists**

**to change this.**

## The **state of play** for civil society

Despite the evident need, only a small fraction of aid funding is targeted towards children with disabilities, which has meant that disability-focused organisations in Africa have long been under-resourced and under-supported. Traditionally receiving a large portion of its funding from overseas, the recent introduction of legislation constraining funding to NGO's, along with the unprecedented scale of Covid-19 has forced many of these organisations to close all together.

For African Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) the situation is particularly difficult. As organisations representing a marginalised group, they also experience discrimination and prejudice, receiving fewer invitations to participate or influence and even fewer opportunities to receive funding. Even where specific disability-focused funding or support is available, OPDs that work for children with disabilities are usually the last to receive it, unable to compete for space with larger players.



# What we do

We **protect**, **educate** and **amplify** the voices of children and young people with disabilities, so they are able to thrive. We do this by:



## Delivering high-quality programmes

We deliver high-quality programmes, generating evidence of what works and building best practice for inclusive programming for children with disabilities.



## Standing up for their rights

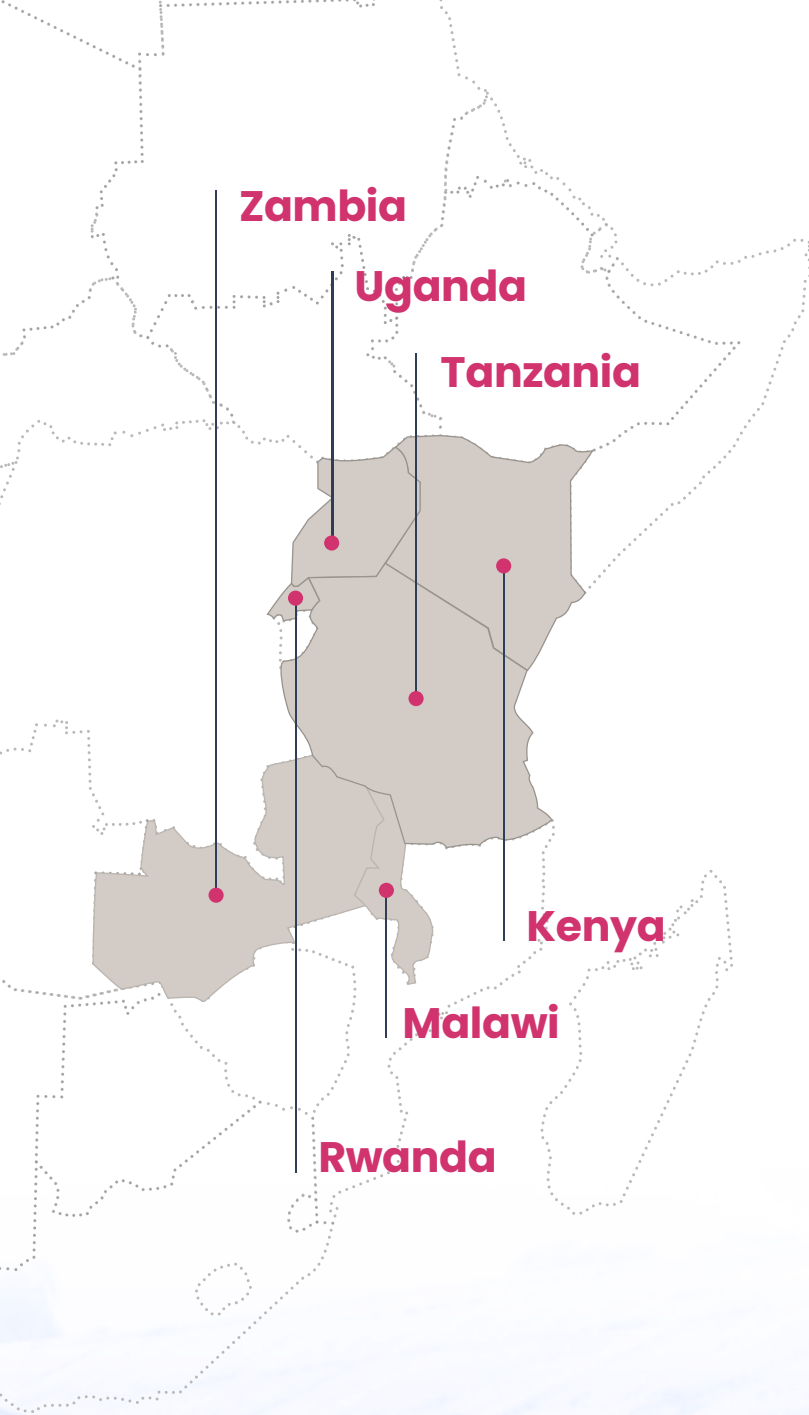
Standing up for the rights of children with disabilities, amplifying their voice and creating change by influencing governments and other international allies.

### The role for data.

Evidence underpins all of our work. We work together to collate data on the barrier's children with disabilities experience and generate evidence of what works for inclusive programming. We then use this information to deepen our impact with children with disabilities and to influence governments and other international allies.







We have over **39 years'** experience working with local organisations across Africa to improve the lives of children with disabilities.

Our **mission** is to promote the realisation of equal rights for children and young people with disabilities in Africa and to facilitate their meaningful inclusion in all aspects of life.



# Protect.



**We stand up for the rights of children and young people with disabilities to ensure they are **protected and included** in their communities.**

Children with disabilities are at a higher risk of violence, abuse or exploitation due to the multiple barriers that prevent them from protecting themselves or reporting incidents of abuse. We work across the network to improve and support local safeguarding practices that ensure the protection of children.

We support families to break down the stigma and discrimination around disability, to ensure the inclusion of children with disabilities within their communities. We have been working to do this in Uganda...

## Improving child safeguarding in Uganda:

We have been supporting **Ugandan Society for Disabled Children (USDC)** to build a more robust safeguarding culture. Through a Comic Relief funded grant, we delivered a workshop with staff to identify gaps in their knowledge, culture, policies and practices in relation to the different stages of the safeguarding cycle. This enabled the team to identify short- and long-term solutions to address these gaps, ensuring USDC is better placed to adopt better safeguarding practices across every aspect of their work.

We were able to utilise our expertise in disability inclusive child safeguarding to support USDC to develop their own set of safeguarding standards. This has ensured there is a shared understanding of USDC's commitments to safeguarding across the organisation and for all staff.



# Educate.



**We ensure that children and young people with disabilities have **access to an education** and the services they need to succeed.**

In low-income countries, over 90% of children with disabilities do not attend formal school. To tackle this problem, we have developed inclusive education projects that support children with disabilities to access mainstream education alongside their peers, improving their educational outcomes and ensuring they are able to thrive.

We have been working in Kenya to change the lives of children with disabilities through education...



### Using inclusive play as a tool for inclusive education in Kenya:

We have been working with **Action Network for the Disabled** to develop and implement a disability inclusive play programme for children with disabilities to improve their access to quality Early Childhood Education.

Using our inclusive play approach, children attending early childhood centres are encouraged to play and interact with each other, bringing a sense of joy and laughter within the school environment. Crucially, this also helps the children to engage with their surroundings, develop communication skills and self-awareness, and connect with others. Play is a fundamental part of childhood for all children, with the development of an inclusive play programme ensuring teachers are equipped with the knowledge to effectively include children with disabilities in pre-school activities.

We have been working with 10 early education centres in Nairobi over four years, with the inclusive play programme playing an important role in supporting nearly 100 children with disabilities to access education for the first time.



# Amplify.

## We work with children and young people with disabilities to be confident and resilient, **amplifying their voice to demand their own inclusion.**

For too long children with disabilities have been forgotten, hidden and systematically excluded. One of the key reasons for this is that children and their parents have been unaware of their rights and are therefore disempowered in the fight for justice. By providing children and young people with disabilities with knowledge of their rights and then amplifying their voice to speak out, they are able to break down the barriers to inclusion for themselves and their peers.

We have been working in Rwanda to amplify the voices of young people with disabilities ...



### Amplifying the voice of young people with disabilities in Rwanda:

Partnering with Euromoney Institutional Investor and **Uwezo Youth Empowerment (UWEZO)**, we have been amplifying the voice of children and young people with disabilities to demand more inclusive child protection systems in Rwanda.

In partnership, we developed a youth-led model, providing training and other support to young people with disabilities to be the main implementers of the project. Young people with disabilities have led on parent workshops, meetings with government officials, and providing mentoring for younger children with disabilities. Through this approach, we have supported young people with disabilities to take ownership of the project and to draw on their own experiences to become key advocates for inclusion within child protection systems.

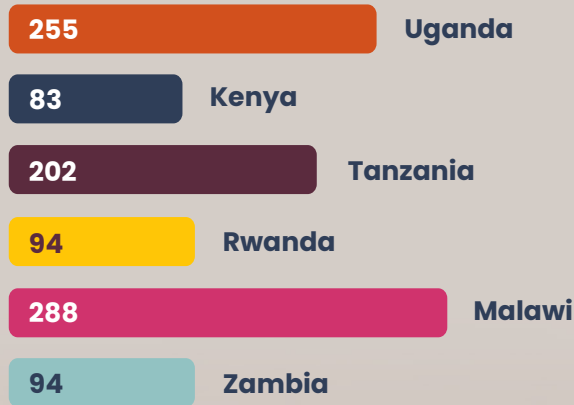
This has created new mechanisms, networks and support groups, where children and young people with disabilities are coming together to campaign for their inclusion in child protection systems, ensuring these systems are as inclusive and accessible as possible.

# Our impact

Over the last year, we have been working across **six countries in Africa** to improve the lives of children with disabilities.

We directly supported children and young people with disabilities through enrolling out-of-school children into schools, providing disability aids, making school premises more accessible, establishing mentoring networks and activities to break down damaging myths about disability.

## Children & young people with disabilities directly supported



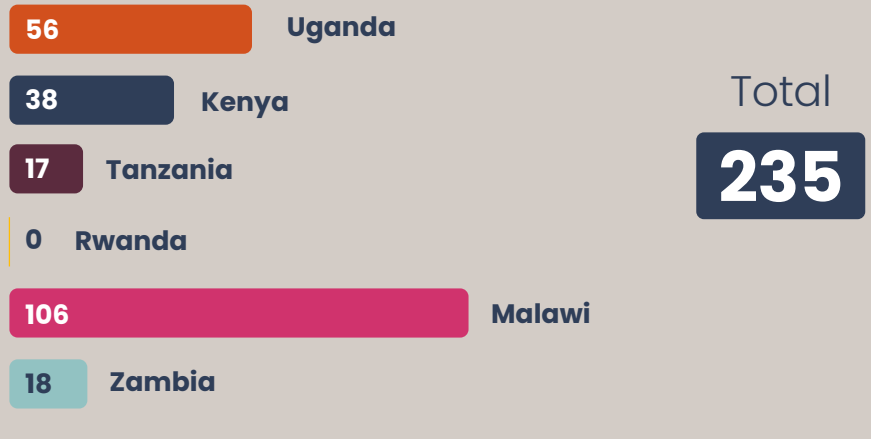
Total

**1,016**



**We trained teachers in inclusive teaching methods,** providing the necessary training and tools to help teachers support all children in the classroom and ensuring children with disabilities can participate in lessons alongside their peers.

### Teachers we trained



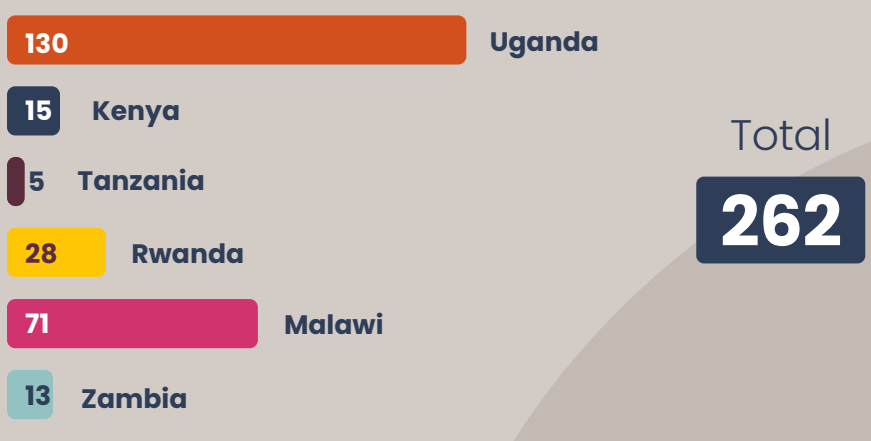
**We supported parents of children with disabilities** through parent support groups or community events, giving parents the opportunity to discuss the challenges they face, support each other and work together to advocate for their children’s inclusion.

### Parents we supported



**We worked with government officials and ministers** advocating for improvements in disability inclusion at a local and national level in key government services in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Malawi and Zambia.

### Government officials we worked with





# Uganda

We have been working in Uganda **since 1984** alongside **Uganda Society for Disabled Children** (USDC), 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 we're proud of

We know that children with disabilities are at an increased risk of being left behind in school when their needs are not properly identified. Early detection of their needs therefore allows for the correct intervention and ensures better outcomes for children with disabilities. In partnership with Marr Munning Trust, we have successfully supported six schools to adopt and improve access to learning for children with disabilities through the combined use of Individualised Learning Plans and Early Screening tools. Through this project, over 60 children were identified and supported with Individualised Learning Plans (ILP) based on their specific needs. To date, 70% of the children have achieved their ILP objectives and are progressing to higher classes, which is a significant achievement in enabling children to realise their full potential.

**Able Child Africa's support to my team and ongoing sharing of ideas has helped us come up with new ideas we would not have thought possible.**

**Dolorence Were,**  
Director USDC



### Improving school enrolment through inclusive Early Childhood Education

Children with disabilities often remain hidden, with those around them more likely to hold low expectations for their future. **Getting them into early childhood settings and breaking down these negative stereotypes is vital to ensure they are able to thrive.** Having successfully opened 18 Community Learning Centres in partnership with Comic Relief, the past year has seen considerable progress in improving the school-readiness of children with disabilities through our community-led learning programme. The existing curriculum used in the centres was refined to ensure it was accessible for children with disabilities, and multiple trainings were delivered to the centre caregivers. There are now **724 children enrolled across the 18 Centres, of which 20% are children with disabilities, far exceeding our expectations at the start of the project.** As a community-led project, we have seen several instances where members of the community have donated time, materials and food to help ensure the successful running of the Centres. Awareness raising events have also ensured people in the community understand the importance of education for children with disabilities.





## Abasi's Story

**Abasi** is a four-year-old boy living in a village in northern Uganda. When Abasi was three weeks old, he became extremely unwell, and his health continued to deteriorate. He was referred to the general hospital for treatment and while there, he had several seizures. It wasn't until much later that his parents realised that Abasi was unable sit upright or crawl, like other children the same age were able to do. They were extremely worried and unsure what was wrong.

When Abasi was three, his mother heard about the **inclusive Early Childhood Education (ECE)** project, **where children with disabilities were being enrolled alongside children without disabilities in a community-led programme.** She expressed her interest and Abasi was immediately enrolled. Abasi received a formal medical assessment through the project, where he was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. Abasi's parents received support through the project's parent support group, as well as regular home visits from project staff. They learnt about basic physiotherapy exercises that they could do with Abasi at home to aid his development.

Now, Abasi is able to crawl and can stand upright when holding onto an object for support. He is doing well at the centre and enjoys playing with the other children. Abasi's parents are extremely pleased and have a restored hope for his future. A future where **he can continue to go to school and play an active role in society,** just like other children with disabilities reached through the project.

Abasi's parents are extremely pleased and have a **restored hope for his future.** A future where he can continue to go to school and **play an active role in society.**

## Through our current projects



We advocated to  
**2,781**  
community members

on disability awareness, early identification and early intervention for children with disabilities.



We advocated to  
**130** government officials

at district and national level on disability inclusive education policy



We supported  
**676** parents

through Parent Support Group meetings

# Kenya

We have worked in Kenya since 2009 with Action Network for the Disabled (ANDY) supporting children and young people with disabilities to be included in all aspects of their lives.

While Kenya has a system of free primary education, the curriculum requires basic skills that most children with disabilities do not have. Very few have accessed early education, meaning young people with disabilities are less likely to be employed, and more likely to be living in poverty. With limited access to education or health care, these young people continue to face injustice, stigma and sometimes abuse and violence. This is magnified in Kibera, Africa's largest slum where ANDY is based, and home to thousands of people with disabilities.

## What we're proud of

This year, we kickstarted a new project **specifically looking to improve the inclusion of female young people with disabilities in vocational training and employment in Kenya**. This represents the first focused employability programme that we have delivered. The project aims to address the discrimination that many young women with disabilities in Kenya face in trying to access employment due to their gender and disability. The project, titled 'We Can! Women's employability and employment programme', commenced in December 2022 in partnership with the British and Foreign Schools Society, where 20 young people with disabilities were identified to become employability mentors. Through vocational skills training, mentoring, entrepreneurial business development and business leadership, the 20 young people will **mentor a wider group of 180 young people with disabilities** across the duration of the project. They will also **identify specific solutions to the barriers young people with disabilities face in developing employability skills and entering employment**, drawing on their own experiences to educate business leaders on how to create channels for employment.



### Improving personal and social capabilities for lifelong learning

Creating platforms and spaces for children to express themselves provides a strong foundation for learning. This is why ANDY has been implementing Child Rights Clubs (CRCs) in Kenya for the last few years. In partnership with Comic Relief, we have implemented inclusive play sessions to over 60 targeted children with disabilities through our Ready Steady Go! project. Here, children with and without disabilities learn how to play together in a disability inclusive way, and how to support each other using child to child methodology. Teachers have received training and continual support to deliver the inclusive play sessions, with an inclusive play guide developed to ensure teachers can deliver activities that tailor to the needs of the individual children with disabilities. These platforms not only create a space for children with disabilities to be aware of their rights but allow for increased positive interactions between children with and without disabilities.



## Through our current projects



We trained **38** teachers

on inclusive teaching practices and disability rights



We trained **126** parents

to better equip them to support the early childhood development of their children with disabilities



We advocated for the rights of children with disabilities with

**15** government officials

## The impact of Parent Support Groups

**Moses** is a nine-year-old boy who has a hearing impairment and uses sign language to communicate. Prior to being enrolled into his current school as part of our Ready Steady Go project, he was unable to communicate effectively and never went outside unless one of his parents was with him.

Due to the delays in enrolling him into a school, Moses started his journey with a number of difficulties. He had a short attention span, difficulty with his memory, low exposure to Kenyan sign language and a lack of cognitive skills. He also struggled to play with other children since he had never done so before, experiencing little to no interaction with his peers. He could also not express his needs to his parents easily, and they struggled to communicate with him, which was extremely frustrating for Moses.

Through our project, one of **Moses' parents joined the Parent Support Group, where they participated in trainings focused on disability, early intervention services and home-based learning.** The trainings highlighted the importance of inclusive education and play for children with disabilities and Moses' parents began the formal assessment process so that Moses could be placed in a school that could support him.

**Since joining the school, Moses has flourished.** His confidence has increased significantly and with the support and encouragement from his parents, he is much happier at home. He interacts well with his peers and can communicate his needs more effectively. Through their engagement with the Parent Support Group, his parents have benefited hugely. Their attitudes towards disability have completely changed and they have a much more positive outlook regarding their child's future, which has allowed Moses to thrive.

Since joining the school, **Moses has flourished...** He interacts well with his peers and can communicate his needs more effectively.



# Tanzania

We have been working in Tanzania **since 2007** alongside our partners **Child Support Tanzania** (CST) to change the lives of children and young people with disabilities through inclusive education.

Many children and families in Mbeya (south-west Tanzania) are living in poverty, often exacerbated by disability, HIV/AIDS and high mortality rates. Here, services for children with disabilities are severely lacking and poorly resourced. Although primary education is free in Tanzania, children with disabilities often do not develop the basic early learning skills needed to succeed in this environment and are continually left behind when it comes to accessing primary education.

## What we're proud of

This year we worked with Child Support Tanzania to open inclusive libraries in three primary schools in Mbeya. With funding and books provided by Book Aid International. These libraries are now **providing nearly 3,000 children with access to a range of books**, including textbooks, storybooks, novels, and sensory books. Together with Book Aid International, we trained a cohort of teachers to act as librarians, with the teachers now ensuring children of different ages and reading abilities are able to access quality books to aid with their learning. One of the libraries is situated within Child Support Tanzania's own school, with regular reading sessions taking place to complement the school curriculum.

### Enhancing access to physiotherapy

Early intervention through rehabilitation therapies can significantly increase the functional independence of children. It is crucial that children with rehabilitative needs are provided with this support at



the earliest possible stage in their development. However, there is generally a poor level of understanding of disability among healthcare workers and very few trained therapists provide adequate rehabilitation services. With many children with disabilities living in poverty, the cost of travel to rehabilitative appointments and the fees incurred also exclude most families from accessing these vital services.

In response to this, we have been working with Child Support Tanzania to develop a physiotherapy and occupational therapy project within Child Support Tanzania's brand-new physiotherapy room, which was constructed as part of the Irma Skeele's legacy project. The project aims to improve the health and education of children with disabilities at Child Support Tanzania's school through improved rehabilitative support.

Occupational therapy and physiotherapy training was provided for teachers, while direct support was provided to parents to provide therapeutic support for their children at home. The school was also equipped with sensory tools, and speech and language therapy tools, to ensure better retention rates for children and reduce educational inequalities between children with and without disabilities.





## Through our current projects



We supported **90** parents

of children with disabilities through Parent Support Groups



We supported **202** children with disabilities

through access to quality inclusive libraries and physiotherapy support



We trained **17** teachers

on inclusive libraries management and rehabilitative support for children with disabilities



### Individual Case Study: Mary

**Mary**, a new pupil at Child Support Tanzania's Inclusive Early Childhood Centre, used to crawl. She could occasionally use a walking frame for a short period of time but was unable to move around unattended and could only move a few steps at a time. But, through our project we have been trying to change that.

A physiotherapist, funded through the project has been supporting Mary in school and at home. Mary's mother has been trained on how to help her continue her rehabilitation at home and Child Support Tanzania have conducted several home visits to help monitor her progress outside of school.

With the help of the physiotherapists, teachers and her parents, there has been a significant improvement in Mary's mobility. **Mary is now able to walk without her frame with little support.** She has gained considerable confidence and both her teachers and family are continually encouraging Mary to keep progressing. **Everyone is now confident that Mary will be able to stand up and walk with no assistance,** something that would not have happened without the support she received - a result we are aiming to realise for many more children like Mary.

# Rwanda

We have been working in Rwanda with **Uwezo Youth Empowerment** (UWEZO) **since 2016**, supporting children and young people with disabilities to stand up for their rights to access inclusive education, inclusive WASH, and accessible child protection systems.

Nearly half of all people with disabilities in Rwanda are under 35. Two-thirds are not in education or employment and over 90% fall below the national poverty line. Children with disabilities comprise less than 1% of all primary school students, and this rate drops further at secondary level. As they grow older, these inequities remain. Rwandan young people with disabilities are far less likely to participate in the workforce, with 18.5% unemployed. While Rwanda has a good track record of inclusive policies and has taken many strides towards better inclusion of its population, many children with disabilities are still unable to access basic services and face stigma and discrimination, and 30% of children with disabilities have never attended school.

## What we're proud of

This year we are proud to be making child protection systems in Rwanda more inclusive in partnership with Euromoney Institutional Investor. Children and young people with disabilities are at much higher risk of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. Exacerbating this is the lack of appropriate mechanisms to prevent, report and respond to child protection cases for children with disabilities.

Through our project with UWEZO, **we are supporting child protection systems to be more sensitive to the needs of children with disabilities, particularly girls.** We are working to ensure that parents of children with disabilities are better



supported to prevent abuse through 'positive parenting' workshops. We are training young people with disabilities to mentor children with disabilities to inform them of their rights. We are also undertaking an extensive mapping of existing child protection services and systems in Rwanda, assessing the existing levels of disability inclusion. This will form an evidence base to promote inclusive child protection systems across Rwanda and more widely.

### Inclusive mental health provision

Children with disabilities 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, research has shown that there is very little mental health provision for children and young people with disabilities.

This year we started an exciting new mental health-focused project in Rwanda with UWEZO, in partnership with Network for Social Change, which will directly respond to Rwanda's mental health service provision gap for children with disabilities. We held participatory workshops with children and young people with disabilities to help us understand their experiences and access to mental health services. This research is now informing the design of tools for an inclusive mental health 'toolbox', as well as a Disability-Inclusive Child Mental Health Guide. The pack will contain practical advice for practitioners on supporting the mental health of children and young people with disabilities, which we hope will be rolled out nationally.



## Through our current projects



We have trained **12** young people with disabilities

in mentoring, inclusive child protection and safeguarding



We provided **94** children with disabilities

with one-to-one mentoring from older young people with disabilities



We facilitated **73** parents

with disabilities to attend training workshops on positive parenting and child protection



### Individual Case Study: Safia

**Safia** is a 13-year-old girl with a hearing impairment, who is sociable and has always enjoyed school. As part of our inclusive child protection project in Rwanda, young people with disabilities have set up child protection clubs in schools, which children with and without disabilities are invited to attend. Safia started attending these clubs regularly, giving her the **opportunity to share her own experiences and to learn from her peers**.

The groups are facilitated by the project's mentors, who lead discussions in a safe environment about disability rights for children and young people with disabilities. They discuss how any harm or abuse can be reported appropriately in disability inclusive and accessible ways. The group discussions have offered Safia the opportunity to learn more about child protection in a safe and comfortable environment, something she had not experienced before as topics such as sexual abuse are often taboo, and rarely spoken about openly. **Safia has been able to share her own worries** about how despite generally feeling included and safe while at home or school, having a hearing impairment can mean she can feel unsafe at times when she is out in her community.

**Safia has developed so much in the group that she has volunteered to lead some sessions herself**, such as mapping existing child protection systems in her community and making a presentation on the rights of children with disabilities to her classmates. She has even said that she now wants to become a social worker when she leaves school, so that she can focus on protecting children with disabilities in her community.



# Malawi

We began working in Malawi in 2020 with **Federation of Disability Organisations in Malawi (FEDOMA)**.

Since then, we have worked together to strengthen FEDOMA's organisational capacity and to create a more inclusive environment for children and youth with disabilities in Malawi.

## What we're proud of

Following on from the accessibility audits we completed led by people with disabilities, we have now improved the accessibility of Community Childhood Centres as part of our Early Childhood Education project in Malawi. We have supported the modification of these centres to ensure they are safe and inclusive for children with disabilities to learn and thrive. We have equipped the centres with **inclusive play equipment to encourage pre-school children with disabilities to develop key skills in a fun and inclusive environment**, preparing them for further learning.

We have also delivered trainings to Malawian government officials on disability inclusive child safeguarding and child protection, as well as on inclusive monitoring, evaluation and learning. These trainings have also offered the opportunity to reflect on existing strengths and opportunities in our Early Childhood Education programme and share best practice among staff.

**We value the partnership with Able Child Africa as it goes beyond project implementation, to support organisational development and build our capacity**

**Chris, FEDOMA Project Manager**



### Disability inclusive play schemes

Children with disabilities are often excluded from early childhood education, an exclusion which can lead to educational and social inequalities that can persist through their lifetime. As part of our three-year project in Malawi, we developed a disability inclusive play scheme, which is being implemented across multiple Community Centres. This scheme incorporates elements of play alongside more traditional teaching methods to develop valuable skills. To support this scheme, we have co-developed an inclusive play guide with Malawian education officials and organised multiple trainings for teachers on how to implement the play scheme in their centres in a disability inclusive way.

Bi-weekly sessions are being held for children with and without disabilities in the centres, where the children are led through games, music and other activities to encourage the development of their social and motor skills. This provides an valuable opportunity for children with disabilities to build their confidence, while creating an entry point for their integration into primary education.





## Through our current projects



We enrolled **288** young children with disabilities

into early childhood education



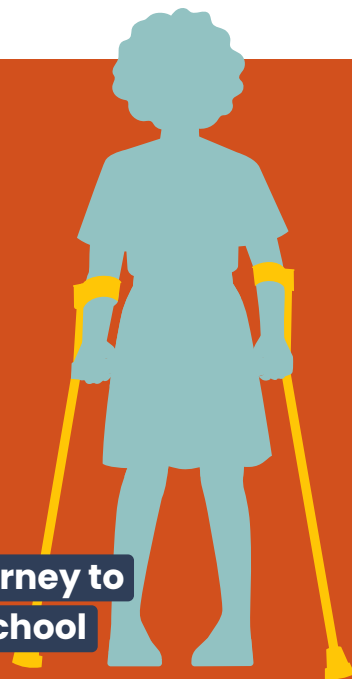
We enrolled **219** parents

of children with disabilities into parent support groups



We trained **106** teachers

in disability inclusive teaching methods



## Faith's journey to primary school

**Faith** is a seven-year-old girl who lives in a village in one of our project districts with her family. When she was three years old, she contracted cerebral malaria, which led to her developing a physical impairment. This impacted her ability to move independently, particularly her ability to walk.

As part of our Early Childhood Education project, **Faith started attending the inclusive play scheme at her local Community Centre**, where she was able to play with other children and develop critical motor skills, social skills, pre-numeracy and literacy skills. Faith also attended a screening programme where physical and occupational therapists were able to suggest ways she could be supported. As a result, parallel bars were installed in her home so she could practise walking independently and her parents were taught physiotherapy exercises to help Faith build her strength in a safe environment.

Through the inclusive play scheme, **Faith has met new friends and has grown in confidence**. As a result of the support she received, Faith has now successfully transitioned to primary school along with her peers and **continues to thrive in school**.



"There is a **great improvement in Faith**. We are now very hopeful because the changes we have seen."

*Faith's mother*

# Zambia

We began working in Zambia with **Zambia Association of Parents for Children with Disabilities** (ZAPCD) in 2020.

Since then, we have worked together to understand the barriers children with disabilities face in accessing inclusive education in the country and have developed a new inclusive education programme.

In Zambia, it is estimated there are just over 1 million people with disabilities, which equates to 7.2% of the population. No policy or statement which outlines the need for inclusive education exists in Zambia. As few as 22% of children with disabilities are in Early Childhood Education, 52% are in primary education and only 12% are recorded as having completed secondary education. The needs of children with disabilities are not fully considered in government plans, with national data and evidence desperately needed to influence the government to address the needs of children with disabilities.

## What we're proud of

Our new three-year Early Learning Programme in partnership with Vitol Foundation, **ensures young children with disabilities have equitable access to Early Childhood Education**. Working across six pre-primary schools in the east of the country, the project is tackling the barriers children with disabilities face. Activities in the first year of the project have targeted parents, teachers, government officials and community leaders, while child-centred activities have encouraged children with and without disabilities to better support each other.

The project has also seen the **formation of Parent Support Groups, which equip parents with the knowledge and skills to provide Early Childhood Education support at homes**. The six centres will become 'centres of excellence' through teacher trainings, the incorporation of inclusive play and the use of Individualised Education Plans. A community awareness campaign has started to create greater demand for inclusive Early Childhood Education, while local and national advocacy activities have targeted government decision makers to realise IECE for children with disabilities.



### Training the media on disability inclusive reporting

As part of our Inclusive Early Childhood Education programme in Zambia, we are working with ZAPCD to change the narrative of stigma and misunderstanding that can often surround children with disabilities. To tackle this, the project has included multiple community awareness events and media campaigns to spread awareness about the rights of children with disabilities, especially in their right to access Early Childhood Education.

As part of the programme's media campaign, a multi-day training was organised for media professionals to inform them of the rights of children with disabilities and identify different strategies for reporting on disability in an inclusive and empowering way. The professionals included representatives from both radio and television, covering local and national programming. Over two days, the participants were invited to learn about different models of disability, common myths and misconceptions about disability. At the end, participants organised a press conference where they discussed the rights of children with disabilities, which was broadcast across Zambia on both television and radio.



## Helping Mary to better support her child

**Mary** is a mother of a child with disabilities who is part of our Early Childhood Education project in Zambia. She is a single parent as her husband left the home shortly after their child was born. Mary had assumed that her child would always stay at home with her due to his disability, as she had no knowledge of other children with disabilities in her village who had attended school.

However, when Mary's child was three years old, she was contacted by ZAPCD about the **inclusive childhood education programme in her local community centre**. Despite her initial reservations, and after discussing it with the teachers, Mary agreed to enrol her son in the centre for a few hours per day.

**Mary immediately began to see a change in her son's confidence and progress in his speech.** Mary became more active and **got involved in the project's Parent Support Group, where she was able to share her experiences with other parents in her community.** As part of the group, Mary also joined a savings group and received financial training, to help raise funds to be used to support their children.

Since their involvement in the project, Mary has greatly appreciated the positive changes she has seen in her son, but in addition, she has seen the benefit of the project's advocacy and awareness raising activities, which have changed the way her community treats her and her son. **The Parent Support Group has given her a renewed sense of belonging and confidence to raise her son.** Mary's story has shown the power of involving parents and communities to help support children with disabilities to access IECE.



"This project has really changed the way I see my child. I really used to feel hopeless, and no one gave me respect. Now when people see me attending meetings and workshops and my child going to school, **they ask me how I did it.**"

*Mary – Parent of a child with disability*

## Through our current projects



We enrolled **94** young children with disabilities

into early childhood education.



We consulted with **13** government officials

throughout the set-up of the project to ensure their buy-in and ownership of the project.



We have supported **68** parents

parents of children with disabilities to register in parent support groups.





“The project has **changed our attitude towards Peace’s participation in education.** We better understand that a child with a disability has all the same rights as any other child.”

– Peace’s Father



# Peace's story

Peace is a joyful and energetic six-year-old girl, the middle of three siblings. At an early age she was **diagnosed with Down Syndrome** which can sometimes make **communication a challenge**.

➤ Peace's parents didn't know how best to support her, and for much of Peace's early life, she was not allowed to interact with other children and kept close to home. Her parents had limited resources to support and unaware of what rights Peace had, she was not enrolled into early education. Peace was in danger of falling behind.



**This is where  
Able Child Africa  
came in.**

Through our project, **Peace and her family were approached with information of the new Inclusive Early Childhood Education project** being implemented across her community. Following conversations with the project staff, Peace's parents agreed to enrol her in the centre. Once at the centre, Peace reacted positively to the environment and quickly began to **interact more freely with other children and started to make friends**. Her parents were also informed of financial support they were entitled to and were able to source funds and equipment to help her attend school.

**Peace's parents attitude to their daughter's disability has changed entirely.** Peace's father now chairs his local Parent Support Group and leads them to collectively improve their community's awareness and understanding of their children's rights and needs.

# Advocating for **Change**

We are committed to raising awareness of the unique barriers that children with disabilities face and **actively advocate for recognition of their rights** and the **funding associated with their inclusion.**



We believe our partners are best placed to advocate locally and seek to strengthen their capacity to influence change. As such we work primarily through our partners to advocate for the inclusion of children with disabilities in local policies, procedures and budgets. We stand alongside them to hold their governments to account for their stated obligations and commitments as outlined in national charters, constitutions and international frameworks and ensure it is them, not Able Child Africa who are recognised for projects that deliver local advocacy. We also work with partners to deliver local community level campaigns and awareness raising strategies to ensure children with disabilities grow up in supportive unprejudiced environments.

**This year, our partners have we have had some significant success in **influencing** and **strengthening national level policies.****

In **Uganda**, USDC have been able to gain further support from the District Inspector of Schools in Lira, with Inspector agreeing to use the Individualised Learning Plans (ILPs) developed in the project across all schools in Lira. USDC visit the district education department on a monthly basis to ensure officials are updated regularly, with further awareness raised through involving officials in project trainings, government working groups and Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) meetings.

In **Kenya**, as a result of continued lobbying activities and the establishment of two Community Based Rehabilitation groups, which bring together government officials, education and other professionals, parents and community members, there have been several successes with officials. Several children have received additional support, such as bursaries and assistive devices. Parents have also received additional training and grants to strengthen their businesses, with this income in turn support the inclusion of their children with disabilities in schools.

In **Tanzania**, Child Support Tanzania (CST) continue to be a leading voice in Tanzanian civil society for the inclusive education of children with disabilities. This year, CST have continued to be recognised by the government as a model centre of excellence for disability inclusive education, with government officials in Mbeya bringing their visitors to the CST school as a way of demonstrating the district government's commitment to inclusive education. CST continue to be consulted by national government on guiding the implementation plans of the National Strategy for Inclusive Education (NSIE) 2022-26 period, which they supported the initial development of. Advocacy continues to be high on CST's agenda, with several opportunities capitalised on to maximise their impact and subsequent awareness raising of disability inclusive education for children with disabilities.



In **Rwanda**, as part of our inclusive child protection programme, our partner UWEZO have continually engaged with local government officials to ensure their support for making Rwanda's child protection systems more disability inclusive. As a result, the officials have helped to facilitate the identification of children and youth with disabilities in their communities and have attended community meetings to talk about the importance of protecting and empowering children with disabilities. UWEZO have also created a system with local government officials to rapidly share information about safeguarding and child protection issues, allowing officials to draw on UWEZO's expertise to enable more disability-sensitive responses to child protection cases involving children with disabilities.

In **Malawi**, our partner FEDOMA have been working closely with the district governments in the project regions to support the design of the District Development Plan (DDP), which will guide all development activities in the districts over the next five years. FEDOMA have been brought on to the DDP committee as disability inclusion experts and have been advocating to ensure the DDP is inclusive of children and youth with disabilities. FEDOMA have also led on disability inclusion trainings for the team who will oversee the DDP's implementation to ensure the plan is rolled out in a disability sensitive way. This will have a huge impact on the inclusion of many people with disabilities in the regions who will benefit from the many development activities over the course of the next five years.

In **Zambia**, we have engaged with government officials during the first year of our Inclusive Early Childhood Education programme to ensure their support for the programme's outcomes. Representatives from multiple government departments have shared commitments to better include children with disabilities in Early Childhood Education across Chadiza district. Our partner ZAPCD have supported the establishment of a disability inclusion committee involving several government departments, which will serve as an accountability mechanism to ensure these commitments are carried out.



**We have been able to build a national network of advocates; young people with disabilities empowered to campaign for their rights.**

**Youth Mentor and Advocate in Rwanda**



**My daughter has brought great changes in her community. She has taught us to see that children with disabilities can achieve great things.**

**Mother** of a beneficiary of our work

# Financial Report

## Overview

**Able Child Africa’s total income this year was £1,035,086 which represents a growth of 50% from the previous financial year.**

This is comprised of £626,604 in restricted funding (including grants) and £408,482 in unrestricted flexible funding.

Total expenditure this year was £909,023, which is a 23% growth from the previous financial year.

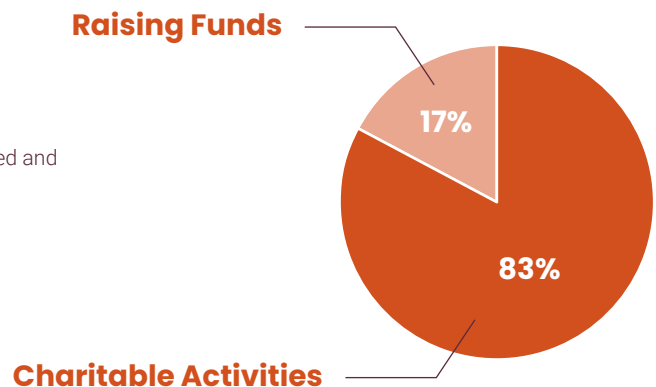
## Income and Expenditure

Income and Expenditure	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds
Income	£408,482	£626,604	£1,035,086
Expenditure	£382,271	£526,752	£909,023
Net Income (Expenditure)	£26,211	£99,852	£126,063

## Spending on Charitable Activities

Expenditure Split	Charitable Activities	Raising Funds	Total Expenditure
Total	£748,661	£160,362	£909,023

Expenditure on charitable activities amounts to **83p for every pound** raised and comprises costs of our projects in Africa, our advocacy and influencing.



## Reserves

**We ended March 2023 with £225,593 of unrestricted reserves**, well above our 6-months reserves target. We have continued to maintain a strong unrestricted reserves position throughout this unstable period and predict a growth in our unrestricted income levels over the next year.



# Celebrating You

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Nothing we do would be possible without the many people who support or fund us, complete challenges for us or provide in-kind support. So, to all of you, a massive thank you!

## Our Patrons

We are lucky to have some amazing patrons who continue to support our work and raise the profile of what we do. We want to thank Anne Wafula-Strike, Ellie Robinson, Keith Nethercot and Emeli Sandé for all their support over the last year and we look forward to an exciting year ahead.

## Our Ambassadors

There are a small group of people who go above and beyond in their support of our work. Our Ambassadors are incredibly dedicated individuals who understand the importance of our work and are willing to back us on a personal basis and over a long period of time. We want to say a huge thank you to Azad Ayub, to Clare Persey, to Vijay Parikh for your unwavering support and personal connection to what we do. Your support is not taken for granted and we are proud to call you part of the Able Child Africa family.

## Our Corporate Supporters

We are very fortunate to have some amazing corporate partners, whose continued support through a challenging environment over the last few years has been vital. To The Exile Group, to Dan Sheriff, Dom Kloiber, Katy Rose and Hesham Zakai and all the team, a huge thank you not only for your continued generosity of support, but your willingness to make us part of your family. The Exile Group currently provide us with an office space free of charge, which means a significant saving to the charity and means more money can get to where it is needed most.

To PenCarrie, thank you for once again not only continuing your support but for increasing your support and commitment to the work we do. It means a lot.

To Hassell Inclusion, to Rosnah and Jonathan Hassell for quietly providing an incredibly generous and long-term commitment to the charity and buying in to what we do. Your support is valuable, and it is great to have you with us on this journey.

To American Century and Paul Harrison, who have now provided five years of support through their grant donation and matching scheme, allowing us to build a base on which we hope to be able to grow our support in the US.

To Cargill and Juwon Sofola for your significant and continued annual donation towards our work. To Findlay Park, thank you for investing in our mission and starting a journey with us. Particular thanks to Sello Lekalakala for his support.

We would also like to thank everyone that donates their services free of charge or at reduced rates to help us keep our costs down and ensure as much money as possible goes to where it is needed most. A big thank you to the team at Penelope for their IT support; to Raihan Islam, Bakhtiyar Islam and everyone at lirth for their brand and website support; to Michèle Renée Creative for design support; and to Peter Weiss at Simon Muirhead Burton for pro-bono legal advice a huge thank you.

## Our Challenge Takers

Every year we are so lucky to have an amazing group of fundraisers who take on the challenge of the London Marathon and raise funds for our work. This year, we had another big team with 38 runners. We want to thank each and every one of you that ran and raised money for us this year. We know how difficult both parts of that challenge can be and it was great to be able to cheer you all on, on the day.

We also want to say a special thank you to a few of you who went the extra step this year. To Krishan Basra, who raised an incredible sum of over £7,500 for Able Child Africa - a huge achievement. To Edward Joudrey, who ran for us for the second year in a row and as well as raising over £3,700. And to Alastair Cotterell and Steve Leighfield who both went above board in raising over £2,500. We also send a special thank you to David Cowie, Gary Cowie, and young Raf who independently raised over £2,000 during a five-day cycle across Holland, from the Hook to Amsterdam. The funds and awareness you raised are hugely appreciated. Thank you.

## Our Individual Supporters

There are so many of you that support our work. From regular monthly donations to spreading the news of our work. Each and every one of you is an inspiration and we thank you for the role you play in changing the lives of children with disabilities. A special thank you goes out to Cath Ford and Tony Shubrook, Steve Smith, Heather Barr, Tunji Akintokun, Patricia Balogun and Kunle Fagbenro for supporting us for so long and for your unwavering support to help us achieve our mission.

## Celebrating You

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Nothing we do would be possible without the many people who support or fund us, complete challenges for us or provide in-kind support. So, to all of you, a massive thank you!

### Our Trustees

None of what we do would be possible without the support of an incredibly passionate Board of Trustees, who all give up their time to make us a better organisation. We are incredibly lucky to have such a supportive and engaged group of individuals who create a positive environment that allows the organisation to flourish.

So, to our UK Board - to Jim Sellars who has been a driving force as Chair over the past three years. To Mitul Shah as Treasurer, Martin Hill, Emily Bueno, Cat Carter, Maria Omare, Miiro Michael, Bharat Mehta and Abigail Viljoen we want to say a massive thank you for everything that you do, we couldn't do it without you.

We also want to thank our US Board of Trustees, who are working very hard to help us establish our base in the US. To Paul Harrison, Liz Macfadyen, Rachelle Gregory and Neil Hankinson, a huge thank you for the time, energy and commitment to help us build something new, and we look forward to an exciting year ahead.

### Our Staff

And finally, a huge thank you to the whole staff team, who work tirelessly to bring to life the vision of the charity. We are very lucky to have such a passionate, hardworking, and skilled team, who help drive forward the organisation to make it what it is. We think they are all great and would like to thank them for making Able Child Africa feel like a family and a positive place to work.

### We would like to thank the following donors for their support in the last year

American Century Investments  
Azad Ayub Ltd.  
The Bartlett Foundation  
Book Aid International  
Cargill  
Comic Relief  
Euromoney Institutional Investors  
Exile Group  
Findlay Park  
Hassell Inclusion  
Irma Skeeles Legacy  
James Tudor Foundation  
Network for Social Change  
PenCarrie  
Rangoonwala Foundation  
Souter Charitable Trust  
The Allan & Nesta Ferguson Trust  
The British and Foreign Schools Society  
The Marr Munning Trust  
Tula Trust  
Vitol Foundation



# Looking Ahead: Our 2030 Strategy

With a changing landscape comes a changing role for Able Child in how to **best support children with disabilities** in Africa.

For the last 40 years Able Child has been part of a progressive change to support African organisations working to improve the lives of children with disabilities. As our reach grew over the last ten years, we began a process to analyse what our role has been, what it is now and what it should be in the future.

Following an extensive 18-month consultation and review process, we have developed a new way forward. A direction that creates an organisation that is fit for purpose, that builds a model aligned with the interests of our current partners in Africa, and ensures we are best placed to achieve our vision of ensuring no child with a disability is left behind.

## This is our 2030 Strategy.

We are undergoing an **operational shift**. Able Child has always been a 'vehicle' for African registered organisations to build expertise, access funding and to advocate for change. Our new strategy takes this role to the next logical step as we transition ourselves into a **network**, cementing our partners at the centre of who we are.

This is a journey that will begin with the incubation of the new network model within our current structure, ensuring a supportive environment for the network to learn and grow. Once up and running, the network will have greater decision making over the organisation and decide how we prioritise our activities. At the same time, we will be expanding to new regions, confirming our presence in Southern Africa as well as expanding into West Africa, as we look for a wider network across Africa.

To support this growth, we will embark on an international expansion of our operations. The new strategy will see a significant expansion in our activities in the US as we look to build new funding partners and influence in the run up to 2030. Following the expansion in the US we will then look for future growth opportunities as we raise the profile of the brand so we can secure more fundings and have greater influence on the international stage.

We have identified two strategic priorities. We want to have greater reach and expand our influence across Africa, and we believe transitioning to a network model is the best way to achieve this.

### Growth & Influence

Expanding our reach and impact across Africa, working with more organisations in more countries.

Expansion of our income portfolio outside the UK, moving first into the US and then looking at future opportunities.

Raising the profile of the organisational brand, so we have greater influence on the international stage.

### Building a Network

Implementation of a new network model, for African organisations supporting children with disabilities.

Creation of a new body or structure that meaningfully shifts power to member organisations within the network.

Development of a powerful joint voice to speak with expertise on the issues of children with disabilities.



# Able Child Africa Network

We are implementing a new network model to bring together the leading African based organisations working with and for children with disabilities across the continent.

## Why we need the network

### **Broaden our impact.**

Principally we want to do more. We are really proud of our partnership model and it has been a strong driver of our success over recent years. But we believe we can achieve greater impact as a wider network of likeminded organisations across Africa.

### **Positioning ourselves.**

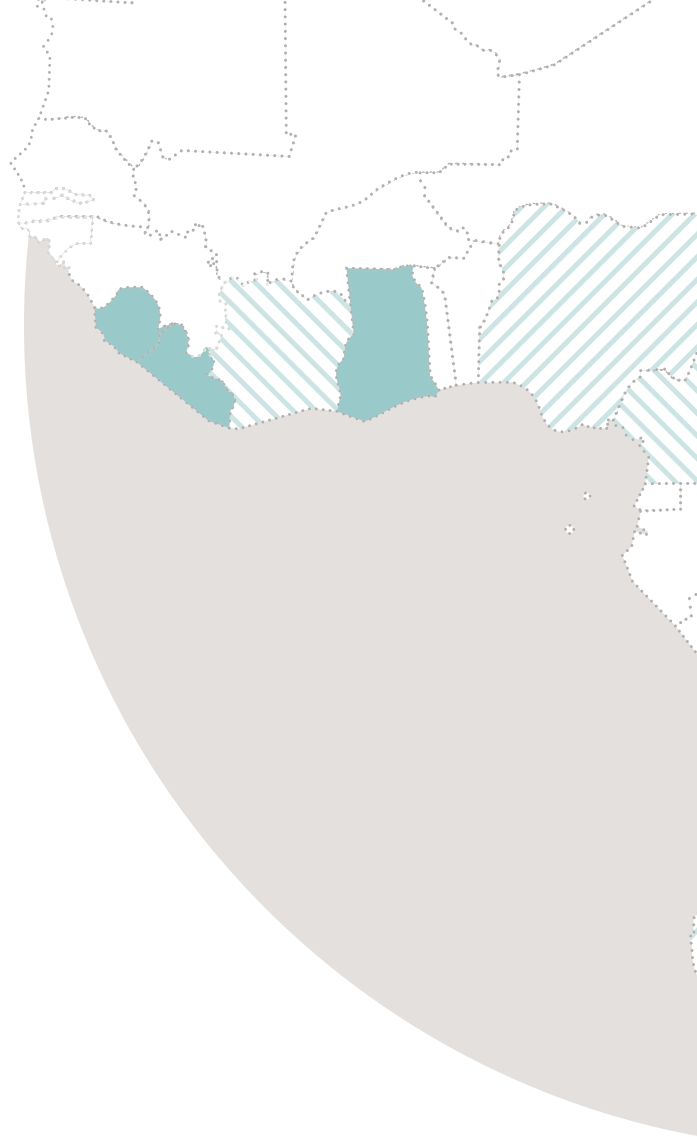
We will be the leading network working solely to improve the lives of children with disabilities in Africa. We will bring the expertise from the best African-registered NGOs to shape the landscape for what works for children with disabilities in development programming.

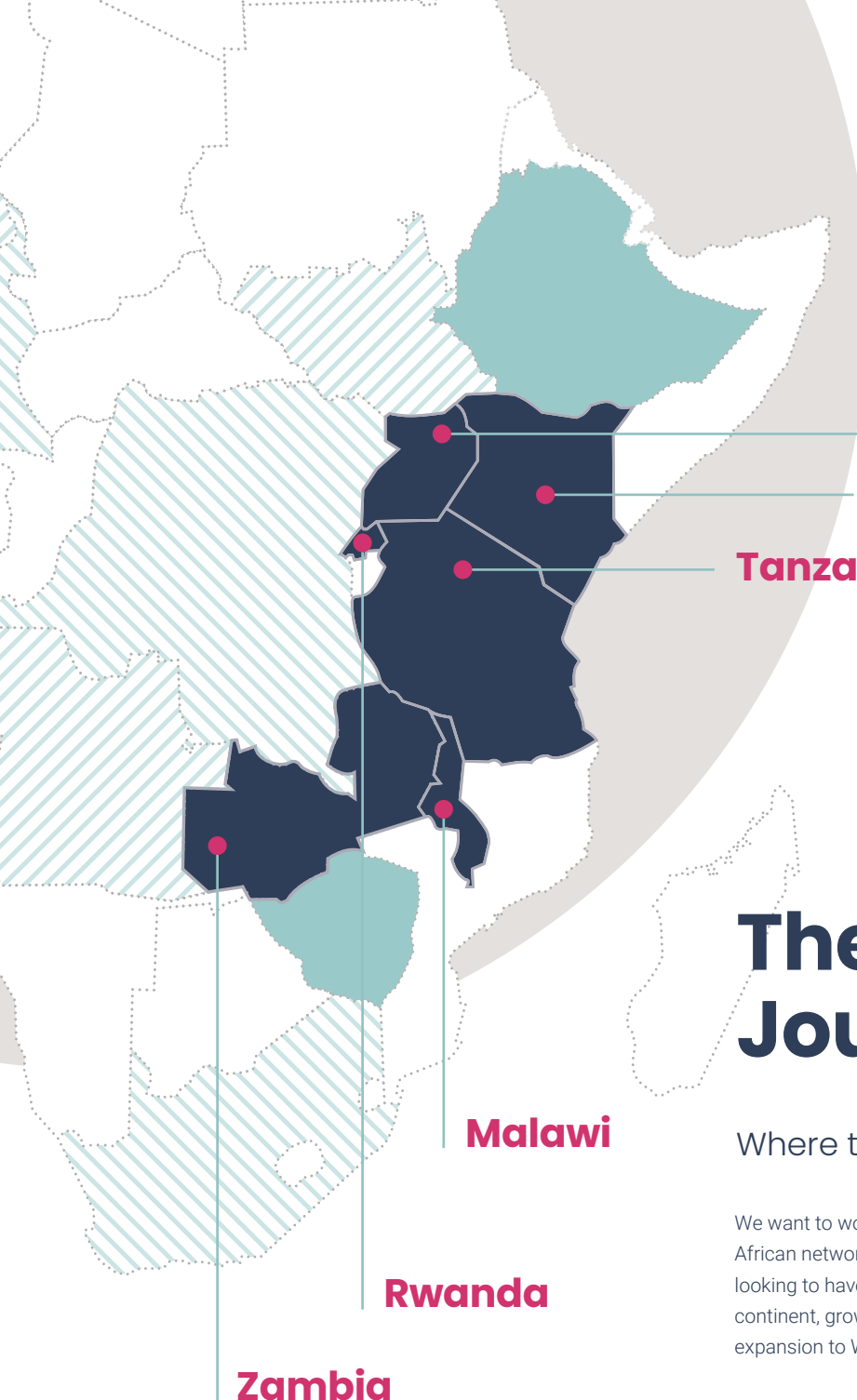
### **Changing landscape.**

There have been social shifts in relation to our work that requires us to change. The anti-racism movement, alongside dialogues about unequal power-dynamics and outdated, colonial approaches to development brings with it a need to be self-critical and a responsibility to adapt to new ways of working.

### **Listening to our partners.**

Our partners told us they wanted to do things differently. They want to take the lead and make decisions about how we support and allocate our funds. They wanted to challenge extractive reporting and to have direct relationships with donors. They believed they were stronger together. So, we listened.





**Uganda**

**Kenya**

**Tanzania**

**Malawi**

**Rwanda**

**Zambia**

## The Network Journey

Where the network will operate.

We want to work across Africa. In order to be a fully representative African network, we need to broaden our reach. By 2030 we are looking to have active members in at least three regions on the continent, growing our presence in Southern Africa, alongside an expansion to West Africa.

This growth will be led by the network themselves, who will choose how and where we grow. Our priority will always be focussed on working with African organisations who work for children with disabilities and see value in joining the Network.

Currently working in **Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Malawi** and **Zambia**, we foresee working across more countries in East and Southern Africa as well as West Africa by 2030, as demonstrated by the map.



# Safe. Thriving. Heard.

## Safe.

We stand up for the rights of children and young people with disabilities to ensure they are protected and included in their communities.

## Thriving.

We ensure that children and young people with disabilities have access to an education and the services they need to succeed.

## Heard.

We work with children and young people with disabilities to be confident and resilient, amplifying their voice to demand their own inclusion.











Educate. Educate. Educate.

Amplify. Amplify. Amplify.

Protect. Protect. Protect.

Educate. Educate. Educate.

Amplify. Amplify. Amplify.

Protect. Protect. Protect.

Educate. Educate. Educate.

Amplify. Amplify. Amplify.





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