

Decent Work for People with Disabilities

Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Zambia



International Labour Organization



FACT SHEET

Women and men with disabilities can and want to be productive members of society. In both developed and developing countries, promoting more inclusive societies and employment opportunities for people with disabilities requires improved access to basic education, vocational training relevant to labour market needs and jobs suited to their skills, interests and abilities, with adaptations as needed. Many societies are also recognizing the need to dismantle other barriers - making the physical environment more accessible, providing information in a variety of formats, and challenging attitudes, and mistaken assumptions about people with disabilities.

Current Situation

According to the World Health Organization estimates, some 690,000 to 1 million women and men in Zambia, or 7 to 10 per cent of the population, have a disability¹.

A higher percentage of people with disabilities live in rural areas where access to basic services is limited. A 2000 Population and Housing Census, which collected data on disability, reported that a large percentage of people with disabilities are self-employed workers, while very few are employers. The same Census also says that more than 80 per cent are employed in agriculture, making it by far the most common occupation².

As group, a majority of Zambians with disabilities live in poverty. Street begging is a prevalent means of survival. Literacy levels are very low among the population of disabled persons.

Governmental support for people with disabilities

The Government of Zambia has adopted a number of laws and policies pertaining to people with disabilities, including their right to productive and decent work and to basic services, workers' compensation, social security, and entrepreneurship development. The main ones are listed on the next page.

¹ ILO, 2006: Zambia Country Profile. Promoting the Employability and Employment of people with disabilities through effective legislation (Southern Africa), p. 4.
² Zambia Central Statistical Office, 2000 Census, http://www.zamstats.gov.zm/media/chapter_9_disability_-_final2.pdf, p. 141, accessed on 4 June 2009.

- **The 1991 Zambian Constitution, amended in 1996**, contains one provision on disability relating to the provision of just and equitable social benefits and amenities suitable to the needs of disabled people. The country's Constitution is under review.
- **The Persons with Disabilities Act 1996**, prohibits discrimination on the grounds of disability and establishes a State agency - the Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities - to promote, coordinate and provide services for disabled persons.
- **Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) Act, 1998**, states that the "special needs of people with disabilities will be taken into consideration."
- **Workers' Compensation Act (No. 10 of 1999)**, revises the law relating to the compensation of workers for disabilities suffered or diseases contracted during the course of employment.
- **The National Policy on Education, 1996**, recognizes the right to education for each individual, regardless of personal circumstances or capacity. The Ministry of Education has overall responsibility for education, including special education.
- **The National Employment and Labour Market Policy (NELP), 2005**, shows the government's intentions to provide for improved care and support services to vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities.
- **The National Long-Term Vision 2030**, articulates the country's development agenda for the next twenty-five years. One of the objectives is to make Zambia a middle-income country by 2030 in which all people will be provided with opportunities to improve their well-being.
- **The Fifth National Development Plan (FNDP) 2006 to 2010**, among other objectives, aims to attain the full participation, equality and empowerment of persons with disabilities. It seeks to provide enhanced support to disabled persons through increased government spending on disability; developing inclusive mainstream policies; review of existing pieces of legislation; and the establishment and/or strengthening of institutions and systems that cater to people with disabilities.
- **National Youth Policy, 2006**, aims at integrating disabled youth in mainstream programmes and projects targeting the youth.
- **Citizen Economic Empowerment Commission Act, 2008**, aims at empowering people with disabilities economically through start-up businesses that will employ others.

Key ministries and agencies responsible for disability issues

The Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS) is entrusted with formulating policy for people with disabilities. The Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities has the responsibility to coordinate the implementation of the National Policy on Disability and acts as an advisory body to the Ministry.

- Ministry of Education has overall responsibility for education, including special education.
- Ministry of Science, Technology and Vocational Training has responsibility for developing science and technology and for the provision of technical education and vocational training.

Other important institutions:

- National Vocational Rehabilitation Centre run by MCDSS
- National Trust for the Disabled under MCDSS
- Zambia Agency for People with Disabilities (ZAPD)
- Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority

Key international standards on disability and their status

- International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention Concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation, 1958, (No. 111). Status: ratified, Oct 23, 1979.
- ILO Convention Concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons), 1983, (No. 159). Status: ratified, January 5, 1989.
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and Optional Protocol. Status: signed on May 5, 2008, not yet ratified. Optional Protocol signed on 29 September 2008, not yet ratified.

Zambia works to implement the Action Plan established for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities, extended to December 2019.

Organizations for persons with disabilities

At the federal level, the Zambia Federation of the Disabled (ZAFOD) is an umbrella organization representing several disabled persons organizations. Its main activities include advocacy and awareness-raising. It also provides small loans to people with disabilities and training in small-scale business management.

Other significant organizations

- Zambia National Association of Disabled Women
- Zambia National Association of the Deaf
- Zambian National Association of the Hearing Impaired
- Zambian National Association of the Partially Sighted
- Zambian National Association of the Physically Handicapped
- Zambian Association of Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities
- Zambian National Federation of the Blind
- National Vocational and Rehabilitation Centre
- Zambia Association of Parents of Children with Disabilities

Organizations for persons with disabilities

- Disability Initiatives Foundation
- Disacare Wheelchair Centre
- Zambia National Library and Cultural Centre for the Blind
- Zambia Association on the Employment for Persons with Disabilities

The role of the ILO

The primary goal of the ILO today is to promote opportunities for everyone, including people with disabilities, to obtain decent and productive work, based on the principles of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. The ILO works to achieve its goals of decent work for all through promoting labour standards, advocacy, knowledge building and technical cooperation services and partnerships, both within the ILO and externally. The Zambia Decent Work Country programme establishes the framework for delivery of ILO action.

In Zambia, current ILO technical cooperation projects on disability are :

“Promoting the Employability and Employment of People with Disabilities through Effective Legislation” (PEPDEL). Earlier phases of PEPDEL included the compilation of a country report on legislation, policy and implementation mechanisms on the training and employment of persons with disabilities to build a knowledge base on people with disabilities; identification of priority and needs in consultation with government, representatives of workers’ and employers’ groups and disabled persons’ organizations; and, support to ZAPD in the review of disability-related legislation and policy. A disability audit of legislation relating to the vocational training and employment of persons with disabilities was carried out in 2008. Currently, efforts are underway to support the development of and action plan to address the gaps in policies and legislation as indicated in the audit and to strengthen the capacity of government to implement these laws and policies.

“Promoting Decent Work for Persons with Disabilities through a Disability Inclusion Support Service” (INCLUDE). The project builds capacity at regional and national levels to effectively support the full participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream programmes and services focussing on vocational training, entrepreneurship development, employment, and micro-finance. INCLUDE also involves advocacy and awareness-raising activities to promote decent work for persons with disabilities.

The way forward

Productive and decent work enables people with disabilities to realize their aspirations, improve their living conditions and participate more actively in society.

Ensuring a disability perspective in all aspects of policy and labour legislation, effective implementation and enforcement of existing disability laws and policies and providing for equal employment opportunities and training are among the factors that contribute to the reduction of poverty and to the social and economic inclusion of people with disabilities in Zambia

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