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Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation Systems for Special Needs Education and Rehabilitation Services in Southeast Nigeria: Institutional Capacity Gaps and Equity Considerations

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Abstract
Monitoring and evaluation occupy a central place in the delivery of accountable social services, yet within Nigeria's special needs education and rehabilitation sub-sector, the structures meant to track programme performance remain fragile, outside the major federal agencies. This opinion paper reflects on the institutional and human capacity constraints that continue to limit the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation in special needs education and rehabilitation services, with attention to Southeast Nigeria. Drawing on existing literature, policy documents, and disability rights reports, the paper argues that a shortage of trained monitoring and evaluation personnel, weak data systems, and overlapping institutional mandates have combined to produce monitoring practices that are largely reactive rather than evidence-driven. The paper argues that these capacity gaps carry equity implications, since states and population groups with the weakest monitoring systems tend to be the least visible in national planning and resource allocation decisions. Anchoring its discussion in the Southeast geopolitical zone, where region-specific data on special needs education and rehabilitation services remain scarce, the paper contends that this scarcity is itself a symptom of the capacity problem under discussion. The paper concludes by calling for deliberate investment in institutional structures, personnel training, and harmonised data systems towards more credible monitoring and evaluation in the sub-sector.

Keywords: Institutional Capacity; Monitoring, Evaluation; Rehabilitation Services; Southeast Nigeria; Special Needs Education

Introduction

Governments and development partners worldwide now rely on monitoring and evaluation to determine whether the programmes they fund are doing what they were designed to do. In Nigeria's education sector, this reliance has grown over the years as policymakers continue to seek ways to link spending decisions to programme performance. Jacob *et al*. (2020) observed that, when properly resourced, monitoring and evaluation give education administrators the information they need to identify what is working, what is not, and where to redirect attention. Without this information, programmes tend to run on assumptions rather than evidence, and problems that could have been caught early are instead allowed to grow until they become difficult to reverse. This concern with evidence and accountability becomes even more pressing when the focus shifts to special needs education and rehabilitation services, a sub-sector that has historically received less attention than mainstream education in Nigeria. Omede and Momoh (2022) questioned whether inclusive education in Nigeria has moved beyond rhetoric into reality, and much of the writing since then suggests the gap they identified has not closed. Drawing on a survey of educators, administrators, and parents across five states in the southeast, Ikenyiri et al. (2025) found that children with disabilities in early childhood settings were still excluded or only passively accommodated, despite national policy commitments to inclusion. The Federal Ministry of Education's National Policy on Inclusive Education (2023) represents one of the more recent attempts to bring learners with disabilities into the mainstream conversation on educational planning, and it places considerable emphasis on coordination among the different

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tiers of government. Yet a policy document, no matter how carefully written, only becomes meaningful once it is translated into structures, budgets, and day-to-day practice, and it is at this point of translation that monitoring and evaluation is supposed to play its part. Ikenyiri *et al*. (2025) treated monitoring and evaluation structures as one of the factors standing between policy and outcomes in their study, and among their recommendations was a call for monitoring frameworks that could hold implementation accountable to what policy already promises. In practice, however, the translation from policy to practice has not gone smoothly. Angwaomaodoko (2023) found that a large proportion of teachers in the schools studied had never even encountered the term inclusive education, a finding that says a great deal about how far policy statements are from classroom realities. If teachers, who are closest to the learners, are themselves unaware of the frameworks meant to guide their practice, then it becomes difficult to imagine how programme managers further up the chain can monitor implementation in any meaningful way. This gap between what is written and what is practised is precisely the kind of gap that a functional monitoring and evaluation system is supposed to expose and help close.

The problem, though, is that Nigeria's monitoring and evaluation systems in education are themselves weak, and this weakness predates and extends beyond the special needs sub-sector. Jacob *et al*. (2020) listed inadequate funding for monitoring activities, a shortage of officers trained in monitoring and evaluation methods, and the absence of standardized tools as some of the recurring obstacles facing the wider education sector. These are not small administrative inconveniences; they go to the heart of whether anyone in government can say, with any confidence, how a programme is performing at any given point in time. When this is the situation for mainstream education, it is reasonable to expect that special needs education and rehabilitation services, which receive comparatively less attention and funding, would face an even steeper version of the same problem. Rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities add a further layer of complexity, because responsibility for these services is often spread across several ministries and agencies rather than concentrated in one place. The situational analysis conducted by the Global Disability Fund (2025) on the rights of persons with disabilities in Nigeria pointed out that regulation of rehabilitation-related services is fragmented across multiple agencies, with no shared national framework for tracking how well these services reach the people who need them. Yibakuro (2025), in their examination of education law in Nigerian tertiary institutions, similarly argued that a system of continuous monitoring and evaluation of how institutions support students with special needs is needed, since its absence makes it difficult to identify gaps in service delivery before they become entrenched. Behind all of these gaps lies a more basic question of capacity, both institutional and human. Usman (2022), in an evaluation of the National Policy on Special Needs Education and the rights of persons living with disabilities, recommended that the federal government create a platform for monitoring and evaluating the strategies meant to implement the policy, a recommendation that, on its own, suggests that no such platform was considered to be functioning adequately at the time of the study. Earlier work by Bridgette and Mkandawire (2017, 2020) on the experiences of students with visual impairments and their parents in Lagos schools also pointed to an absence of structured support systems, the kind of systems that a properly staffed monitoring and evaluation unit would normally help to put in place and sustain. These capacity constraints do not affect all parts of the country in the same way, and this is where the question of equity comes in. The situational analysis by the Global Disability Fund (2025) noted that a disability working group bringing together organisations of persons with disabilities, humanitarian actors, and government agencies has been established in the north-east of the country, yet no comparable structure has been reported for other zones, including the southeast. Much of the available literature on inclusive education and disability in Nigeria, including the work of Brydges and Mkandawire (2017, 2020), has also concentrated on Lagos and similar urban centres, leaving other parts of the country comparatively under-examined. When monitoring and evaluation systems, and the research that depends on them, cluster around a few locations in this way, the areas left out do not simply remain unstudied; they also tend to remain unplanned for, since planning in Nigeria's education and rehabilitation sectors often follows where the evidence already exists. It is against this background that the present paper turns its attention to Southeast Nigeria, and to Anambra State in particular, as a lens through which the broader national picture can be examined. Compared with the volume of literature on inclusive education in places like Lagos, the body of work focused specifically on monitoring and evaluation of special needs education and rehabilitation services in the southeast remains noticeably thin, and this thinness is, in itself, a small but telling illustration of the capacity problem this paper sets out to discuss. The sections that follow examine this problem more closely, beginning with a statement of the specific issues the paper addresses, before moving to the research questions that guide the discussion.

The strengthening of monitoring and evaluation systems for special needs education and rehabilitation services in Southeast Nigeria is closely aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4, SDG 10, SDG 16, and SDG 17. The strongest alignment is with SDG 4 (Quality Education), which promotes inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. Effective monitoring and evaluation systems are essential for determining whether learners with disabilities are receiving appropriate educational support, identifying gaps in service provision, and ensuring that inclusive education policies are translated into practice. The topic also aligns with SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) because inadequate

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monitoring systems can make inequalities in access to education and rehabilitation services less visible. Strengthening disability-sensitive data collection and reporting can help identify underserved populations and support more equitable distribution of educational and rehabilitation resources. Furthermore, the institutional dimension of the study relates to SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), particularly the need for effective, accountable, and transparent institutions. Clearly defined monitoring responsibilities, harmonized reporting systems, reliable data, and regular evaluation can strengthen institutional accountability in the provision of special needs education and rehabilitation services. Finally, the study supports SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) by emphasising collaboration among government agencies, educational institutions, rehabilitation providers, researchers, civil society organisations, and organisations of persons with disabilities. Such partnerships can improve data generation, knowledge sharing, policy implementation, and continuous monitoring of inclusive education and rehabilitation services in Southeast Nigeria. Despite the policy attention that inclusive education has received at the national level in recent years, the practical machinery for monitoring and evaluating special needs education and rehabilitation services in Nigeria remains underdeveloped, and this is particularly true outside the handful of states and cities that have attracted most of the available research and donor interest. In Southeast Nigeria, and in Anambra State specifically, the evidence base on how special needs education and rehabilitation services are monitored is thin. Udo-Anyanwu *et al*. (2025) recently examined how public libraries in Anambra and Imo States serve people with special needs, one of the few studies to look closely at any aspect of special needs service provision in the zone, yet even this study did not extend to how such services are tracked or evaluated over time, which says something about how far down the list monitoring and evaluation sits when service provision itself is barely studied. This absence mirrors a wider pattern. Jacob *et al*. (2020) identified a shortage of personnel trained in monitoring and evaluation methods as one of the recurring problems facing Nigeria's education sector as a whole, and there is little reason to think that special needs education and rehabilitation services, which sit at the margins of mainstream planning, are better staffed in this respect. Ikenyiri *et al*. (2025) went further, treating monitoring and evaluation structures as one of the factors standing between policy commitments and actual outcomes for children with disabilities in early childhood settings across the southeast, and recommending that monitoring frameworks be created to hold implementation accountable. This paper addresses two issues. Institutional arrangements for monitoring and evaluating special needs education and rehabilitation services in Southeast Nigeria appear fragmented, under-resourced, and rarely documented, while the human capacity needed to design, conduct, and act on such monitoring appears equally limited within the relevant government agencies and service-delivery institutions. If the systems meant to show how these services are performing in places like Anambra State are themselves weak or missing, the question worth asking is what basis currently exists for decisions about these services, and what this means for the learners and clients the services are meant to reach.

Institutional Capacity Constraints in Monitoring and Evaluating Special Needs Education and Rehabilitation Services

When people talk about institutional capacity for monitoring and evaluation, they usually mean something quite specific: whether there is an office, a unit, or a department somewhere in the system whose job it is to collect information about how a programme is doing, and whether that office has the standing to act on what it finds. For special needs education and rehabilitation services in Nigeria, the institutional picture is crowded rather than empty. Several bodies have some claim to a role in this space, yet crowding is not the same thing as capacity. The situational analysis carried out by the Global Disability Fund (2025) gives a useful sense of how crowded this space has become. According to the report, responsibilities relating to disability, including aspects of special needs education and rehabilitation, are shared among the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, an office within the presidency known by the acronym OSSAP-SNEO, and the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, among others. The report recommended harmonizing these roles and establishing a national coordination structure, which suggests that even those closest to the system see the current arrangement as something other than well-coordinated. From where this paper sits, the problem with this kind of arrangement is not that too many agencies care about special needs education and rehabilitation services, but that when several agencies share an interest in something without one of them being clearly responsible for tracking how it is going, monitoring tends to become everybody's concern in principle and few individuals in practice. made a related point about tertiary institutions, arguing that continuous monitoring and evaluation of how these institutions support students with special needs is needed precisely because, without it, gaps in support tend to go unnoticed until they have already affected students. If this is true at the level of individual institutions, it seems reasonable to expect that the same logic applies, perhaps with even greater force, at the level of state and federal agencies whose mandates overlap.

At the state level, the picture in Anambra offers a useful illustration. The Anambra State Disability Rights Commission has, in recent years, taken on a more visible role, including the domestication of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the announcement of new support initiatives for children with disabilities and their families (Voice of Nigeria, 2025). These are welcome developments, and they suggest that institutional attention to disability issues in the state is growing. What is less clear, at least from the

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information publicly available, is whether this growing institutional attention comes with a defined monitoring and evaluation function of its own, one with its own data systems, indicators, and reporting lines into both state planning processes and whatever national coordination structure eventually emerges from recommendations such as those of the Global Disability Fund (2025). There is, in fairness, some recognition at the federal level that data on disability, broadly defined, needs to improve. The Global Disability Fund (2025) referenced a national data charter action plan running from 2024 to 2028, intended to strengthen disability data collection across the country. Whether such a plan eventually translates into the kind of institutional capacity that special needs education and rehabilitation services in Anambra State would need, in the form of designated officers, functioning data systems, and a clear line of accountability between local service providers and state or federal monitoring units, remains to be seen. Given how often national-level policy ambitions in this sub-sector have struggled to reach the state level, as both Usman (2022) and Angwaomaodoko (2023) have shown in different ways, it seems fair to treat this as an open question rather than a settled one.

Human Capacity Constraints: Personnel, Training, and Practice

Institutional structures, however they are arranged on paper, are run by people, and it is at the level of people that the second part of this paper's argument sits. Two kinds of human capacity matter for monitoring and evaluation in special needs education and rehabilitation services. The first is the capacity of frontline staff, teachers, therapists, and centre administrators, to recognise and record the information that any monitoring system would eventually need. The second is the capacity of specialists who can turn that information into something usable, by designing indicators, managing data systems, and producing the kind of analysis that feeds back into decision-making. Both kinds appear to be in short supply. On the first point, Angwaomaodoko (2023) found that a substantial number of teachers in the schools studied had never encountered the term inclusive education, despite the concept being central to national policy discussions for years. This finding matters for monitoring and evaluation in a way that goes beyond classroom practice. If the people closest to learners with disabilities do not share the basic vocabulary of the policies meant to guide their work, it becomes difficult to see how they could reliably report on whether those policies are being followed, since reporting of this kind depends on knowing what to look for in the first place. A monitoring system is only as good as the observations that feed into it, and those observations come from people. Ikenyiri *et al*. (2025), working with educators, administrators, and parents across five states in the Southeast, offer some support for this concern, though their findings also point toward a possible way forward. They found that educators who had received training in inclusive practices scored significantly higher on measures of inclusive attitudes than those who had not, and one of their recommendations was that inclusive education training be made a compulsory part of teacher preparation. If training of this kind were to become routine, it would not only affect how learners with disabilities are treated in the classroom, but would also build the kind of shared understanding among frontline staff that any future monitoring and evaluation exercise would need to draw on. The second kind of human capacity, specialists who can design and run monitoring and evaluation processes, appears even thinner on the ground. Jacob *et al*. (2020) identified a shortage of personnel trained in monitoring and evaluation methods as a recurring problem across Nigeria's education sector as a whole, not specific to special needs education. Usman (2022) arrived at a related conclusion from a different angle, recommending that the federal government establish a platform for monitoring and evaluating the strategies meant to implement the National Policy on Special Needs Education. A recommendation of this kind, on its own, suggests that no functioning platform of this sort, with its own staff and mandate, was considered to exist at the time the recommendation was made. Taken together, these two gaps reinforce each other in a way that is worth pausing on. Even if frontline training were to improve tomorrow, in line with what Ikenyiri *et al*. (2025) recommended, the information that better-trained staff might begin to generate would still need somewhere to go, and someone with the skills to make sense of it. Bridgette and Mkandawire (2017, 2020), writing about the experiences of students with visual impairments and their parents in Lagos schools, described an absence of structured support systems even in a state that has attracted more research attention and donor interest than most others in the country. If gaps of this kind exist in Lagos, it would be reasonable to expect that Anambra State and the wider southeast, where, as the earlier sections of this paper have argued, even basic descriptive research on special needs service provision remains scarce, face a version of the same problem that is at least as serious, and possibly more so. It is this combination- institutional arrangements that lack a clear monitoring mandate and human capacity that is thin on both the frontline and the specialist side- that the next section connects to the question of equity across Nigeria's geopolitical zones.

Equity Implications for Southeast Nigeria and Anambra State

Discussions of equity in Nigerian education tend to follow a familiar script, and that script is mostly about the north and the south. Nwoke *et al*. (2024), in their review of the out-of-school children phenomenon, pointed to a sizeable gap in primary school enrolment between the northern geopolitical zones and the rest of the country, a gap that has rightly attracted attention from researchers, donors, and policymakers for years. The southeast, on most of the indicators that feature in this conversation, does not stand out as a region in crisis, and there is a risk

that this can be read as meaning the region has little left to worry about. This paper takes the view that such a reading would be premature, at least where special needs education and rehabilitation services are concerned, because the indicators that drive the north-south conversation are rarely broken down in ways that would reveal how learners with disabilities in any particular zone are actually faring. The Global Disability Fund (2025) report offers a small but telling illustration of how attention to disability-related services can end up distributed across the country. According to the report, a disability working group, bringing together organisations of persons with disabilities, humanitarian actors, and government agencies, has been established in the north-east, a region that has for over a decade been at the centre of a major humanitarian response. No comparable structure was reported for the southeast. This is understandable given the circumstances that gave rise to the north-east working group, but it also means that, for the southeast, there is no obvious equivalent platform through which disability-specific monitoring could be coordinated, even informally, in the way that humanitarian coordination structures sometimes end up generating monitoring data almost as a by-product of their main work. A similar pattern shows up in the research literature itself. Brydges and Mkandawire (2017, 2020) focused on Lagos, Ikenyiri *et al*. (2025) drew their sample from five southeastern states but only very recently, and Udo-Anyanwu *et al*. (2025) looked specifically at library services in Anambra and Imo States rather than at special needs education or rehabilitation services more broadly. None of this is a criticism of the researchers involved, whose work has added genuinely useful pieces to the picture. The point is a more general one: where research attention goes, some form of monitoring activity, even informal monitoring carried out by academics and NGOs rather than government agencies, tends to follow, and where research attention is thin, that informal monitoring is thin too. Southeast Nigeria, and Anambra State in particular, sits closer to the thin end of this pattern than to the thick end.

Why this matters for equity is fairly direct. Planning and budgeting processes, whether run by state governments, the federal government, or development partners, rely on data to decide where resources should go. If the data on how special needs education and rehabilitation services are performing in Anambra State is sparse, whether because of weak institutional monitoring structures, as discussed in section 4.0, or because of limited human capacity to generate and use such data, as discussed in section 5.0, then Anambra's special needs education and rehabilitation sub-sector is at risk of being treated, in practice, as though it does not have pressing needs, not because an assessment has concluded this, but because no assessment has really been done. Being unmeasured, in this sense, can end up functioning much like being deprioritised, even where nobody intends this outcome.

Having set out the institutional, human, and equity dimensions of the problem, the paper now turns to what might be done about it. The next section sets out this paper's own reflections on possible ways forward, offered in the spirit of an opinion contribution to an ongoing conversation rather than as a finished policy roadmap.

Towards Stronger Monitoring and Evaluation Systems: Reflections and Recommendations

What follows is not a blueprint, and this paper does not pretend to have worked out every detail of how monitoring and evaluation in special needs education and rehabilitation services in Southeast Nigeria should be organised. What it offers instead are a few starting points that seem, to this writer, worth taking seriously, scaled to the realities described in the sections above rather than to some ideal version of how things might work in a better-resourced system. The first of these starting points follows from the fragmentation discussed in section 4.0. The Global Disability Fund (2025) called for a national coordination structure to harmonise the roles of the various federal agencies with an interest in disability, and that call is reasonable, but national-level reforms of this kind tend to take years, if they happen at all. While that conversation continues at the federal level, there seems to be no good reason why a state like Anambra could not designate, within an existing body such as the State Ministry of Education's special needs education unit or the Anambra State Disability Rights Commission, a small monitoring and evaluation function with even a modest initial mandate, perhaps something as basic as an annual count of learners with disabilities accessing services, the kinds of support being provided, and the gaps reported by service providers themselves. Edo and Nwonkwo (2025) argued that continuous monitoring matters because it catches problems before they become entrenched, and that logic does not require a sophisticated system to begin applying; it requires only that someone, somewhere, is asked to look and to write down what they see on a regular basis. The second starting point concerns the human capacity side discussed in section 5.0. Ikenyiri *et al*. (2025) recommended that inclusive education training be made compulsory for educators in the southeast, and this paper would suggest that any such training include, even briefly, a component on basic data collection and reporting. The reasoning is straightforward: if frontline staff are already being trained to recognise and respond to the needs of learners with disabilities, adding a short module on how to record and report this information is a relatively small additional step, but one that could begin to populate whatever monitoring system eventually exists with information from people who actually understand what they are looking at, rather than leaving data collection to occasional external surveys. A third starting point is to make better use of research activity that is already happening. Studies such as those by Ikenyiri *et al*. (2025) and Udo-Anyanwu *et al*. (2025) show that institutions in the southeast, including colleges of education, are already producing research on disability and inclusion in the zone, even if this research has so far tended to be one-off rather than recurring. Formal partnerships between these

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institutions and state agencies, perhaps as simple as an agreement that a particular survey instrument be repeated every two or three years, could turn what is currently scattered academic interest into something closer to a recurring monitoring activity, at a cost that is likely to be far lower than building a new system from nothing.

A fourth and final starting point looks toward the national level, but with a southeast-specific request attached to it. The Nigeria Inclusive Data Charter Action Plan referenced by the Global Disability Fund (2025) is, on its face, a positive development, but its value to a state like Anambra will depend on whether southeast-specific indicators for special needs education and rehabilitation services are built into it from the start. Given how often, as Usman (2022) and Angwaomaodoko (2023) have both shown in their own ways, national frameworks in this sub-sector have arrived in the southeast late, incompletely, or not at all, it does not seem unreasonable to ask that this particular plan be treated differently, with southeast states represented in its design rather than simply receiving its outputs after the fact. None of these suggestions, taken on its own, would solve the problem this paper has described. Taken together, though, they point in a direction that this paper considers more realistic than waiting for a single, comprehensive national framework to arrive and resolve everything at once. Given how thin the current baseline appears to be, even modest, locally anchored steps toward institutional and human capacity for monitoring and evaluation would represent genuine progress, and would give the next round of research on this topic something more substantial to build on than the present paper has had available to it.

Recommendations

i. **Establishment of Functional Monitoring and Evaluation Units:** The Anambra State Government, through the State Ministry of Education and the Anambra State Disability Rights Commission, should establish or strengthen dedicated monitoring and evaluation units for special needs education and rehabilitation services. These units should be responsible for regularly collecting, analysing, and reporting data on learners with disabilities, rehabilitation service users, available support services, and existing service gaps. This will improve institutional accountability and ensure that policy decisions and resource allocation are based on reliable evidence. This recommendation aligns with SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, particularly the promotion of effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions. The paper specifically recommends a modest state-level monitoring function, including annual data collection on learners with disabilities and the support they receive.

ii. **Regular Training and Capacity Development for Personnel:** Government and relevant educational institutions should provide regular training and professional development for teachers, therapists, administrators, and monitoring and evaluation personnel involved in special needs education and rehabilitation services. Such training should cover inclusive education practices, disability-sensitive service delivery, basic data collection, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation techniques. Improving the capacity of personnel will strengthen both service delivery and the quality of information available for planning and decision-making. This recommendation directly supports SDG 4: Quality Education, especially the provision of inclusive and equitable quality education, as well as SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, by improving educational opportunities for persons with disabilities. The paper identifies shortages in both frontline and specialist monitoring and evaluation capacity and supports inclusive education training with a data collection and reporting component.

iii. **Development of a harmonized Disability Data and Reporting System:** The Federal and Southeast State Governments should develop and implement a harmonised data collection and reporting framework for special needs education and rehabilitation services. The framework should contain common indicators that allow information to be collected consistently across states and institutions, with specific indicators for Southeast Nigeria. Reliable and comparable data will make learners and service users with disabilities more visible in education planning, budgeting, and resource allocation. This recommendation is consistent with SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, because better disability-disaggregated information can help identify and address inequalities in access to education and rehabilitation services. It also supports SDG 16, through improved evidence-based planning and institutional accountability. The paper stresses the need for harmonised data systems and Southeast-specific indicators within broader national disability data initiatives.

iv. **Strengthening Partnerships among Government, Educational Institutions, and Disability Organisations:** Government agencies should establish stronger and sustained partnerships with universities, colleges of education, rehabilitation centres, non-governmental organizations, and organisations of persons with disabilities to support continuous research, monitoring, and evaluation of special needs education and rehabilitation services. Universities and other research institutions should be encouraged to conduct periodic studies whose findings can be incorporated into government planning and policy decisions. Such collaboration will help transform isolated research activities into continuous monitoring mechanisms and ensure that the experiences and needs of persons with disabilities are reflected in policy development. This recommendation aligns with SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals, which emphasizes effective partnerships among government, institutions, civil society, and other

stakeholders. The paper specifically proposes formal partnerships between research institutions and state agencies and recommends recurring surveys rather than one-off research activities.

Conclusion

This paper set out from a fairly simple observation: that policies on inclusive education and disability rights in Nigeria have multiplied in recent years, while the systems needed to track how these policies play out in practice have not kept pace, and that this gap is felt with particular force in special needs education and rehabilitation services in Southeast Nigeria. Working through the available literature, the paper has argued that the institutional architecture for monitoring this sub-sector is fragmented rather than absent, that the human capacity to staff such monitoring, both at the frontline and at the specialist level, remains thin, and that these two gaps combine to produce an equity problem that conventional north-south comparisons in Nigerian education research do not capture. Anambra State, and the southeast more broadly, illustrates this problem well precisely because so little has been written about it in this specific regard, a scarcity that this paper has treated not as a limitation to apologise for but as evidence in its own right. As an opinion paper, this contribution has leaned more on argument and synthesis than on new data, and it does not claim to have settled the questions it raises. What it has tried to do is connect a set of observations, drawn from policy documents, evaluations, and recent studies, that are not often discussed together, and to suggest that the path toward stronger monitoring and evaluation systems in this sub-sector probably runs through small, locally grounded steps rather than through any single national reform. If this paper succeeds in encouraging closer attention to special needs education and rehabilitation services in Southeast Nigeria, whether through further research, through institutional reform at the state level, or simply through more careful record-keeping by the people already working in this space, it will have done what an opinion paper of this kind can reasonably be expected to do.

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