

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY TONGA 2024



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Ministry of Education and Training
GOVERNMENT OF TONGA

Foreword

The Ministry of Education and Training (MET) is pleased to introduce the comprehensive review of our Inclusive Education Policy in collaboration with UNICEF. This endeavour underscores our firm commitment to ensuring that every child from age 4-18 has the right to access quality education in Tonga, irrespective of the child's abilities, gender, religion, socio-economic status, physical condition, or location.

The involvement of all stakeholders has been invaluable, and their expertise has provided deep insights and strategic guidance for the Ministry of Education and Training. This critical effort has highlighted a clear roadmap for the future, ensuring that inclusivity remains at the heart of our educational initiatives. This is not just a policy mandate; it is a moral imperative and a foundation of a just and equitable learning society. By addressing the diverse needs of all learners, we aim to break down barriers and create a more inclusive, accepting, and forward-thinking educational environment. This review has reinforced our belief that inclusivity enriches the learning experience for everyone, fostering understanding and mutual respect among students.

I extend my deepest gratitude to UNICEF for their dedication throughout this process and for being a source of inspiration. Additionally, I would like to thank all the educators and stakeholders who contributed their time and expertise to this policy.

Together, we are making strides towards a future where every child's right to education is upheld, celebrated, and fully addressed evens/he is born with disability. "Neither person with disability nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him" (John 9: 3).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hu'akavameiliku', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Hon. Hu'akavameiliku
Minister for Education and Training.

Acknowledgements

The development of this policy was led by the Ministry of Education and Training, with support from UNICEF.

The policy reflects the consideration and input from individuals across Tonga, including people with disabilities, parents, families and caregivers of children with disabilities (see Annex A for a full list).

We gratefully acknowledge the time and insights of all involved, including educators from the ministry's divisions, institutions, government and mission schools, civil society organizations, non-governmental agencies, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, church leaders, community leaders and parents. Your invaluable and unwavering support has been instrumental in shaping this policy, which truly echoes our joint commitment to inclusivity and educational excellence.

A special thanks to our development partner, UNICEF, for their generous financial support, making this crucial review possible. Your dedication to the betterment of education is deeply appreciated.

We also wish to acknowledge the exceptional efforts of Sally Baker, whose expertise and experience were pivotal in crafting this policy. Your hard work with the Inclusive Education Unit staff has laid a strong foundation for inclusive education in Tonga.

Through cooperation, we have made substantial advancements towards a more inclusive and equitable educational future for All children in our nation.

Mālō 'aupito.

Mr 'Isikeli Oko,
Chief Executive Officer,
Ministry of Education and Training.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ECE	Early Childhood Education
GoT	Government of Tonga
IE	Inclusive Education
MET	Ministry of Education and Training
MoH	Ministry of Health
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
OPD	Organisations of People with Disabilities
TNVIA	Tonga National Vision Impairment Association
TSDF	Tonga Strategic Development Framework
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

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Purpose

This policy establishes a framework for providing education for children with disabilities in the Kingdom of Tonga. The policy reflects the priorities and views of people from across the islands of Tonga.

Vision

An educational system where all children, including children with disabilities, participate and are treated equally, and the educational system adapts its procedures and teaching modalities to ensure that all children, irrespective of their abilities, can learn, experience success, feel valued, and fulfill their potential, in line with the 'Faiako Ma'a Tonga' core values of patience, humility and kindness.

Definitions

Differentiated teaching describes methods teachers use to extend the knowledge and skills of every student in every class, regardless of their starting point. The objective is to lift the performance of all students, including those who are falling behind and those ahead of year level expectations.

Inclusive Education is the process of focusing on and responding to the diverse needs of all learners, removing barriers impeding quality education, and thereby increasing participation in learning and reducing exclusion within and from education.

Disability-inclusive education enables children (or adults) with disabilities to access education within mainstream schools and learning settings alongside peers without disabilities, in the classrooms they would be attending if they did not have a disability, or within environments that best correspond to their requirements and preferences.

Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) are non-government organisations which are representative self-advocacy groups of people with disabilities. Historically, OPDs have also been known as Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs).

Out-of-school students are primary- and secondary-aged students who are not currently enrolled in primary or secondary school.

People with disabilities (including children and students) are persons with long term physical, mental, learning, intellectual and sensory impairments and whose participation in everyday life as well as enjoyment of human rights are limited, due to socio-economic, environmental and attitudinal barriers."¹

Reasonable adjustments or accommodations are measures or actions to enable students with disabilities to participate in education on the same basis as students without disabilities. These should be applied to learning and assessment processes.

Service Providers are non-government organisations (NGO) which provide services to people with disabilities and their families. These include 'Uluaki Faiako, Tonga Red Cross Society, NATA, LATA, and Tonga National Visual Impairment Association.

Schools are educational institutions which provide Early Childhood Education (ECE), primary, secondary, and post-school education and training including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and tertiary education.

Teacher Training Institutions are educational institutions that offer teaching qualifications. These include Tonga National University, University of the South Pacific, and Tupou Tertiary Institute.

¹ United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006

Background

The Government of Tonga signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2007. Although Tonga is yet to ratify the CRPD, disability inclusion is guided by strong national policy commitments. Tonga's Strategic Development Framework 2015-2025 (TSDF) outlines a range of strategic outcomes with reference to persons with disabilities through provision of education and health services for all, and establishment of social protection and support services for people with disabilities.²

Tonga's Education Act 2013 states every child shall have the right to quality education. The Education Act articulates the principle of inclusiveness as "Every child under the age of 19 years has a right to access quality education in Tonga, irrespective of the child's gender, religion, socio-economic status, physical condition and location". It has a component on Inclusive Education which recognizes the right to education for all children from age 4-18.

The TSDF calls for effective implementation of Tonga's national policies on Disability Inclusive Development, Mental Health and Inclusive Education to ensure people with disabilities have access to appropriate health, education, training and support services and to mainstream their participation in income-generating and employment opportunities.

The TSDF also promotes improved collaboration with and support to social and civil society organisations (CSOs) and community groups, stating that this is essential for supporting people with disabilities, increasing inclusion and improving the quality of life.

Tonga's National Disability Survey (2018) found that a total of 7,649 people {3,901 female) experience one or more forms of disabilities, and that approximately 11.4% of persons aged over 18 experience disability.³ The survey report noted that women are more likely to experience disability compared to men, and that disability is more prevalent with age.

According to the survey, people with disabilities in Tonga experience less access to services and supports than others. Access to education for people with disabilities is much lower than for people without disabilities, with 61% dropping out of school and 8% never attending school. Likewise, people with disabilities are far less likely to work compared to people without disabilities.⁴

After deep and wide-ranging consultation, the Ministry of Education and Training launched its first Inclusive Education Policy in 2007. The strategic policy areas identified in this policy (2007) were:

1. Awareness, Collaboration, and Empowerment
2. Evaluation, Assessment, and Information Gathering
3. Inclusive Education Pilot Classroom
4. Teachers Institute of Education (TIOE)
5. Tonga Inclusive Model for Education (TIME)
6. Early Intervention, Case Management, and Statistics

² Government of Tonga (2015) Tonga Strategic Development Framework 2015 - 2025

³ Government of Tonga (2018) National Disability Survey Report

⁴ Ibid

7. Ongoing Professional Development
8. Access to Educational Built Environments and Educational Transport Systems
9. Early Childhood Education Collaboration and
10. Policy Monitoring, Review and Implementation.

The policy provided a framework for addressing education for children with disabilities through the development of a more inclusive educational system, by creating greater awareness of the needs of children with disabilities and identifying priority areas for action to dismantle barriers hindering their full participation during the course of their educational life.

Implementation centered around the establishment of the first special education class for children with disabilities aged between 5 and 12, located in a primary school in Nuku'alofa. The special education classroom was open to all children with disabilities throughout Tongatapu but the class was called the Inclusive Education Class. A second Inclusive Education Class was opened, in Hoi, Tongatapu.

Implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy was not monitored or evaluated. However, progress was reviewed during consultations held fifteen years after its endorsement, as a result of a decision by the Ministry of Education and Training to review and redevelop its Inclusive Education Policy.

Consultations were held in Nuku'alofa in October 2022 in order to review progress and develop new priorities for a new policy. Consultations were attended by 52 participants, including 3 people with disabilities. Follow up consultations were held in Vava'u (29 participants), Ha'apai and 'Eua.

The Framework for Disability-Inclusive Education⁵ was used to guide examination of the education system through a disability-inclusive lens (see Annex B). The framework provides an overview of the different elements of an education system that need to be addressed, including the social context, to enable the inclusion of children with disabilities. The framework is divided into two main sections: service delivery and enabling environment.

Findings are summarized as follows:

Service Delivery
Supply
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The special education classroom achieved successes with a small number of students with disabilities. However, teachers lacked training to support children with diverse and severe disabilities, classrooms weren't always fit-for-purpose according to child needs, and teachers sometimes had limited commitment. Despite this, parents believe these classrooms are the most appropriate places for learners with disabilities. These classrooms have limited capacity, and are only based in Tongatapu, limiting access to children with disabilities on other islands. Mainstream classroom teachers have had very limited access to training and exposure to support them to teach children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Teachers require an understanding of and confidence in using creative teaching approaches. Organisations

⁵ UNESCO, UNICEF, Global Partnership for Education, (UK) Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 2021. Education Sector Analysis: Methodological Guidelines.

<p>of Persons with Disabilities such as NATA can provide professional development in the CRPD, however are rarely called upon to do so.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching guides and similar resources need to be made available to support teachers to implement inclusive education. • Teacher role descriptions need to be well-defined, so that all teachers understand their role in the delivery of inclusive education. • Accessible classrooms and transport are needed as a pre-condition to disability-inclusive education. • There is no sign language in Tonga, and teachers and deaf children are not taught to use lip-reading. Teachers do not know how to use Braille, so blind children miss out on this. Learning materials in diverse formats are needed.
<p>Quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While a partnership between MET and the Ministry of Health is in place, these needs to be strengthened to enable the delivery of stronger early intervention, assistive technology and other specialist services to benefit learners with disabilities. • Special education classes are needed for children with severe or complex disabilities, while inclusive education should be established in some schools. • Curricula should incorporate inclusion principles and approaches. • Good communication between teachers, parents and others is critical. • Case management services should be extended to support learners with disabilities at the secondary level, and need to be strengthened. • Outreach services are required in order to locate children with disabilities, support them and their families, and link them and their families into Early Childhood Education. • Information about student strengths, abilities and support needs must be communicated to secondary schools when students with disabilities transition. • TVET options require strengthening to enable students with disabilities to access these.
<p>Demand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness raising efforts regarding the Inclusive Education Policy, opportunities to attend school for children with disabilities and benefits of inclusive education, need to continue, with the involvement of parents and guardians. Awareness activities are required at all levels, including family, community and national. • Parents and guardians require education in how to support and enable access to education for their children with disabilities, and in how to support children with disabilities at home. • Strong communication is required between teachers and parents of learners with disabilities.
<p>Enabling Environment</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A detailed policy and implementation plan is required to guide action. This should be monitored and evaluated. • Government policies must align with the Inclusive Education Policy. • Student disability data collection must be strengthened and made available to teachers, to assist in guiding their selections of teaching approaches. Data would also assist in monitoring the implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy at school and MET levels. • Leadership that promotes and celebrates inclusive education is critical, within the MET and in schools.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High student-teacher ratios mean that students with disabilities are not accepted into large classes. • Resources must be made available to support delivery of inclusive education policy aspirations.
Safety
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying and cyber-bullying remain a concern, especially for learners with disabilities. • Schools require plans to ensure all students are protected in an emergency.

Strategic Priorities within Tonga's Inclusive Education Policy (2023) were developed during the consultations held in Tongatapu, Haapai and Vavau in October 2022, and were informed by past experiences, successes, and lessons. These priorities were explored further, and an implementation plan developed during consultations held in 'Eua (July 2023) and Tongatapu (August 2023).

Strategic Priorities

1. Raise awareness and challenge stigma

- 1.1. The Ministry of Education shall collaborate with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities, non-government organisations, church leaders, parents of children with disabilities and community leaders to promote inclusive education across Tonga as an approach to leaving no one behind, using television, radio, social media and other communication strategies to raise awareness regarding the Inclusive Education Policy, and opportunities available for children with disabilities.
- 1.2. Working together with church and community leaders, Schools shall welcome and enroll children with disabilities and provide positive learning environments by promoting and celebrating inclusion and addressing bullying.
- 1.3. Working together with church and community leaders, Schools shall lead outreach programs to promote enrolment of children with disabilities at all school levels.

2. Strengthen stakeholder collaboration

- 2.1. The Ministry of Education shall establish an Inclusive Education Taskforce, comprising the Ministries of Education, Health, Internal Affairs and other relevant government ministries; Organisations of Persons with Disabilities; church leaders; parents of children with disabilities; relevant school heads and community leaders; in order to coordinate efforts to implement, monitor and report on progress of the Inclusive Education Policy.
- 2.2. The Ministry of Education shall collaborate with other government and civil society stakeholders through the National Disability Taskforce to promote and strengthen inclusive education through discussion and sharing at Taskforce meetings.
- 2.3. The Ministry of Education shall work together with Inclusive Education Taskforce members to promote and enable the provision of additional health and social protection support services including screening, early intervention, specialist services and health services including glasses, hearing aids and mobility devices, case management and assistive technology to children with disabilities and their families.

3. Build on lessons from the Ngeleia / Hoi pilot to expand delivery of inclusive education

- 3.1. All schools shall welcome all students with diverse disabilities.
- 3.2. Further steps for improving access to inclusive education shall be informed by a Ministry of Education-led evaluation of the inclusive education pilot, the Pacific Regional Inclusive Educational Review, and good practices from around the Pacific.
- 3.3. Teachers shall deliver the national curriculum to students with disabilities in a student-oriented, creative, differentiated way which benefits all learners, regardless of their disability.
- 3.4. Teachers shall use Individual Education Plans to support the learning of students with disabilities as advised by the Ministry of Education.
- 3.5. The Ministry of Education shall ensure schools which enroll blind and deaf students have access to teaching and learning technology, including brailers, audio recorders and screen reading software.
- 3.6. The Ministry of Education and schools shall offer students with disabilities reasonable adjustments to enable their equitable participation in assessment.

- 3.7. The Ministry of Education shall make teaching and learning resources including guidance and indoor and outdoor equipment available to schools to enable effective teaching for students with disabilities.
- 3.8. The Ministry of Education shall assist schools to provide quiet spaces which allow students with sensory needs to regulate their behaviour.
- 4. Strengthen the teaching workforce to improve inclusive education delivery**
- 4.1. The Ministry of Education shall raise awareness of the Inclusive Education Policy with Ministry and school personnel, and school communities.
- 4.2. The Ministry of Education shall deliver regular coaching visits and annual in-service training to teachers and teachers' aides in inclusive education pedagogies and approaches based on identified needs.
- 4.3. Schools shall support in-service training for teachers in inclusive education strategies, and inclusive education awareness raising sessions with parents and Sunday school teachers.
- 4.4. The Ministry of Education shall specify a proportional allocation of professional development hours to be dedicated to inclusive education.
- 4.5. The Ministry of Education shall collaborate with pre-service teacher training institutions to align teacher training with the Inclusive Education Policy, including provision of practicum experiences in special and inclusive classrooms.
- 4.6. The Ministry of Education shall ensure teacher job descriptions clarify roles and responsibilities to support the delivery of inclusive education, and performance development processes are utilized to review and improve the work of teachers working in inclusive classrooms.
- 5. Where necessary and of value to the student, deliver special education.**
- 5.1. Children with severe or complex disabilities may attend classrooms dedicated to learners with disabilities.
- 5.2. Curriculum delivery in special classrooms shall align with the national curriculum, with teaching approaches developed and/or adjusted to suit student learning needs.
- 5.3. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) shall be developed to guide and monitor the learning and assessment of students participating in education in special classrooms.
- 6. Support early childhood development**
- 6.1. The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and early intervention NGO service providers shall deliver early intervention services in partnership to young children with disabilities and their families.
- 6.2. All early intervention services shall be strengthened to improve access to quality health services, assistive technology and case management for young children with disabilities.
- 6.3. In partnership, the Ministry of Education, NGO service providers, OPDs and Ministry of Health shall provide information and education for parents of children with young children with disabilities, and screening and referrals of young children with disabilities between health services and schools.
- 7. Involve and support parents and caregivers**
- 7.1. Teachers, parents and/or caregivers of students with disabilities shall communicate regularly regarding progress and issues.

- 7.2. Teachers shall involve parents and/or caregivers in the development of teaching and learning strategies, including Individual Education Plans, for children with disabilities.
- 7.3. The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and NGO service providers shall support schools to run information and education sessions for parents and/or caregivers of children with disabilities.
- 8. Improve access to educational built environments and transport systems**
- 8.1. The Ministry of Education shall ensure that all new and renovated school infrastructure, including classrooms, washrooms, pathways, libraries, playgrounds and sporting facilities, is built in line with accessibility standards, and maximises the learning of students with disabilities.
- 8.2. Schools, OPDs, students with disabilities and their families and NGO service providers shall work together to identify accessibility issues.
- 8.3. The Ministries of Education, Health and Internal Affairs shall collaborate to ensure students with disabilities are able to access grants to enable their transport to school, and to monitor this.
- 9. Improve transition of students with disabilities between school levels**
- 9.1. Transition between school levels will be supported by the development and implementation of transition plans and meetings for students with disabilities to the school of their choice.
- 10. Identify and collect student disability data to inform teaching and planning**
- 10.1. Develop and utilise a process for the teacher-led identification of students' disability status, and timely collection of relevant and up to date data in Tonga's Education Management Information System.
- 10.2. School principals shall share a child's disability information with parents.
- 10.3. The Ministry of Education, working together with relevant NGO service providers, shall use data to inform the selection of school for children with disabilities.
- 10.4. The Ministry of Education shall support teachers to use student disability data to assist in decision-making regarding the teaching approaches used to enable the learning outcomes of students with disabilities.
- 10.5. The Ministry of Education shall use disability data to inform relevant laws and policies, annual planning and budgets and interventions.
- 11. Plan and monitor implementation of the Policy**
- 11.1. Implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy shall be coordinated by the Ministry of Education's Inclusive Education team.
- 11.2. An implementation plan shall guide implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Inclusive Education Policy.
- 11.3. The Ministry of Education shall incorporate the Inclusive Education Policy's Implementation Plan priorities in its strategic and operational plans.
- 11.4. Schools, Early Childhood Education providers and NGO service providers shall incorporate the Inclusive Education Policy's Implementation Plan priorities in annual plans.
- 11.5. The Ministry of Education's Inclusive Education team shall lead monitoring and evaluation of the Inclusive Education Policy, in collaboration with Inclusive Education Taskforce members.

12. Support education for students with disabilities in emergencies

- 12.1. School Heads shall ensure the considerations of students with disabilities are incorporated in school disaster management plans, and communicate these to staff, students and parents.
- 12.2. The Ministry of Education shall ensure that educational options, including remote learning, are in place for students with disabilities following unexpected school closures due to climate change, natural disasters or pandemics, and shall communicate regularly with students with disabilities and parents/ caregivers to enable these.

13. Support child protection for students with disabilities

- 13.1. The Ministry of Education shall ensure child protection for students with disabilities by providing annual training in positive behaviour support to enable teachers to use proactive approaches to manage challenging behaviour.

Annex A: Inclusive Education Policy Implementation Plan

Strategic Priority 1: Raise awareness and challenge stigma

Action	Responsibility	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
1.1 Undertake twice yearly national awareness raising activities regarding inclusive education, including on International Day for Persons with Disabilities. ⁶	MET, OPDs, NGOs, church leaders, community leaders, parents of children with disabilities	X	X	X	X	X
1.2 Promote inclusive education as an approach to leaving no one behind through regular television, radio and social media stories.	MET, OPDs, NGOs, church leaders	X	X	X	X	X
1.3 Celebrate and promote inclusive education through regular community-level awareness-raising activities.	Schools, OPDs, church leaders, community leaders	X	X	X	X	X
1.4 Create a welcoming school environment for students with disabilities through leading regular school-based awareness activities, and developing a procedure for managing bullying behaviour.	Schools, parents	X	X	X	X	X
1.5 Conduct regular outreach to identify out of school students with disabilities, and encourage their enrolment in school.	MET, schools, OPDs	X	X	X	X	X

⁶ Awareness raising approaches should include celebrating people with disabilities as role models.

Strategic Priority 2: Strengthen stakeholder collaboration

Action	Responsibility	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
2.1 Establish an Inclusive Education Taskforce ⁷ in order to coordinate efforts to implement, monitor and report on progress of the Inclusive Education Policy.	MET in collaboration with the National Disability Taskforce (led by MIA)	X	X			
2.2 Hold regular Inclusive Education Taskforce meetings, and coordinate with the National Disability Taskforce, to oversee implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy.	MET in collaboration with the National Disability Taskforce (led by MIA)	X	X	X	X	X
2.3 Develop a referral tool for use by schools and support services, to improve access to health and social protection services including screening, early intervention, health services, case management, child protection and assistive technology for children with disabilities.	MET and Inclusive Education Taskforce	X				

⁷ The Inclusive Education Taskforce should comprise the Ministries of Education, Health, Internal Affairs and other relevant government ministries; Organisations of Persons with Disabilities; NGO service providers, church leaders; parents of children with disabilities; relevant school heads and community leaders;

Strategic Priority 3: Build on lessons from the Ngeleia / Hoi pilot to expand delivery of inclusive education

Action	Responsibility	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
3.1 Undertake an evaluation of the Ngeleia / Hai pilot to identify lessons and determine next steps for expansion of the delivery of inclusive education in Tonga, drawing on the Pacific Regional Inclusive Educational Review, and good practices from around the Pacific.	MET	X	X			
3.2 Develop and train teachers in knowledge resources and guidance to support teachers in delivery of the national curriculum in a student-oriented, creative, differentiated way, to all students regardless of their disabilities.	MET		X	X	X	X
3.3 Develop Individual Education Plan templates and guidance, and train teachers in their use.	MET		X	X	X	X
3.4 Purchase teaching and learning technology as needed by blind and deaf students, including brailers, audio recorders and screen reading software.	MET, Tonga National Vision Impairment Association and development partners	X	X	X	X	X
3.5 Purchase teaching and learning resources including indoor and outdoor equipment to enable effective teaching for students with disabilities.	MET and development partners	X	X	X	X	X
3.6 Develop reasonable accommodations guidelines and/or policy to support students with disabilities to participate in assessment.	MET		X			

Strategic Priority 4: Strengthen the teaching workforce to improve inclusive education delivery

Action	Responsibility	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
4.1 Socialise the Inclusive Education Policy with Ministry and school personnel, and school communities including parents through awareness raising sessions.	MET	X	X			
4.2 Deliver regular coaching visits and annual in-service training to teachers and teachers' aides in inclusive education pedagogies and approaches based on identified needs. ⁸	MET, OPDs, NGO service providers	X	X	X	X	X
4.3 Deliver regular in-service training for teachers in inclusive education strategies, and inclusive education awareness raising sessions with parents and Sunday school teachers.	Schools	X	X	X	X	X
4.4 Allocate a proportion of teacher professional development hours to be dedicated to inclusive education.	MET	X				
4.5 Map teacher training institution pre-service content in inclusive education and develop and implement a plan for ensuring alignment with the Inclusive Education Policy, including opportunities for inclusive education practicums.	MET and Teacher Training Institutions		X	X		
4.6 Define teacher job descriptions to clarify roles and responsibilities to support the delivery of inclusive education.	MET		X			
4.7 Develop and support the use of performance development processes to review and improve the work of teachers working in inclusive classrooms.	MET		X	X	X	X
4.8 Offer overseas scholarships for Tongans to attain qualifications in inclusive education policy and practice.	Government of Tonga, development partners	X	X	X	X	X

⁸ These include disability awareness training, the use of Individual Education Plans to guide education and assessment for students with disabilities in special and inclusive classes who require one; practical strategies to support the inclusion of children with disabilities in classrooms, including strategies for children with learning disabilities, behaviour difficulties and autism, braille and sign language / lip reading.

Strategic Priority 5: Where necessary and of value to the student, deliver special education.

Action	Responsibility	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
5.1 Continue to support students with severe disabilities to attend school in classrooms dedicated to learners with disabilities already established in Ngeleia and Hoi.	MET, Schools	X	X	X	X	X
5.2 Develop a procedure to guide decision-making regarding which type of school a child with disabilities should attend (eg Ngeleia / Hoi or an inclusive classroom) based on disability type and severity, and parent and student perspectives.	MET		X	X		
5.3 Explore the cost and benefit of establishment of similar classrooms for learners with severe disabilities in other island groups and make and implement recommendations regarding this.	MET		X	X		

Strategic Priority 6: Support early childhood development.

Action	Responsibility	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
6.1 Continue to deliver early intervention services to young children with disabilities and their families.	MET, MoH, service provider NGOs	X	X	X	X	X
6.2 Strengthen early intervention services to improve access to quality health services, assistive technology and case management for young children with disabilities across all island groups in Tonga.	MET, MoH, service provider NGOs, development partners	X	X	X	X	X
6.3 Develop a join screening and referral tool to improve access to health, education and early intervention services.	MET, MoH, service provider NGOs.		X	X		
6.4 Facilitate regular early childhood development information and education sessions for parents/ caregivers of young children with disabilities.	MET, MoH, service provider NGOs, OPDs.	X	X	X	X	X

Strategic Priority 7: Involve and support parents and caregivers.

Action	Responsibility	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
7.1 Involve parents of children with disabilities in the development of Individual Education Plans.	Schools	X	X	X	X	X
7.2 Communicate regularly with parents of children with disabilities regarding progress and issues. ⁹	Schools	X	X	X	X	X
7.3 Facilitate regular disability information and education sessions for parents and/or caregivers of children with disabilities.	MET, MoH, service provider NGOs.	X	X	X	X	X

Strategic Priority 8: Improve access to educational built environments and transport systems

Action	Responsibility	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
8.1 Develop and implement a review process to ensure plans for new and renovated school infrastructure ¹⁰ complies with accessibility standards.	MET, OPDs, Schools		X	X	X	X
8.2 Develop and implement a procedure to enable students with disabilities to access grants to enable transport to and from school.	MET, MIA		X	X	X	X

⁹ This could include group chats via phone apps, email groups, monthly in-person meetings etc.

¹⁰ Including classrooms, washrooms, pathways, libraries, playgrounds and sporting facilities.

Strategic Priority 9: Improve transition of students with disabilities between school levels

Action	Responsibility	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
9.1 Develop transition plans to enable students with disabilities to move between school levels (ECE, primary, secondary and TVET / tertiary).	MET ECE, primary, secondary and Inclusive Education teams, OPDs, NGO service providers		X			
9.2 Utilise transition plans and meetings to support transition for students with disabilities moving from ECE to primary school.	ECE, primary schools, MET, students with disabilities, parents		X	X	X	X
9.3 Utilise transition plans and meetings to support transition for students with disabilities moving from primary to secondary school.	Primary schools, secondary schools, MET, students with disabilities, parents		X	X	X	X
9.4 Utilise transition plans and meetings to support transition for students with disabilities moving from secondary to TVET / tertiary.	Secondary schools, TVET/tertiary, MET, students with disabilities, parents		X	X	X	X

Strategic Priority 10: Identify and collect student disability data to inform teaching and planning

Action	Responsibility	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
10.1 Informed by lessons from the region, develop and implement a procedure and tool for the teacher-led identification of students' disability status, and timely collection of relevant and up to date data in Tonga's Education Management Information System.	MET, MoH, NGO service providers, OPDs, schools, development partners		X	X	X	X
10.2 Using data collected, develop annual disability reports to inform relevant laws and policies, annual planning and budgets and interventions.	MET		X	X	X	X

Strategic Priority 11: Plan and monitor implementation of the Policy

Action	Responsibility	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
11.1 Incorporate activities from the Inclusive Education Policy Implementation Plan into annual strategic and operational plans.	MET, Schools	X	X	X	X	X
11.2 Undertake an annual review of progress of the Inclusive Education Policy's Implementation Plan, and share a report with relevant stakeholders.	MET, Inclusive Education Taskforce	X	X	X	X	X
11.3 Undertake an evaluation of the Inclusive Education Policy, with recommendations informing a new Policy.	MET, Inclusive Education Taskforce					X

Strategic Priority 12: Support education for students with disabilities in emergencies

Action	Responsibility	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
12.1 Incorporate the needs and considerations of students with disabilities within school disaster management plans and communicate these with staff, students and parents.	Schools	X	X	X	X	X
12.2 Establish remote learning options which are suitable for and accessible to students with disabilities.	MET			X	X	X

Strategic Priority 13: Support child protection for students with disabilities

Action	Responsibility	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
13.1 Provide annual training in positive behaviour support to teachers in order to manage challenging behaviour.	MET	X	X	X	X	X

Annex B: Stakeholders Consulted

Tongatapu

Ministry of Education and Training

- Inclusive Education Coordinator
- Inclusive Education Staff
- Early Childhood Education staff
- Institute of Education (USP)
- Educational Data Intelligence Division
- Curriculum and Assessment Division
- Chief Executive Officer
- Primary School officers

Schools

- ECE - Moana Academy
- Liahona High School
- Mission ECE - FWC
- ASC
- Tupou College
- Tu'ulua Education Program
- FWPS Primary School
- Falakiko Asisi Primary School
- Ele Unit
- Hilliard Memorial School
- ECE St Francis Asisi
- LMC
- Montessori School
- Tonga College 'Atele
- St Andrew High School
- Tailulu College
- Takuilau College
- GMS Ngele'ia
- Ace Training
- 'Apifo'ou College
- Tonga College
- SDA School
- ACTS
- LCC
- GMS Tokomololo

Government of Tonga

- Ministry of Internal Affairs

Civil Society Organisations

- Tonga Red Cross Society
- Ma'a Fafine moe Famili
- NATA
- Huelo Alzheimer
- Tonga National Vision Impairment Association
- Save the Children
- 'Uluaki Faiako

Development Partners

- SET Project
- UNICEF

Teacher Training Institutions

- Tonga National University
- University of the South Pacific

Other stakeholders

- Parent representatives
- Town Officers

Vava'u

Government of Tonga

- Ministry of Education and Training
Primary school officers (7)
- Ministry of Health Community
Nurses (3)
- District Officer
- Town Officer
- Ministry of Internal Affairs (3)

Development partners

- UNICEF

Other stakeholders

- Parents (1)
- Retired Inclusive Education
personnel.

Schools

- Pouono Campus (TVET - FWC)
(2)
- Primary school principals (2)
- Secret Heart ECE
- Mizpah College (Seventh Day
Adventist)
- Vava'u Primary Schools + ECE
- Vava'u High School
- Maama'anga Christian School

'Eua

Government of Tonga

- Ministry of Education and
Training, Primary school officers
- People's representative to
parliament
- Town Officer

Civil Society Organisations

- Uluaki Faiako
- Ma'a Fafine mo e Famili

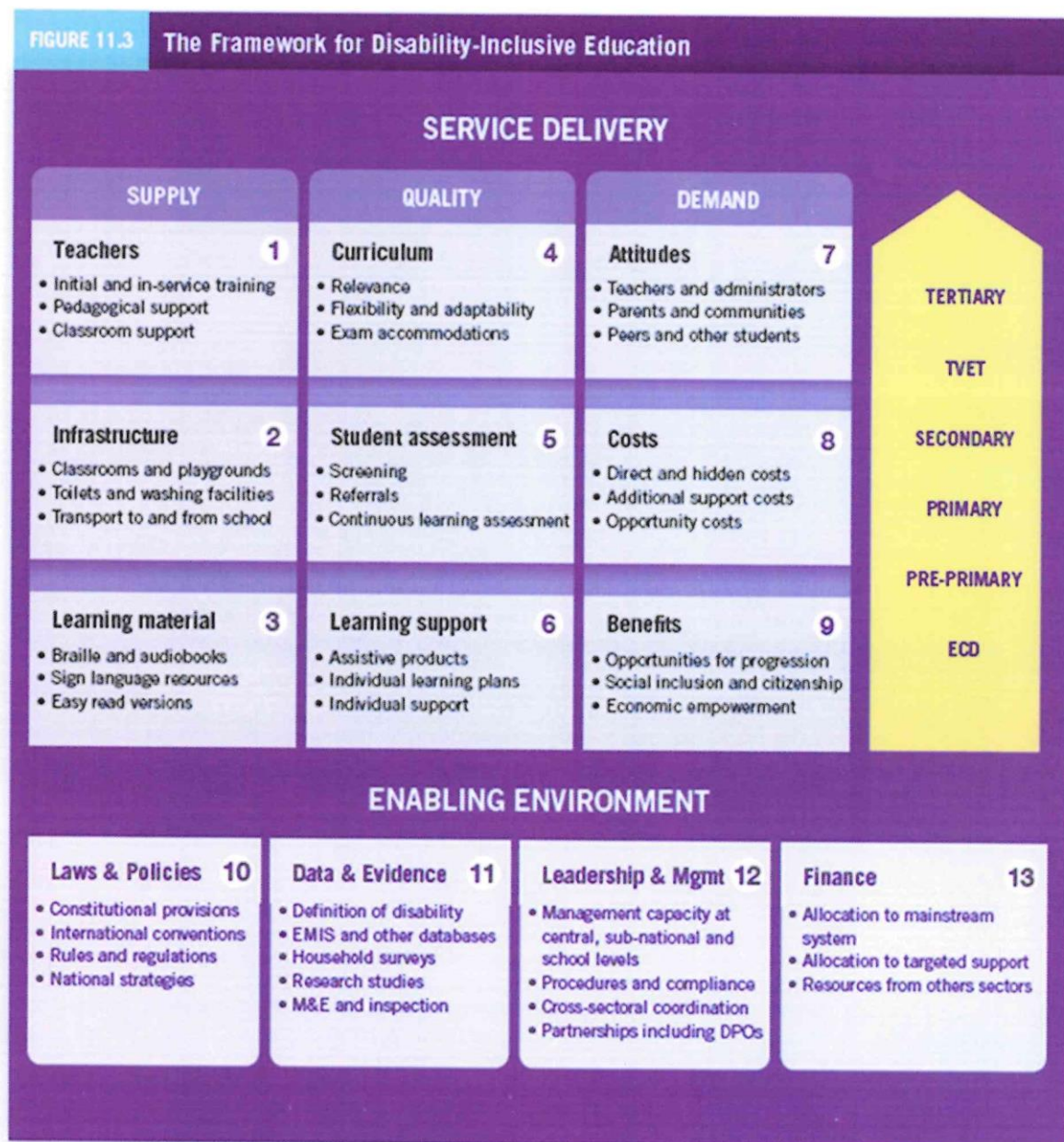
Other stakeholders

- Parents (15)
- Person with disability (1)
- News reporter (1)

Schools

- GPS Houma
- GPS Ta'anga
- GMS 'Ohonua
- GPS Tufuvai
- GMS Angaha + ECE
- GPS Ha'atu'a

Annex C: Framework for Disability-Inclusive Education



Source: Working document created by UNICEF and IIEP-UNESCO for reference during the Technical Round Tables on Disability-Inclusive Education Sector Planning (2018 & 2019)