



International
Labour
Office

STRATEGIES FOR SKILLS ACQUISITION AND WORK FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

ZAMBIA

February 2007

Prepared by the ILO Skills and Employability Department
and the Government of Flanders

**International Labour Office
Geneva**



Publications of the International Labour Office enjoy copyright under Protocol 2 of the Universal Copyright Convention. Nevertheless, short excerpts from them may be reproduced without authorization, on condition that the source is indicated. For rights of reproduction or translation, application should be made to the ILO Publications (Rights and Permissions), International Labour Office, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland, or by email: pubdroit@ilo.org. The International Labour Office welcomes such applications.

Libraries, institutions and other users registered in the United Kingdom with the Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 4LP [Fax: (+44) (0)20 7631 5500; email: cla@cla.co.uk], in the United States with the Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923 [Fax: (+1) (978) 750 4470; email: info@copyright.com] or in other countries with associated Reproduction Rights Organizations, may make photocopies in accordance with the licences issued to them for this purpose.

ILO

Strategies for skills acquisition and work for persons with disabilities : Zambia / ILO Skills and Employability Department and the Government of Flanders. Geneva : ILO, 2007 - - 1 v.
ISBN: 9789221197676; 9789221197683 (web pdf)

CORPORATE AUTHOR(S): International Labour Office. Skills and Employability Dept; Flanders (Belgium)

ILO DESCRIPTORS: vocational training, employment, training employment relationship, disabled person, disabled worker, Zambia

FACET: 06.01

ILO Cataloguing in Publication Data

The designations employed in ILO publications, which are in conformity with United Nations practice, and the presentation of material therein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the International Labour Office concerning the legal status of any country, area or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers.

The responsibility for opinions expressed in signed articles, studies and other contributions rests solely with their authors, and publication does not constitute an endorsement by the International Labour Office of the opinions expressed in them.

Reference to names of firms and commercial products and processes does not imply their endorsement by the International Labour Office, and any failure to mention a particular firm, commercial product or process is not a sign of disapproval.

ILO publications can be obtained through major booksellers or ILO local offices in many countries, or direct from ILO Publications, International Labour Office, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland. Catalogues or lists of new publications are available free of charge from the above address, or by email: pubvente@ilo.org

Visit our website: www.ilo.org/publns

Contents

ABBREVIATIONS	IV
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1. PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN ZAMBIA	3
<i>Social and economic context</i>	<i>4</i>
2. LEGAL AND POLICY PROVISIONS IN ZAMBIA	7
<i>International commitments</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Legislation concerning vocational training for disabled persons</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Policy.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Training programmes</i>	<i>10</i>
3. PROMOTING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH TECHNICAL COOPERATION.....	13
<i>ILO projects and technical support.....</i>	<i>13</i>
4. STRATEGIES FOR SKILLS ACQUISITION AND WORK FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN ZAMBIA	21
<i>Methodology</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Survey population.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Socio-demographic characteristics</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Vocational training.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Relevance of training to job opportunities, self-employment</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Employment</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Summary.....</i>	<i>31</i>
5. WHICH WAY FORWARD?	33
<i>Recommendations arising from the survey.....</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>General considerations.....</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Concluding comment</i>	<i>38</i>

Abbreviations

AGFUND	Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations
ARI	African Rehabilitation Institute
AU	African Union
CBR	Community-Based Rehabilitation
CISEPs	Centres for Informal Sector Employment Promotion
DEWD	ILO project, “Developing Entrepreneurship among Women with Disabilities”
DPOs	Organizations of and for persons with disabilities
DTEVT	Department of Technical Education and Vocational Training
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Councils’
EDCs	Entrepreneurship Development Centres
EISDU	Entrepreneurship and Informal Sector Development Unit of TEVETA
FAMR	Finnish Association on Mental Retardation
FES	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
GTZ	German Development Agency, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
HDI	Human Development Index
HIPC	Highly-Indebted Poor Countries
IYB Programme	ILO Improve Your Business Programme
LDCs	Least-Developed Countries
MCDSS	Ministry of Community Development and Social Services
MSEs	Medium- and Small-Sized Enterprises
MSTVT	Ministry for Science, Technology and Vocational Training
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NPA	National Plan of Action
NVRC	National Vocational Rehabilitation Centre
OAU	Organization for African Unity
PHOS	Platform for Disability and Development Cooperation
PRSP	Poverty Reduction and Strategy Paper
SRG	A stakeholders’ reference group
SSDS	Sector Skills Development Strategy
STAC	Sector Training Advisory Committees
TEVET	Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training
TEVETA	Technical Education Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WCFCB	Workers’ Compensation Fund Control Board
WEDGE	ILO project, “Promoting Women’s Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality”
WHO	World Health Organization
ZAEPD	Zambian Association on Employment of People with Disabilities
ZAFOD	Zambia Federation of the Disabled
ZAPD	Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities
ZCH	Zambia Council for the Handicapped
ZIT	Zambia Institute of Technology
ZNADWO	Zambian Association of Disabled Women

Introduction

When persons with disabilities have access to training in skills which are relevant to the labour market, and suited to their abilities and interests, they can make a significant contribution in the workplace and to the living standards of their households, the community and wider society. This is increasingly recognized as opportunities have opened up, in recent decades, both in training centres and in the open labour market. Yet in many countries, the potential of many persons with disabilities remains untapped, as they frequently do not have equal access to training in employable skills, relevant to the labour market in which they seek to work, either in formal employment, in self-employment or small businesses in the informal economy.

What strategies which been successful in assisting some disabled persons in finding decent jobs? What obstacles stand in the way of others? What policy measures are required to dismantle these barriers? These and related questions require attention in every country around the world. The ILO project, “*Skills Acquisition and Work for Persons with Disabilities in Southern Africa*” funded by the Government of Flanders, has sought to contribute to this debate through an exploratory assessment of skills acquisition strategies which have been introduced in African countries through technical cooperation projects over the past two decades. Working in collaboration with organizations of and for people with disabilities (DPOs) in Malawi, South Africa, Swaziland and Zambia, the project involved conducting pilot surveys of disabled persons and case studies of some of those who have attended training.

This document reports on the findings of the ILO/Flanders project in Zambia, in the broader context of the legislation and policies in place. Focusing on examples of success and of obstacles faced, the document sets the scene for a discussion of the policy and programme steps needed in order to turn the goal of full inclusion with equality, into a reality for all Zambians with disabilities. An initial discussion of the survey findings took place at a tripartite-plus workshop, “People with Disabilities – Pathways to Decent Work” in May 2006. The recommendations of this workshop are contained in the workshop report.¹

The document, along with the workshop report, is intended as a contribution to the effective implementation of Zambian legislation and policy concerning persons with disabilities, and more broadly, as a contribution to the achievement of the targets set in the Plan of Action of the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities. It will hopefully assist in setting the scene in Zambia for future implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, formally adopted in December 2006, if the Government of Zambia decides to ratify this Convention.

¹ ILO, *People with Disabilities: Pathways to Decent Work. Report of a Tripartite Workshop, Lusaka, Zambia, 9-10 May 2006.*

1. Persons with disabilities in Zambia

There were 282,684 persons with disabilities in Zambia, comprising 2.9 per cent of the population according to the 2000 census.² This figure is significantly lower than the World Health Organization (WHO) estimate of 7 to 10 per cent, according to which the population of disabled persons lies between 690,000 and 1 million.

In 2002-2003, the Zambia Federation of the Disabled (ZAFOD) and its member organizations organized consultations and conducted a needs assessment regarding the current situation of persons with disabilities in Zambia.³ They described the situation as follows:

- there is little awareness of the rights, needs and aspirations of persons with disabilities, who are still victims of stigma;
- over 90 per cent of buildings (including medical premises and churches) and streets are not accessible to disabled persons;
- there are few rehabilitation services and they lack funds, equipment and specialists;
- people with disabilities have access to both inclusive education and special education, but neither is adequately funded;
- most disabled persons are not in employment, because of inadequate education/training, the built environment and stigma;
- people with disabilities are rarely represented in decision-making forums, political parties and mainstream civil society organizations; and
- disability issues are rarely taken into account in governments' budgets.

The ZAFOD needs assessment identified 17 priority areas in which action was required. Education, literacy and vocational training were ranked highly among the areas identified, followed by employment and poverty alleviation.

While not dealing extensively with disability issues, the Zambia Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)⁴ identifies people with disabilities as being among the disadvantaged and the poor. One of the PRSP objectives is to decentralize decision-making and to this effect, it states that, "*a decentralization policy will be developed and implemented as a matter of top priority to ensure that citizens, particularly women, disabled persons, and other disadvantaged groups, actively participate in their own affairs*".⁵

² ZAFOD, *National Plan of Action on Disability in Zambia*, 2003.

³ Of the 64 people gathering the data, 51 were people with various disabilities while 20 were women.

⁴ In the context of the Highly-Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) debt-relief initiative, debtor countries have to develop and implement a PRSP to indicate where the money they will receive will be allocated.

⁵ *Zambia PRSP*, p. 35.

Social and economic context

Zambia is one of the world's 50 Least-Developed Countries (LDCs) and ranks 164 out of 177 countries on the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI) according to the UNDP Human Development Report of 2004.⁶ The country's status on the key indicators used to calculate the HDI is as follows:

- life expectancy at birth was 32.7 years; almost equal for men and women;⁷
- gross enrolment ratio (combined for primary, secondary and tertiary education), was estimated at 47 per cent among boys and 43 per cent among girls;
- adult literacy rate was 80 per cent with a higher rate recorded for men (86.3 per cent) than women (73.8 per cent); and
- annual per capita GDP was US\$840 in 2002.

Income poverty is extremely high as over 63 per cent of the population lives with less than \$1 per day, while 87 per cent live with less than \$2 per day.⁸ Persons with disabilities are considered to be among the poorest groups in society, according to the Zambia PRSP. The labour force participation rate (15-64 years old) is 76.8 per cent, with a higher rate for men (87.4 per cent) than for women (67.1 per cent).⁹

Poverty has increased over the past 15 years and the economy has been steadily moving from the formal economy to the informal sector. Informal employment is estimated to account for 64 per cent of the country's non-agricultural employment. Almost 75 per cent of the informal economy is found in urban areas, mostly in Lusaka and the Copperbelt region. Most of the employment in the non-agricultural informal economy is found in trading, the rest being in manufacturing.¹⁰

HIV/AIDS prevalence is estimated at 16.5 per cent.¹¹ By 2000, Zambia had lost more than 10 per cent of its labour force as a result of AIDS,¹² and over 600,000 youths were orphaned. Training institutions are not equipped to offer much help to these rising numbers of orphans. HIV/AIDS is also placing extra burdens upon staff and students within training institutions.¹³

⁶ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2004*, Washington, 2004.

⁷ Other sources estimate life expectancy to be higher. For example, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates it at 40.5 years (cf. <http://www.unfpa.org/profile/zambia.cfm>). In all cases, figures are almost equal for men and women.

⁸ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2004*, op. cit. GDP and income poverty are measured in purchasing-power parity (PPP) US dollars.

⁹ UNFPA, <http://www.unfpa.org/profile/zambia.cfm>.

¹⁰ Haan, Hans Christiaan, *Training for Work in the Informal Sector: New Evidence from Eastern and Southern Africa*, ILO-ITC Occasional Papers, Turin, 2001, p. 119.

¹¹ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2004*, op. cit.

¹² ILO, *HIV/AIDS and Work: Global Estimates, Impact and Response*, Geneva, 2004, p. 7.

¹³ World Bank, *Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Credit to the Republic of Zambia for a Technical Education Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET)*, Development Program Support Project. Report 21417-ZA. Washington, D.C., 2001, p. 10.

- ➔ The fact that most people seeking work in Zambia will find it in the informal economy in the foreseeable future, rather than in formal employment, has already been taken into account by policymakers and training service providers in Zambia in the form of changes to Technical and Vocational Education and Training policy and programmes. The question of how these policy measures are working in practice requires attention, and the impact they are having on opportunities for men and women with disabilities, in particular, needs to be systematically examined.
- ➔ The widespread incidence of HIV/AIDS and its impact on vocational training personnel and on trainees is a further matter which needs to be taken into account in planning policy measures, programmes and services to address the skills development needs of persons with disabilities. More attention needs to be paid to the inclusion of disabled people in HIV/AIDS-related educational and support programmes.

2. Legal and policy provisions in Zambia

International commitments

In 1989, Zambia ratified the ILO Convention concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons), 1983 (No. 159). Overall, Zambia has ratified 39 ILO Conventions, including the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111).

Ratification of these Conventions commits Zambia to observing the principles of equal opportunity and equal treatment in laws, policies and programmes, including those concerning persons with disabilities. It also commits the country to tripartite consultations in the process of developing these and in planning for their implementation. DPOs should also be consulted.

Legislation concerning vocational training for disabled persons

In 1996, Zambia adopted the Persons with Disabilities Act, prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of disability. Provisions for persons with disabilities have not yet been included in labour legislation, vocational training legislation or other general laws. The Zambian Constitution contains one provision on disability, relating to social benefits.

Persons with Disabilities Act, 1996

The Persons with Disabilities Act, 1996, prohibits discrimination on the grounds of disability. This has significant implications for skills development of disabled persons. Discrimination by learning institutions in the acceptance/admission of students is prohibited and employers must not discriminate in staff training. The failure to provide reasonable accommodation, defined as “*not providing different services or conditions required for the disability*”, is considered discriminatory (Article 19). The Act also states that the Parliament shall also make available funds for training institutions admitting people with disabilities, in order for these institutions to make necessary adjustments to accommodate them (Article 23).

The Act established the Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities (ZAPD), to promote, coordinate and provide services for disabled persons and advise the Minister of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS) on disability issues.

Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) Act, 1998

This Act is part of the major reform process of Zambia’s vocational training system, started in the second half of the 1990s with the introduction of TEVET Policy (1996) on vocational training, followed by a Strategy Paper (1997). It was generally agreed that the previous system, dating from the 1960s, focused mainly on the formal economy and did not correspond to the skills needs of the current labour market and the wider society. The reform aimed at enabling the training system to be demand-driven – to be responsive to labour market needs – notably by giving great attention to the informal economy and to entrepreneurship development. The TEVET Act of 1998 addresses the structural/institutional dimension of the reform, while the TEVET Policy (outlined below) defines its policy dimension.

As part of the TEVET reform process, the TEVET Act established the Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA), to regulate and coordinate the TEVET system. The Act also provides for the decentralization of

public training institutions, which are no longer administered by the Ministry but by autonomous Management Boards. These are subject to national standards set by TEVETA but administer their own affairs, and are notably responsible for developing their own curricula, so that these might better respond to local labour market needs. With the enactment of the TEVET Act, the Government has thus moved from being a direct service provider to a financier and regulator.¹⁴

The Act also demands that every training institution be registered with TEVETA. Operating an institution without being duly registered constitutes an offence.¹⁵

Policy

National Policy on Disability, 2002

Zambia's National Policy on Disability of 2002 aims at integrating people with disabilities in the mainstream of society. The integration of people with disabilities into the vocational training system is given high priority, along with the development of programmes for the equalization and integration into mainstream society, the provision of devices to promote the inclusion of disabled persons in the workplace and in the education system, the development of mandatory standards of physical accessibility, and gender mainstreaming in the provision of services to persons with disabilities. The plan of action sets out to address the issues of gender and HIV/AIDS.

The Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities (ZAPD), reporting to the MCDSS, has a central role in the coordination of service provision for disabled persons in the framework of this policy. ZAPD also administers the National Trust Fund for the Disabled, established by the Schedule of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1996. Its functions include: planning, promoting, coordinating and providing services for persons with disabilities, including training services. Members of ZAPD include eight representatives of DPOs, as well as a member of the Zambia Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Education Policy

The 1996 National Policy on Education recognizes the right to education for each individual “*regardless of personal circumstances or capacity*”. The Policy contains a section on special needs education, which states that: “*The Ministry of Education will ensure equality of educational opportunity for children with special needs. The Ministry is committed to providing quality education to pupils with special education needs. The Ministry will improve and strengthen the supervision and management of special education across the country.*”¹⁶

The Policy aims to include children with disabilities in the mainstream education system, except for children with severe impairments who will continue to be catered to in special schools. The Policy also provides for the following measures: children with special needs are to be exempted from the “*direct costs*” of education; scholarships are to be provided for students with disabilities at the tertiary level, and an “*adequate number*” of special education teachers are to be trained.¹⁷

¹⁴ Johanson, Richard K. and Adams, Arvil V., *Skills Development in Sub-Saharan Africa*, World Bank Regional and Sectoral Studies, Washington, 2004, pp. 77-79.

¹⁵ Penalties include fines and imprisonment.

¹⁶ Republic of Zambia, Ministry of Education, *Educating our Future: National Policy on Education*, 1996, pp. 66 and 69.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) Policy

The TEVET Policy aims to “*improve the technical education and vocational training and link it to the requirements of the employment sector*”. More specifically, it aims to: balance the supply of skilled labour with the demands of the economy; improve productivity and income-generation; and minimize inequalities. The TEVET Policy targets some groups in particular, which are believed to benefit more from the training. Those groups are: school leavers; employees in the formal sector; entrepreneurs (both in the formal and informal economy); the unemployed; women; and retrenched workers. The Policy also states that the “special needs of people with disabilities will be taken into consideration”. People with disabilities are not one of the explicitly-mentioned target groups, although the Zambia PRSP identifies disability as a cross-cutting issue in the TEVET system.¹⁸

The new Policy differs from the old one in three aspects. Firstly, it targets the informal economy just as much as the formal economy. Secondly, it broadens the fields of training, incorporating “*all types of technical and vocational education*”, including agriculture, engineering, nursing and community development. Thirdly, it incorporates entrepreneurship development. Those changes are reflected in the 2003 Sector Skills Development Strategy (SSDS).

Sector Skills Development Strategy (SSDS)

In order to make the system more responsive to the need of the labour market, Zambia launched its SSDS in 2003. This strategy has two components.

Part 1 focuses on the formal economy and consists of linking skills development with the needs of the labour market, by putting “employers in the driver’s seat for the determination of skills requirement and the training response to those demands”. This is done through Sector Training Advisory Committees (STAC), which are formed around existing business associations and divided by sectors such as media and information, construction or utilities and communication. STACs develop skills development plans, in consultation with “*key companies and other organizations*”, contribute to the development of curricula; and assess the effectiveness of the training in their sector and recommend changes, in the overall objective of matching skills training with labour market needs. To that end, STACs aim to promote linkages between employers and training providers.

Part 2 focuses on entrepreneurship development and on the informal economy. The Entrepreneurship and Informal Sector Development Unit of TEVETA (EISDU) was established to integrate Entrepreneurship Development Programmes into the mainstream vocational training system and has the overall responsibility for entrepreneurship development and training programmes for the informal sector. To achieve these objectives, two types of centres were established. The Centres for Informal Sector Employment Promotion (CISEP) provide information on business opportunities, including on medium- and small-sized enterprises (MSEs) support services, and facilitate training in business management skills and product marketing. CISEPs were part of the ILO’s Improve Your Business (IYB) Programme and received support from the German development agency Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES). The Entrepreneurship Development Centres (EDCs) serve as a link between the informal economy and TEVET institutions. They attempt to facilitate enterprise development among trainees by strengthening institutional capacity for training for the informal economy, training trainers, and initiating contacts with

¹⁸ Zambia PRSP, p. 80.

micro-credit institutions. The EDCs manage the Non-Formal Training Institute Support Fund that funds capacity building of training providers. So far, two EDCs have been established (in Lusaka and Ndola). A preliminary assessment of EDCs show little results, as training institutions appear to be slow in changing their training to cater to the informal economy and entrepreneurship development.¹⁹

Minimum training standards and grading

Zambia has issued a *Minimum Training Standards Guide* that deals with issues of trainers' qualifications, staff-students ratio, teaching hours, physical environment, equipment and tools, and examinations. For example, trainers must have a degree higher than the one they are teaching, some teaching qualifications, and a minimum of three to five years of industry experience. Training institutions are inspected upon registration and then every year and are graded according to their following of standards. Institutions that are evaluated as unsatisfactory cannot register and be accredited.

No specific standards have been established regarding trainers of young persons with disabilities.

ZAFOD Action Plan

ZAFOD, the umbrella organization of Zambian DPOs, developed a National Plan of Action (NPA) for the period 2003-2008, to address the needs of people with disabilities. The NPA includes a number of objectives relating to vocational training, which it aims to achieve by the end of 2008: the number of people with disabilities enrolled in mainstream schools and vocational training institutions should have increased by 20 per cent; 50 disabled persons should have been trained by DPOs; and relevant legislation (for example, education, labour, social welfare, medical and transport) should have been amended by 2006 to incorporate disability issues. In implementing the NPA, ZAFOD and its member organizations have set the target of sponsoring ten students a year to obtain vocational training in the mainstream system²⁰.

Training programmes

Disabled people have access to vocational training in the National Vocational Rehabilitation Centre (NVRC) at Ndola. The TEVETA approves the syllabus and the National Examinations Council issues trainees with certificates on the successful completion of their course.

The Department of Technical Education and Vocational Training (DTEVT), in response to the Education Reform Act of 1977, initiated a special education and training programme, and a special vocational teachers' training programme, to promote and facilitate the integration of disabled trainees in regular technical and vocational training institutions operated by the Department. Adopting a policy of "*affirmative action*", the DTEVT selects all disabled applicants who meet the entrance requirements for courses at any of its twelve training institutions as stated in the TEVET Policy.

In addition, the Department has established special training courses at three institutions and has courses planned at two additional institutions, which will cater for blind and mentally-handicapped trainees. Courses presently offered include cutting and tailoring, weaving and cane work and basketry. Planned courses are in the leatherwork and ceramics. The entry requirement for the special training courses is a primary education.

¹⁹ Haan, op. cit., p. 136.

²⁰ For a full description of the ZAFOD NPA, see '*Promoting the Employability and Employment of People with Disabilities. Zambia Country Profile*', ILO, June 2006.

Approximately 30 disabled persons (one-third women) complete training every two years.

The Department also operates work preparation and assessment centres at one of its training institutions, which take twenty mentally-handicapped persons per year, and which used to be operated jointly with the Association of Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities, but now works with the Zambian Association on Employment of People with Disabilities (ZAEPD).

The Department also conducts a special vocational teachers' training programme at Luanshya Technical and Vocational Teachers' College, for instructors already training, to provide them with the awareness and techniques necessary to facilitate the training of disabled persons.

The demand by persons with disabilities for entrance into the special education and training programme of the Department is great, often with over 50 candidates per course applying. The Department relies upon recruitment and referrals from the national associations of disabled persons for candidates, who are then selected according to age (older candidates being selected first) and aptitude.

3. Promoting opportunities through technical cooperation

ILO projects and technical support

Vocational Rehabilitation of the Disabled, 1976-1988

The Government of Zambia requested the ILO's assistance on the development of vocational rehabilitation services for disabled persons in Zambia in 1970. Long-term ILO assistance commenced in 1976 with the first three-year phase of the ILO/Zambia Vocational Rehabilitation Project funded by the Government of Finland; subsequently extended for two further three-year periods. In 1983, the project was again extended for an additional three years (Phase III). Construction of the NVRC began in mid-1983 and the Centre was opened on 22 September 1986. The capacity of the NVRC was further developed under Phase III as both the length and number of courses offered increased.

Phase I (1976-1979)

The first phase of the ILO/Finland project, '*Vocational Rehabilitation of the Disabled*' saw the establishment of a Pilot Vocational Rehabilitation Centre in Ndola, which opened in March 1977, with a maximum capacity of 50 students; as well as the development of small-scale industries for disabled persons. The pilot centre was housed in temporary accommodations in Ndola. The size, type and location of the buildings limited the number of trainees to 40 and the training courses to four. In addition, it was not possible to provide any assessment or counselling services for the trainees, which are an important feature of effective vocational rehabilitation courses.

Phase II (1979-1983)

During the second phase of the project, the focus was on further developing the capacity of the Zambia Council for the Handicapped (ZCH) to provide services for all categories of employable disabled persons. ZCH was assisted to restructure its organizational framework and broaden its activities, particularly in the field of production workshops and rural rehabilitation. Planning for a permanent vocational rehabilitation centre continued and approval was given by the Government of Zambia for the expenditure of 3 million Kwacha for the construction of the NVRC, which began in 1983.

Phase III (1983-1988)

Phase III of the project focused on supporting the planning of services and development of programme's National Rehabilitation Centre at Ndola. Delays in the construction of the Centre, originally due to be completed in 1985, led to the extension of the project until 1988.

At the time of the final evaluation of Phase III, the Centre offered a number of different training courses, including: metalwork, woodwork, radio and TV repair, clerical training and typing, machinist, garment making, industrial sewing, home economics, assistant accountant, telephone switchboard operator's courses, and agricultural training. The duration of the training courses was 18 months, which included time for industrial attachment. The DTEVT approved the syllabus for each course. In addition to the vocational training courses, the Centre provided a vocational assessment service and assisted centre graduates in finding employment. Centre facilities included: a gymnasium, swimming pool and hydrotherapy-pool. Trainees were referred predominantly by the ZCH, and also by the Workers' Compensation Fund Control Board (WCFCB).

A report to supplement the findings of the terminal report on the Programme concluded that the Centre was in need of equipment and maintenance, and that problems identified in the management of training courses needed to be addressed. The final recommendation

was that assistance in the form of evaluating progress made at the Centre would be necessary beyond the end of the programme.

Expert meeting on vocational rehabilitation in rural areas

In 1985, the ILO, with support from the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND), assisted the Organization for African Unity (OAU) in creating the African Rehabilitation Institute (ARI); one of whose main aims was to improve the quality of vocational training by addressing the need for qualified and trained rehabilitation staff. To this end, the ILO, in cooperation with the Government of Zambia, organized an African Regional Workshop on Vocational Rehabilitation in Rural Areas, Lusaka, Zambia, 1-19 July 1985. Attended by 16 participants and observers from seven countries in the South African region, the workshop brought together international and African experts with the purpose of forming an expert opinion on how to develop vocational rehabilitation services for disabled persons living in rural areas.

Country papers highlighting the vocational rehabilitation and skills training opportunities for disabled persons in rural areas in several different countries formed the basis of the discussions and outputs generated throughout the workshop. Case studies of vocational training were also presented.

Training of grassroots level community rehabilitation workers, 1985

During the summer of 1985, the ILO, in cooperation with the Government of Zambia and the ZCH, organized training courses for community rehabilitation volunteers. These three-month courses accommodated 28 participants per course and were the first step in developing Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) training for community volunteers in Zambia. They represented an important step, since, up to this point, most of the vocational training and rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities was located in urban areas, mostly concentrated at the National Services Training facility in Kitwe and the National Vocational Rehabilitation Centre (NVRC) at Ndola. The training courses were introduced to train volunteers who would work in rural areas, which is where a majority of Zambia's population is located, including people with disabilities. From its inception, the initiative was designed to serve as a model for future training of community rehabilitation volunteers in Zambia.

Improved livelihood for disabled women: A regional promotion programme for Southern African countries, 1989-1995

In developing countries, women are generally responsible for the welfare of their families, and they contribute in many other ways to the social and economic life of their communities. Despite their important role, however, socio-cultural practices often place women in subordinate positions in their communities. Women with disabilities often face a dual set of challenges: in common with other women they have less access than men to education, health facilities, training and employment; they are also faced with problems stemming from their disabilities, including physical barriers to mobility and social barriers caused by prejudice and discrimination.

The ILO Programme, "*Improved Livelihood for Disabled Women: A Regional Promotion Programme for Southern African Countries*", funded by the Federal Republic of Germany, was designed to address these concerns. The aim of the Programme, which ran in two phases (1989 to 1992, and 1993 to 1995), was to create a regional and national network with the purpose of systematically promoting the integration of disabled women in mainstream development efforts. Regional activities were combined with activities implemented at the national and local levels in Zambia and four other countries of Southern African countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. Activities included awareness campaigns, training seminars for media personnel, opinion leaders and managers of development programmes, recruiting and training of community-based

workers to promote self-reliance among disabled women through income-generating activities; and establishing a support base for the socioeconomic integration of disabled women.

In Zambia, micro-enterprises were created and community-based workers were trained to support them. The success of these efforts gave rise to great interest on the part of disabled women's groups and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Requests for support frequently took the form of project proposals for income-generating activities that required specific skills training. Since these requests for support in creating training and employment opportunities far exceeded the capacity to respond, national coordinators had to carefully prioritize activities meriting assistance in line with the project's capabilities. This contributed to the decision to continue the project efforts into a second phase, during which heightened attention and resources would be paid to creating vocational training. Some training opportunities created under the first phase were extended, though fewer training opportunities were created in Zambia than in other participating countries.

While this Programme did not directly concern skills development, the needs for this by the disabled women entrepreneurs became clear in the course of the programme activities, to enable disabled women to acquire higher level skills so as to be able to engage in decent, productive activities.

Skills acquisition by persons with disabilities in Southern Africa, 2004-2006

In a more recent project on skills development for persons with disabilities, funded by the Government of Flanders (2004–2006), the ILO has undertaken an assessment of the impact of both disability-specific and mainstream training strategies being used in Zambia, as well as three other countries in Southern Africa: South Africa, Swaziland and Zambia. The origins of these strategies lie in over twenty ILO technical cooperation projects, funded by UNDP and multilateral donor agencies, and implemented with governments in African countries during the 1980s-1990s. These projects introduced both institutional and community-based strategies for the training and employment of persons with disabilities, some specifically targeting women with disabilities. While many of the approaches pioneered in these projects proved effective in enabling women and men with disabilities to acquire skills and to start work, no systematic assessment or documenting of the impact of the strategies has been undertaken. Based on surveys of disabled men and women undertaken in cooperation with DPOs in each of the countries, and on case studies compiled, the assessment is intended to lead to the identification of good practice concerning skills acquisition leading to work for persons with disabilities – both in terms of strategies and service delivery. Skills acquisition strategies will be judged effective only to the extent that they result in actual work opportunities.

The aim of the project is to strengthen the capacity of: governments to provide effective policy and legal frameworks; and of public and private training providers and other organizations in African countries to effectively assist persons with disabilities to acquire skills and work opportunities via mainstream training institutions, special programmes or through other methods. Collaborating organizations in each country have been commissioned to gather information on effective skills acquisition strategies through a survey of graduates, in consultation with the reference group, with case studies of individuals who have benefited from the strategies and good practices being compiled as illustrations. A Guide to Good Practice will also be prepared and disseminated at workshops to be organized in each participating country at the conclusion of the project.

The reports of the survey undertaken in the participating countries are currently in preparation. The findings of the survey in Zambia are the basis for the discussion of issues which need to be addressed to improve opportunities for disabled men and women of all ages in the country in the following section.

Developing entrepreneurship among women with disabilities, Phase 2, 2005–2007

The ILO has been involved in implementing income-generation projects and other initiatives for women with disabilities for over twenty years. The most recent initiative is the ILO project, “*Developing Entrepreneurship among Women with Disabilities*” (DEWD), funded by the Government of Ireland. This project has developed a strategy to support women with disabilities and women with disabled dependents in improving their standard of living through training in micro-enterprise skills, vocational skills training, as well as access to credit and business development services. A key element of the strategy is the involvement of the DPOs and women with disabilities in the project management and in carrying out project activities.

Zambia is a participant country in Phase 2 of the DEWD project, with ZAFOD acting as the central coordinating DPO.

Project strategy

The DEWD project strategy, tested in Ethiopia 2001–2004, is based on partnerships with local DPOs and designed and implemented in close consultation with DPOs, training providers, micro-finance institutions, and national and local government authorities.

The core elements of the strategy are:

- Strengthening existing enterprises of women with disabilities and encouraging potential entrepreneurs to start up businesses.
- Building capacity of national DPOs to:
 - facilitate access of potential women entrepreneurs with disabilities to business training, vocational skills training and credit;
 - take increasing responsibility for project implementation, in cooperation with local and national government, under contract to the ILO; and
 - mobilize and diversify their funding sources (for example, to enable them to sustain project activities in the longer term).
- Ensuring effective involvement of women with disabilities in managing project activities through the creation of a Project Management Committee mainly composed of women representatives from participating DPOs.
- Making use of existing in-country sources of technical expertise, skills training, and micro-finance.
- Seeking ways of “*scaling up*” the project to reach more women with disabilities.
- Documenting the impact of project activities through case studies, surveys and photo and video records.

In Phase 2 (2005-2007), an innovation has been introduced in this strategy. Building on the positive experience in Phase 1 where women with disabilities took part in some training courses provided for women entrepreneurs as part of another ILO Ireland-funded project, “*Promoting Women’s Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality*” (WEDGE), the focus in Phase 2 of DEWD is to support the participation of women with disabilities in as many WEDGE training activities and events as possible. DPOs are involved in providing any support services which are required to make this inclusion work in practice.

Activities – Phase 2

During the second phase (2005-2007), DEWD seeks to build upon the strategy developed and tested in the first phase by:

- Extending coverage to include Kenya, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, as well as other regions in Ethiopia.
- Continuing to develop the capacity of DPOs to facilitate the inclusion of women with disabilities in mainstream entrepreneurship development activities by:
 - Liaising with government ministries, employers' and workers' organizations, women entrepreneur associations, business development service providers, training providers offering business training and/or vocational skills, micro-finance institutions and other entrepreneurship and skills development partners.
 - Fostering the development of relevant support mechanisms for women with disabilities to participate in mainstream training and other events.
 - Ensuring the provision of any supports required by women with disabilities to enable them to participate in mainstream training and other events. Examples include: the arrangement of sign language interpreters for deaf participants, materials in Braille for blind participants, and accessible venues to facilitate participants using wheelchairs.
- Working with micro-finance institutions to facilitate access of women entrepreneurs with disabilities to appropriate savings and credit products and services.
- Collaborating with DPOs to sensitize government ministries, employers' and workers' organizations, women entrepreneur associations, micro-finance institutions, the media and other relevant stakeholders to disability concerns.
- Working with the public and private media and other relevant stakeholders to develop strategies to effectively convey positive messages about persons with disabilities and combat negative attitudes and stereotypes through the communications media.

Promoting the employability and employment of people with disabilities through effective legislation, 2005 - 2007

The ILO project, *“Promoting the Employability and Employment of People with Disabilities through Effective Legislation”*, sets out to strengthen the capacity of national governments in selected countries to improve the effectiveness in practice of legislation and policy concerning the vocational training and employment of people with disabilities. Funded by the Government of Ireland, the project involves governments, social partners and DPOs, in selected countries of East and Southern Africa and Asia and the Pacific, in activities and events linked to the review or development of disability-related legislation and policies.

Following a three-year first phase, the project has been extended for a second phase (2005-2007). Zambia is a participant country in Phase 2 of the project. Other countries which have participated in either Phase 1 or Phase 2 of the project to date are:

East and Southern Africa: Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, and

Asia and the Pacific: Australia, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor l’Este and Viet Nam.

The main elements of the project are:

- The development of a knowledge base on disability-related legislation and policy and its implementation in participant countries.
- Advocacy of equal opportunities and treatment and of a rights-based approach in laws, policies and programmes concerning the training and employment of disabled persons through sub-regional and national meetings and workshops.
- The provision of technical support to countries on request, relating to the review, revision or development of disability-related legislation, policies or implementation measures.
- Training of key stakeholders on disability-related employment and training laws and policies.
- Support to media campaigns aiming to promote positive images of disabled people at work and to overcome stereotypes and mistaken assumptions.

In Phase 2 of the project, currently underway, a pro-active approach is adopted to enhancing the capacity of national stakeholders to promote and adopt a rights-based approach through:

- Meetings with key stakeholders to discuss regional and national findings on legislation, policy and implementation measures.
- The establishment, by governments, of advisory groups to develop or revise national action plans on employment promotion for and the enhancement of employability of disabled persons through effective legislation and policy will be encouraged.
- The identification and commissioning of national or sub-regional training institutions to provide training to key stakeholders on topics relevant to the development and implementation of effective employment-related legislation for persons with disabilities, with a view to encouraging the development of sustained awareness of and an informed debate on legislative, policy and programme issues relating to the employment of disabled persons at the national level.
- Support to the development of partnerships with national and local media, aiming at achieving commitment to a media campaign to promote positive images of disability, and overcome negative stereotypes.
- Development of training materials, guidelines and briefing materials on issues relating to disability and employment, for customization, translation into national languages and widespread dissemination.

Through these activities, it is hoped that the project partners will have the capacity to sustain a focus on disability-related issues in training and employment, once project support has been phased out.

Government of Finland - Inclusion and empowerment of girls and women with intellectual disability, 2006-2008

In January 2006, a project, *"Inclusion and Empowerment of Girls and Women with Intellectual Disability"*, was initiated, with funding from the Government of Finland. This two-year project is implemented by the Finnish Association on Mental Retardation (FAMR) in collaboration in collaboration the Zambian Association on Employment of People with Disabilities with (ZAEPD), the Ministry for Science, Technology and Vocational Training (MSTVT) and Zambian Association of Disabled Women (ZNADWO). The immediate aims of this project are: to promote the participation and

integration of intellectually-disabled girls and women into society, improving their access to vocational and entrepreneurship training, and developing their possibilities for employment through peer support, materials in easy-to-read language, media campaigns and lobbying.

This project is of significance because the target group – women and girls with intellectual disability – generally experience greater difficulties than persons with other types of disability in accessing services and in participating in society. The activities undertaken will hopefully serve as a model, not only for policy and services in Zambia, but also for other countries in the region.

- ➔ The NVRC was established under a technical cooperation project and has developed considerably since its opening. Given the changing economic and social environment, however, a review of its contribution to the skills development and employment opportunities of persons with disabilities would be useful.
- ➔ The extent to which men and women with different types of disability have access to skills development services in Zambia deserves particular attention.

4. Strategies for skills acquisition and work for persons with disabilities in Zambia

People with disabilities have the potential to earn decent livelihoods, to support their families and to contribute to their communities and the wider society. Often, though, they are prevented from doing so by the fact that they do not have access to education and training in marketable skills. As a result, many seek to earn a living through activities which generate little income, confining them and their families to lives of poverty. Training in skills which are in demand in the labour market is an important means of breaking out of this situation, enabling individuals to improve their standards of living through decent and productive work, and communities and society to benefit from the potential of disabled persons in the population, which currently remains largely untapped.

Recognizing the central role played by skills in enabling persons with disabilities to access decent work, and the importance of identifying good practice in skills development for disabled persons, the ILO undertook a four-country study in Malawi, South Africa, Swaziland and Zambia in the framework of the ILO/Flanders project “*Skills Acquisition and Work for Persons with Disabilities in Southern Africa*” 2004-2006 (see Section 3 above).

The aims of the study were to:

- identify effective strategies for vocational skills acquisition by persons with disabilities leading to productive work; and
- promote training policies and effective methods of training and employment services delivery for individuals with different types of disabilities, particularly in mainstream training institutions.

The study was designed to be exploratory in nature, so as to highlight good practice as well as key issues relating to skills development and employment of persons with disabilities, which require the attention of legislators, policymakers and service providers. While the findings cannot be generalized to the overall population, they provide an indication of the major challenges to be tackled and of strategies which might be developed.

The results of the study in Zambia are presented below. The survey findings are illustrated by case study excerpts to highlight particular points. The section starts with a brief review of the methodology used, followed by an overview of the study population, a description of the results concerning skills development and employment, and concludes with a summary of the main points. A discussion of the policy implications and recommendations follows in Section 5.

Methodology

The approach taken in the implementation of this project reflects the ILO strategy to build the capacity of DPOs to advocate and lobby on their own behalf. By involving them in conducting a systematic review of skills training and employment of people with disabilities in their countries, it was hoped that the DPOs would further develop their organizational skills and capacity to engage in survey activities, as well as gaining insight into the current situation and identifying policy challenges.

ZAFOD was commissioned to carry out the study in Zambia, involving an exploratory survey of persons with disabilities and case studies of individuals who had received skills training and had found employment. A project implementation guide was prepared by the ILO, which provided support throughout the project. Support was also provided at the

initial planning and implementation stage by the Platform for Disability and Development Cooperation (PHOS), an NGO based in Flanders.

A Stakeholders' Reference Group (SRG) was formed to advise on the design and implementation of the survey activities, to help overcome any obstacles encountered and recommend changes to the project implementation guide as necessary. The SRG members represented ZAFOD and seven of its nine affiliate organizations, representing persons with different types of disability, as well as other relevant organizations and agencies.

A team of 32 surveyors, drawn from seven DPOs affiliated to ZAFOD, carried out the survey activities from October to December 2004. The team consisted of an equal number of women and men, including persons with visual and hearing impairments and physical disabilities, as well as two parents of children with disabilities. Before the commencement of the survey, the enumerators underwent training on the project and survey methodology.

The survey participants were purposively selected on the basis of their training and employment experience, in consultation with DPOs. The sample was to include respondents who were skilled and employed; some who were skilled and unemployed; others who were unskilled and unemployed; and yet others who were unskilled but employed. An equal balance of men and women was sought. Representation was also sought of four different disability types: hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical disability and intellectual disability. It was intended that respondents in both rural and urban areas would be included.

Survey population

The survey was conducted in three districts of Zambia: Chipata, Copperbelt and Lusaka. In each province, activities were limited to the main urban centres. Most interviews were done either at the workplace or at the home of the respondents.

Altogether, 276 persons with disabilities were interviewed, of whom 121 (44 per cent) were skilled and employed; 51 (18 per cent) were skilled and unemployed; 26 (9 per cent) were unskilled but employed; 78 (28 per cent) were unskilled and unemployed. Some had received formal training, while others had not. Some had formal jobs, others were self-employed or had small businesses; while the remainder were unemployed.

In addition to the survey, case studies were conducted of 24 individuals who had acquired skills training and who were presently working. In these case studies, individuals with disabilities described their experience in attending training and in finding jobs. The survey and case studies were carried out between October and December 2004. Analysis of the data proved problematic and was delayed following the withdrawal of PHOS from the project, while this process was underway. Other arrangements were put in place and the analysis was finally completed in November 2006.

It is recalled that the survey was an exploratory rather than a representative survey of the total disabled population in Zambia. While generalizations cannot be made from these results to the overall population, the survey provides useful insights on skills development provision for disabled Zambians, which can inform decisions by policymakers and training providers, and gives indications of possible trends that could be investigated in further studies.

Socio-demographic characteristics

Age and gender

Approximately one-third of the survey respondents (30 per cent) was aged below 25 years, and around a quarter (27 per cent) was above 40 years of age. Forty-three per cent were aged between 25 and 39.

The gender balance was almost even, with women comprising 48 per cent of the interviewees and men 52 per cent.

Marital status

Half (51 per cent) of the respondents were married, 39 per cent were single, while the remaining 10 per cent were divorced or separated, widowed, or cohabiting. It was notable that the women were almost twice as likely to be single (49 per cent) than the men (28 per cent); and significantly less likely to be married (38 per cent, compared to 65 per cent of the male respondents).

Educational level

Almost all (90 per cent) respondents had attended at least primary education. One in five (20 per cent) had not gone further than primary education. A quarter (26 per cent) had attended secondary education while 43 per cent had college education. Very few (1 per cent) had university education. Men were more likely than women to have secondary or college education, while women were more likely to have attended primary education or to have no education at all.

Disability type

Forty-five per cent of respondents had a physical disability; 30 per cent had a visual impairment; and 20 per cent had a hearing impairment. Four per cent had an intellectual disability, while 1 per cent had another unspecified type of disability.

Age of onset

A third of the respondents (33 per cent) had acquired their disability between the age of 1 and 4 years old. A quarter (26 per cent) had acquired their disability when they were between 5 and 9 years old; one in five (19 per cent) when they were under a year old; and one in five (21 per cent) later than age 10.

Cause of disability

Over a third (38 per cent) of respondents had become disabled due to polio, measles or mumps; over one in ten (12 per cent) due to an accident; one in ten (11 per cent) due to genetic factors; 8 per cent due to malaria; while the remainder attributed their disability to poor hygiene or to medical treatment.

Use of assistive devices

Almost half (46 per cent) of the respondents used assistive devices of some type. Crutches were most frequently used, followed by white sticks, glasses, and wheelchairs. Some respondents (over one in ten) used a personal assistant or a sign language interpreter, while others used a hearing aid, or had an artificial limb.

Vocational training

Almost two-thirds of all respondents (63 per cent) had attended some form of skills training. The majority of these who had attended training (70 per cent), were employed while 51 (30 per cent) were unemployed, a pattern which is linked to the way in which the sample was stratified, rather than necessarily indicating a trend.

Respondents were most likely to have trained to become telephone operators (19 per cent) or tailors/clothes designers (18 per cent). More than one in ten (12 per cent) of trained respondents had trained as teachers and 10 per cent had trained in secretarial skills. With one exception, all secretaries were women, while men were more likely to have trained as teachers (14 per cent compared to 9 per cent of the women). Eight per cent of all trained respondents (nearly all men) had received skills in carpentry and joinery.

Other types of skills training which respondents had received included accounting and business management; home economics and housekeeping; weaving and knitting; information technology and computing; and technical skills (radio technician). Those who had been trained in home economic skills were almost all women and, with one exception, those who had received training in accounts and business management were all men.

Problems encountered in trying to acquire vocational skills

Respondents were asked to identify the obstacles they met in seeking to acquire vocational training, whether or not they had actually attended training. Approximately 188 respondents (69 per cent of those surveyed) answered this question, including some who had not attended skills training.

Awareness among training providers

For one in five respondents (20 per cent), lack of awareness of the training providers had been a problem. It is important to note, however, that nearly all who mentioned this had not been prevented from attending training because of it. More men than women mentioned this as an issue.

The failure of trainers to be aware of the specific support requirements of individual trainees is illustrated in the following case-study excerpt:

“Prior to going for teaching, I did electronics but could not hear the sounds of the radios I was repairing. How does one know that the radio is now playing if you can’t hear the sound?”

Special needs teacher with hearing impairment, Lusaka

Transport

Approximately one in five respondents (18 per cent), mainly those with physical disabilities or visual impairments, had experienced problems in getting to and from the training centre, due to lack of transport. This problem was mentioned almost exclusively by respondents, male and female, who had attended training.

Accessibility

Inaccessibility of training centres was mentioned as a problem by under one in five (16 per cent) of the respondents. Challenges arising from the lack of accessibility were mentioned by people with each type of disability represented in the survey - physical disability, hearing impairment or visual impairment and intellectual disability.

“One of the biggest problems in the government’s policy on training of disabled people is accessibility. Even if you are gifted in the brains and you qualify for a course, when it comes to working environments they are not accessible. Even the training institutes themselves are not accessible.”

Telephone Extension Officer with physical disability, Ministry of Education

“When we want to go for training in these other colleges there isn’t even suitable infrastructure for a person like me in a wheelchair to move around; let alone the special Braille materials, the sign language services and even the attitude. What do you expect? What is government thinking?”

Chief Executive with physical disability, Lusaka

Communication

Slightly more than one in ten respondents (13 per cent) had experienced difficulties in communication during their skills training. These were respondents with hearing impairments. Nearly half (46 per cent) of the persons with hearing impairment who replied to this question had experienced such difficulties during their training.

“I was the only deaf pupil in my primary school class so the only way of learning was to copy notes and study. There was no teacher who helped me in sign language. Life was hard there. Imagine five years just reading and copying notes without having a chance to listen to any explanation by a teacher. I failed to go to college the first time they accepted me, because there was no lecturer to handle me even there.”

Special Education teacher with hearing impairment

This was not always the case, however, as indicated in the following case study quotation.

“I trained as a teacher, 1992-1993. This was after I had been admitted to another college to study Journalism, a course I wanted but I turned it down because my hearing was poor. In the teacher training college, most of the work was research based and not reading from the blackboard.”

Teacher with hearing impairment, School for the Deaf

Other challenges

Lack of training materials in accessible format was mentioned as a problem by 5 per cent of respondents.

“When I entered the teacher training college, this brought its own drama: the institution had never had a blind student ever. This meant that there were no Braille materials and assistance that I needed. Even the results I got from the college are not a true reflection of my capacity, because of the hurdles I mentioned”.

Teacher with visual impairment, School for the Blind

Some survey respondents (5 per cent) found it difficult to attend training due to the lack of funds to pay for the training fees. Several of the case study participants also described the consequences of not having funds to pay for their training.

“After my grade 12, I came to NVRC and studied electronics for a year-and-a-half and obtained a certificate. Since I passed so well, I was selected to go to Zambia Institute of Technology (ZIT), but due to lack of money I could not go.”

Technician with physical disability, Lusaka

“I could not go further than grade 10 due to financial problems in the family and therefore in 1982 I left school, very unhappy.”

Self-employed shoe polisher with physical disability

Discrimination, lack of education, unsuitable courses, difficulties in mastering the concepts used at the training course, disability-related difficulties, sickness or family responsibilities were also mentioned by some respondents as having affected their success in developing skills.

“Because of my good performance at college, I was given some money by the Principal to start a tailoring business right there at the institution. But unfortunately my father and my brothers came over to the training centre and told the Principal that they needed me at home and that they didn’t want me to be in training. So I came back to Lusaka with them. After some time my young sister gave me some money to start selling fish again; a business I had done before going for training.”

Housekeeper with hearing impairment

Relevance of training to job opportunities, self-employment

Respondents were asked whether the skills they had acquired enabled them to find work. The majority (62 per cent) said that the skills training they had received proved to be useful and made it easier to find work. The relevance of the skills training they had attended was greater in the case of male respondents (70 per cent) than females (51 per cent).

More than one third (38 per cent) of the 164 respondents who replied to this question said that the skills they had acquired had not been useful in finding work. There was an apparently significant gender difference in replies to this question, which merits further attention: half of the women felt that the training they had acquired did not lead to work opportunities, compared to less than one third (30 per cent) of the men.

Some skills had been more relevant to the labour market than others. Those who had trained in accounts and business management or to become radio technicians, for example, had found their skills training very useful for finding work. Similarly, the vast majority of those who had trained in carpentry and joinery or to become teachers replied that their skills training had been useful for finding a job. On the other hand, nearly one-quarter of those who had trained as telephone operators (37 per cent) or in home economics and housekeeping (38 per cent) did not find these skills useful for the job market. Among those who had trained as tailors, perceived usefulness of the skills training was even lower, with over half of these respondents (57 per cent) stating that the skills training they had acquired did not make it easier to find a job.

“The training did not help me get a job. In 1990, I found a job as an office assistant. Since then I have been working in different departments.”

Kitchen supervisor with hearing impairment, trained in tailoring, Lusaka

“I trained to become a telephone operator and also did a course in tailoring and took a trade test. At the moment I am self-employed in a business I did not do any training for. I have four children whom I can feed and dress, but cannot send to school. My family is not very happy.”

Self-employed shoe polisher with physical disability

For some case study participants, the link between the skills training they attended and the world of work was clear – they found jobs or started small businesses using the skills they acquired.

“When I finished training I found a job with in a garment factory, but after some time the company closed. After this episode a lot of small things happened until I teamed up with other disabled women here in Ndola and formed a tailoring group.”

Tailor with physical disability

Others were not so fortunate: they were not making use of the skills they had acquired, and in some cases, did not seem to have had the benefit of career guidance or information about accommodation and assistive devices, when they were deciding on what course to take.

“I applied to study teaching and was accepted, but thought I couldn’t stand long enough in class to teach. So instead I came to NVRC to do tailoring and obtained a certificate. Then I worked in a project on tailoring, but when it collapsed I was stranded.”

Telephone Operator with physical disability

The case studies reinforce the point arising from the survey findings: that there is an urgent need to review the labour market relevance of existing skills training courses. They also point to the need to improve the level of vocational assessment and career guidance provided.

Overall benefits of training

While the experience of the survey respondents varied, appropriate skills training was generally viewed as beneficial. This is reflected in the views of respondents on barriers to employment, with over one in ten (13 per cent) saying that the lack of skills training was a major problem (see section below on Barriers). This view was also reflected in the individual case studies of respondents who had been successful in gaining skills and employment. There was no doubt in most of the case study participants’ minds that vocational training had been beneficial to them and had improved their opportunities in life, whether or not it lead to employment.

“Without it, I know very well that the people couldn’t have known what they know of me now. I am happy to prove society wrong when they think that disability is linked to failure. I am successful in life.”

Secretary with physical disability

“Without my training, I could not have got to where I am now. I really cherish my training.”

Teacher with visual impairment

Employment

Over half of all respondents (53 per cent or 147 persons) were in employment. They were asked about the type of work they were engaged in presently. As in the case of the findings on skills training, the results here are not representative, but highlight issues and trends in an exploratory way, pointing to areas in need of attention on the part of policymakers and service providers.

Type of work

Most frequently, respondents were either self-employed (16 per cent) or working as telephone operators (16 per cent). About one in ten (11 per cent) were teachers and 7 per cent worked as carpenters or craft workers.

The remaining respondents were engaged in quite a wide spread of occupations. They included: tailors, housekeepers or cooks, clerics, project managers, technicians, cleaners, store keepers, information technologists, secretaries, street vendors and shoe polishers. It is likely that some of these were also self-employed, but had replied to the question with their exact occupation.

Respondents with hearing impairments or a physical disability were more likely to be employed than respondents with other types of disabilities. Of the persons with hearing impairments, 63 per cent were employed, and of those with a physical disability, 60 per cent were currently working, while about half of the respondents with visual impairments and those with an intellectual disability had jobs.

Men were more likely to be at work (61 per cent) than women (48.9 per cent). This pattern was found across all disability types, and merits further investigation to establish whether this finding can be generalized to the whole population of disabled persons.

These apparent differences by disability type and gender may give an indication of trends, but would need to be further investigated in a representative survey before definite conclusions can be drawn.

Finding jobs

Almost all of the employed respondents (141) answered the question on how they had found their jobs. The most common way to find a job was on one's own, via an NGO, via a training centre or with the help of friends. One in ten (20 per cent) had found the job on their own and almost as many (19 per cent) had found work with the help of an NGO. Fifteen per cent had found their job via the training centre at which they had trained and 13 per cent had found it via friends. Other channels that respondents had successfully used to find work were via public employment services, via public authorities, by sending in an application or with the help of relatives. Some got their current job through a chance encounter or occurrence.

“In my life, I have done training in purchasing and stores management from a private college in Ndola, and I have a certificate. In 1988, I went to NVRC and did a course in industrial sewing, which helped me get a job in Ndola from 1990 to 1994. In the same year 1994, I got a job at NVRC as Production Supervisor in tailoring but in 1997, I left and initiated Bwafwano Project dealing in carpentry and joinery. But all these ventures were not going as I wished they could. So in 2004, I concentrated on sign language.”

*Interpreter and teacher with physical disability,
Sign Language Communication Centre*

“While taking my twins to the Clinic, the staff got interested in me and wanted to find a way of helping me and my twin babies. They offered me a job as a telephone operator and consequently in 2003 to 2004 I did a telephone operators’ course at NVRC and obtained a certificate. But I am not happy with the job I am doing. Where I operate from, the room has no window, just a light tube that is ever on and this has made my sight bad. I rather would want to find another job.”

Telephone operator with physical disability

Why were some respondents unemployed?

Twenty-eight (10 per cent) of the survey respondents who had previously been employed, but were presently out of work were asked about the reason for their current unemployment. The reasons most commonly mentioned were economic problems faced by their employers, or reasons relating to their disability. Other reasons mentioned included an accident or ill health, limited skills and discrimination.

Barriers in finding work

Respondents were asked to identify the most important barrier they had experienced when looking for work. The two problems most frequently reported by the 107 respondents (39 per cent) who answered this question were discrimination and the lack of skills training.

Discrimination

Nearly a third of the respondents (31 per cent) were of the opinion that discrimination had been the major reason for not finding employment. Men were more likely than women to report that they had been discriminated against. Over a third of the males (36 per cent) were of the opinion that discrimination hindered them from getting jobs, while slightly more than a quarter (27 per cent) of women thought so. Half of those who had college education (50 per cent) felt that discrimination was a barrier to the employment of persons with disabilities, while a quarter of respondents with secondary education (26 per cent) thought so, with one in five (21 per cent) of those who had primary education felt this. On the other hand, among those with lower levels of education, other reasons such as lack of skills were more frequently mentioned as a barrier to employment.

Respondents with hearing impairments (35 per cent) or physical disabilities (35 per cent) more often reported that discrimination was a barrier to employment than respondents with visual impairments (16 per cent).

Skills training

About one in ten of the respondents (13 per cent) were of the opinion that lack of skills training was the major cause for not finding employment. For women, lack of skills was clearly more often a barrier to finding employment than for men. Nearly one in five (17 per cent) of the women who replied to this question thought they would need more education or skills training in order to make access to employment easier. Among male respondents, the lack of skills was mentioned by one in ten (9 per cent).

Respondents with higher educational levels were less inclined to feel that they lacked skills. Among those with primary education, one in five (22 per cent) thought that the lack of skills made it more difficult for them to find employment, while among those with secondary education, 13 per cent thought so, while only 4 per cent of those with college education expressed this view.

Respondents with physical disabilities were more likely to report a lack of skills than those with hearing or visual impairments. Further research would be necessary to explore the underlying reasons for this finding - whether this is due to less training availability for

people with physical disability, or to greater access to information on available skills training among this group than among people with other disability types.

Case study respondents also mentioned the lack of training in marketable skills as a problem in seeking employment.

“It pains me to see that the only training available to persons with disabilities should be switchboard operation, tailoring, carpentry and joinery. Are these surely the only things a disabled person is able to do?”

Self-employed shoe polisher with physical disability

“The world has become so technical now, but look at the courses being offered to people with disabilities. The courses have never been reviewed since training began decades ago. Technology is working for the disabled people all over the world. With technology, physical jobs have been reduced to pressing a button while seated in your wheelchair. Why can't training programmes for disabled people be upgraded to handle technical courses?”

Teacher with visual impairment, Lusaka

“Things are bad for the disabled people in Zambia. The courses and qualifications from NVRC are inferior; with those qualifications and courses you cannot compete with anyone for a job. You automatically lose out.”

Chief Executive with physical disability

In addition to commenting on the limited and partly out-dated skills training offered to persons with disabilities, some case study respondents also referred to the low level of qualifications offered in courses catering to people with disabilities.

“Why is it that all courses are limited to a certificate level? Where does one go to advance from, where? This should be looked into very seriously. We need to upgrade the qualifications on courses for people with disabilities to a Diploma level.”

Teacher with visual impairment

Other barriers

Problems in communication were mentioned as a barrier by 8 per cent of respondents, all of whom were persons with hearing impairments.

The general lack of jobs in Zambia was cited by 7 per cent of the respondents. Persons with visual impairments mentioned this problem more frequently than respondents with other types of disabilities.

Several respondents mentioned transport as a factor that made it difficult to get work and some thought that their disability was a barrier to finding employment.

Summary

The ILO/Flanders exploratory survey and case studies carried out indicated that:

- Training available to people with disabilities in specialist centres in Zambia is generally out-dated and of limited relevance to current and emerging opportunities in the labour market or in terms of enterprise. Much of the training is in low value-added subject areas.
- There was some evidence that women with disabilities benefited less than men with disabilities in terms of the relevance of the skills training they acquired – further investigation of this indicative trend is required.
- The standard of training in specialist centres was also lower than that in mainstream centres, leaving graduates with disabilities at a comparative disadvantage in their search for jobs.
- Although a wide variety of work was done by respondents, the results show that stereotypical “*disabled peoples’ jobs*”, such as telephone operators, were still frequent. There was also a clear distinction between the training available to women and to men.
- Mainstream training centres are frequently poorly prepared to cater to accommodate trainees with different disabilities – in terms of preparedness of trainers; accessibility of buildings; accessibility of information; availability of sign language interpretation; vocational assessment and career guidance; and availability of accessible transport.
- While the skills training did not lead to employment for many of the respondents, the value of appropriate skills training was recognized and many respondents would welcome the opportunity for further training, if this would assist them in getting decent work or in setting up viable small businesses.
- Respondents generally sought jobs through informal networks or through the training centres they attended. Few availed of public employment services.
- Respondents reported discrimination and lack of relevant skills training as being the major barriers they faced in finding employment. Discrimination was more frequently identified as a barrier by respondents with college level education, while the lack of marketable skills was more frequently mentioned by those with primary level education. Other barriers to employment included: communication difficulties, lack of transport, the individual’s disability and the general lack of jobs in Zambia.

The findings point to the need to review existing training provisions and related career guidance and job placement services for persons with disabilities, and for the introduction of policy and programme measures to improve opportunities for disabled women and men in Zambia to have access to training in marketable skills, so that they can obtain decent work. Recommendations arising from the exploratory survey and case studies are discussed in Section 5.

5. Moving forward

Zambia's commitment to promoting equal opportunities for persons with disabilities and to developing policies and national programmes that favour their full participation and that of their families in social, political and economic development, is evident in the Persons with Disabilities Act of 1996, as well as in the country's early decision to ratify the ILO Convention concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons), 1983 (No. 159). The 1996 Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability and requires that reasonable accommodation be made. Recognition of the importance of skills training in this process is reflected in the Act's provision that funds be made available to ensure that training institutions are accessible. The National Policy on Disability of 2002 also prioritizes the integration of people with disabilities into mainstream training centres.

While this general commitment is in place, its translation into practice appears to be less than effective. A recent report, "*Living Conditions among People with Activity Limitations in Zambia*,"²¹ found that people with disabilities were less likely than non-disabled people to be engaged in formal or contractual employment. By implication, they are more likely to be at work in the informal economy, where the majority of the labour force is engaged, or unemployed, and to live in poverty. Skills development is a key to enabling them to move out of this situation and to obtain decent and productive work, whether this be in formal employment, self-employment or in SMEs. The survey carried out in Zambia highlights some general considerations which should be taken into account by policymakers and vocational training service providers, in seeking to improve access of disabled youth and adults to training in marketable skills, and points to practical measures which will assist disabled people to have effective equal access to the skills training they require.

Recommendations arising from the survey

Relevance of training provided

Many disabled Zambians attend training courses in special training centres catering solely to people with disabilities, and do not train in skills that are marketable. Some of the training offered to persons with disabilities tends to be within stereotypical fields, such as telephone operators and tailoring, and does not reflect the changing opportunities available.

A review of the contribution of special centres to the skills development and employment opportunities of persons with disabilities should be undertaken, with a specific focus on labour market relevance.

Attention should be paid in the review to the training options offered to both women and men with disabilities.

²¹ Loeb, M.E. and Edie, A.H., *Living Conditions among People with Activity Limitations in Zambia, A National Representative Study*, SINTEF Health Research, 2006, p. 104.

Disability awareness of training providers

The survey findings showed that lack of awareness among training providers of the accommodation requirements of individual trainees posed a problem for many disabled persons. If the current trend towards inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream training programmes is to be successful, action needs to be taken to address this issue.

Induction training should be provided for training centre managers, training instructors and other training centre staff, to adequately prepare, combined with a system for assessing accommodation needs of individuals in the classroom.

Transportation

Lack of accessible transport made the process of getting to and from training centres problematic for many of the people interviewed. While this had not proved insurmountable for the survey respondents, it is possibly a factor preventing many others from attending training at all.

Arrangements should be made to facilitate travel to and from training centres by people with mobility and visual impairments.

Accessibility

The lack of accessibility of training centres was mentioned as a problem by survey respondents with all disability types. In addition to the difficulties in getting into buildings and moving around inside, the lack of training materials in accessible formats was also mentioned as a difficulty in following the training courses.

Action should be taken to ensure that mainstream vocational education and training centres are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Training materials should be made available in alternative formats.

Communication

For many trainees with hearing impairments, difficulties arose during their training courses because they could not follow what was going on in the classroom or in the centre. Trainers were not trained in sign language and sign language interpreters were not available.

Steps should be taken to familiarize instructors and training centre staff, as well as hearing trainees, with basic sign language.

Provision should be made for sign language interpretation in the training courses when required.

Training fees

Some of the survey respondents were unable to continue with the training of their choice, because they could not afford to pay the training fees. For others, attendance at training was difficult because they could not afford not to work, they needed to earn a living.

Consideration should be given to waiving training fees in the case of trainees with low income, and to providing training allowances or scholarships for such trainees.

Discrimination

Many respondents – particularly those with college level education – felt that they had been prevented from getting jobs because of discrimination on the part of employers. Since the Persons with Disabilities Act of 1996 prohibits discrimination on the basis of

disability, this finding of the exploratory study would merit further research, to determine whether this is a widespread phenomenon in Zambia. If it proves to be a systematic factor preventing persons with disabilities from getting decent jobs, then action is required to implement the legal provisions effectively, and to raise awareness of employers of the benefits of employing disabled workers in jobs suited to their interest, skills and capacities.

General considerations

Basic and continuing education

The emergence of the knowledge society in which people's skills and capabilities along with investment in education and in training, constitute the key to economic and social development. Skills and training increase productivity and incomes and facilitate participation in economic and social life. Education and training also assist people to escape poverty by raising their outputs as farmers and workers. Enterprises also benefit, improving their productivity and ability to compete successfully in globalized markets. Large and sustained investment in education and training are associated with economic growth and social development of countries.²²

It is clear from the exploratory survey findings that many respondents are greatly disadvantaged in their search for decent work by their limited access to education. This finding merits further investigation to determine the extent to which it is true of the population of persons with disabilities in Zambia as a whole. Systematic obstacles faced by disabled persons in obtaining recognized educational qualifications prevent them from accessing training in marketable skills and work in the open labour market, and stop them from reaching their potential, often trapping them in a vicious circle of poverty and work with low value-added, offering little future prospects. These obstacles also prevent Zambia from benefiting from the potential contribution of these citizens.

Ensuring comprehensive coverage

A fundamental question for policymakers and service providers is whether every disabled person is being reached. Are people with intellectual disability and those with mental health difficulties receiving services to the same extent as people with physical, visual or hearing disabilities? Are disabled people from very poor backgrounds being supported financially to attend skills training courses? What provisions are made to ensure that disabled women have equal access to skills training opportunities? These and other questions need attention, if the national policy goal of integrating persons with disabilities into mainstream society is to be achieved.

Career guidance

Information about occupations and the skills and aptitudes involved assist persons with disabilities in making decisions about their future working lives, and the type of skills training they will take. This information is often provided through schools and vocational training centres, and in some cases through Employment Services. Vocational assessment services also assist persons with disabilities in identifying the types of occupations to which they are suited, and, in combination with information about assistive devices, can enable them to make a choice which is suited to their interests, aspirations and capacities. The survey conducted in Zambia did not indicate that disabled people undergoing training had the benefit of access to such services in making decisions about their futures. This is a gap which policymakers and service providers might consider filling.

²² ILO, *Learning and Training for Work in the Knowledge Society*. Geneva, 2003.

Mainstream vocational training centres

In Zambia, at policy level, there is a commitment to opening general vocational training centres to persons with disabilities. The effective implementation of this commitment will set the scene for great improvement in the status of disabled persons in the future, not only to ensure that they have access to mainstream skills development opportunities, but also that they can successfully complete the course they choose. Several questions need to be addressed, to ensure that access to mainstream vocational training centres is being effectively organized and prepared for. Are mainstream trainers adequately prepared to accommodate trainees with disabilities in their centres? Are mainstream vocational training centres and the training materials accessible to trainees with disabilities? Are support services, technical aids, adaptations available, to facilitate the integration of persons with disabilities?

Distance learning

With developments in information and communications technologies, the opportunities for distance learning have opened up, and these are particularly relevant to persons with mobility impairments. Is the potential of information and communications technology being tapped in skills training provision for persons with disabilities in Zambia?

On-the-job training

On-the-job training is becoming more common in many countries, sometimes provided by the employer, and more frequently as part of a supported employment placement, where a job coach from a specialist agency provides the training in the workplace. This form of training has been particularly useful for persons with intellectual disabilities. What is the scope for extending this form of training in Zambia?

Entrepreneurship development

Many of the survey respondents were self-employed or had their own microenterprises. Given the fact that approximately 11 per cent of the Zambian labour force works in formal employment, and that the prospects for those entering the labour market lie predominantly in micro and small enterprises in the informal economy, it is of central importance that persons with disabilities have access to entrepreneurship training. This important area should receive attention in any review of vocational training for persons with disabilities, and the role of specialist and mainstream vocational training centres in providing such training should be considered.

In addition to entrepreneurship training, access to business development services and to microcredit for persons with disabilities should be promoted, so as to facilitate them in establishing and developing viable businesses.

Employment Services

Many respondents said that they found out about available jobs through their own networks, through the training centre they attended or through some chance meeting or occurrence. This is effective for those with access to such networks, but a more systematic approach is required if all jobseekers with disabilities are to have access to labour market information, which along with employment services, plays a key role in influencing a young person's employability. There is scope to improving the access of jobseekers with disabilities to employment services in Zambia, to ensure that they are adequately informed about available jobs and potential employers. This information can also assist them in making career choices, when it comes to applying for skills training courses.

Upgrading skills of workers with disabilities in the informal economy

The fact that most people seeking work in Zambia will find it in the informal economy in the foreseeable future, rather than in formal employment, has already been taken into account by policymakers and training service providers in Zambia. The question of how these policy measures are working in practice requires attention, and the impact they are having on opportunities for men and women with disabilities, in particular, needs to be systematically examined.

When it comes to reaching out to workers with disabilities in the informal economy, in order to improve their skills, several characteristics of the formal technical and vocational education and training system need to be reviewed²³:

- entry requirements for public TVET are often too high and too rigid for those with no official records or experience of attending school;
- the level of courses is often too high for their needs and learning materials are not suitable, in particular, for those who are illiterate;
- courses are often too long (2-3 years) and the hours are not flexible which makes it almost impossible for informal workers to attend; and
- the formal TVET system does not recognize skills that were acquired informally, which forces workers to take courses for skills they already possess to gain official certification.

How can the public TVET be extended and modified to meet the needs of workers with disabilities in the informal economy? How can non-formal training opportunities that already exist be strengthened and used to complement public TVET? How can the non-formal training provided by NGOs, communities and enterprises be fully recognized as part of the overall TVET system, alongside public TVET institutions? Key policy issues include:

- improved access to public TVET institutions through flexible entry requirements and demand-led training delivery;
- recognition of prior learning (non-formally acquired skills and knowledge);
- strengthening of informal apprenticeship;
- improved linkages between non-formal training and public formal training;
- improving productivity and enterprises' competitiveness;
- skills development for equity (for example, women, persons with disabilities, minority groups); and
- skills development as an integral part of the broader strategy for upgrading the informal economy, so that the better skilled informal economy workers have the opportunity to use their skills.

HIV/AIDS

The widespread incidence of HIV/AIDS and its impact on vocational training personnel and on trainees is a further matter which needs to be taken into account in planning policy measures, programmes and services to address the skills development needs of persons with disabilities. More attention needs to be paid to the inclusion of disabled people in HIV/AIDS-related educational and support programmes.

²³ Sakamoto, Akiko, *Informal Economy and Skills Training. Key Policy Issues*. ILO Skills and Employment Department, Internal Document, 2006.

Concluding comment

Through its laws and policies concerning persons with disabilities, Zambia has taken important steps to recognize that disabled persons are citizens like non-disabled persons in the society. The introduction of a mainstreaming approach in technical and vocational training is a policy innovation which places the country at the forefront of developments in the region. Introducing modern law and policy is an important first step in promoting full participation with equality. Implementing these effectively requires an equal effort. Widespread consultation is needed in planning measures to translate legal and policy commitments into practice, building on experience elsewhere. This, along with a firm commitment on the part of the government, social partners and civil society, including DPOs to work together in this process, will lead to improved opportunities for men and women with all types of disabilities in Zambia, enabling them to realize their potential and make their contribution to their families, community and wider society.