

THE ILO-IRISH AID PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME THROUGH THE PROPEL PROJECT IS PROMOTING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES. THE PROJECT OPERATES IN ETHIOPIA, CHINA, INDONESIA, VIET NAM AND ZAMBIA. THE STORY PRESENTED IN THIS BROCHURE ILLUSTRATES ONE OF THE INNOVATIVE APPROACHES USED BY THE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME TO OPEN PATHWAYS TO DECENT WORK AND OPPORTUNITIES THAT IS BREAKING THE POVERTY CYCLE AFFECTING MILLIONS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES OF WORKING AGE.



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Technical vocational education and training (TVET) plays a central role in opening career opportunities for people with disabilities and enhances earning potential, career progression and employability. In Zambia, PROPEL supported five TVET institutions in fostering learning environments that enabled the enrolment and training of women and men with disabilities, alongside non-disabled students.

ZAMBIA

Zambia has a robust vocational skills training system, with more than 300 institutions. However, persons with disabilities are largely excluded from training on an equal basis with other students. When training for them is provided, it is often in segregated classes and below the level offered in general TVET centres. Negative attitudes and public perceptions about persons with disabilities, combined with physical barriers and a lack of adapted curricula and training materials, present obstacles to the access of people with disabilities to training opportunities available to the general population.

According to the Government of Zambia's Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA), some 33,600 students attend vocational training. However, no up-to-date information is available on vocational education and training of students with disabilities. Today, Zambia is moving away from the system of separate special schools to a more inclusive approach of mainstream education and vocational training services. The change has been stimulated by the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) and the enactment of the Disability Act, 2012 which states that the education system at all

levels must offer equal opportunities to all and be free from discrimination. International labour standards such as the ILO Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159) and ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), both ratified by Zambia, in addition to national policies and initiatives, are also key in ensuring that persons with disabilities enjoy the same rights as others.

Inclusive vocational training involves addressing and responding to the diverse learning and cultural needs of learners and removing barriers to education through accommodation and provision of appropriate structures and curriculum that is relevant and enables the learner to achieve maximum benefit from attendance at school.

Since 2012, PROPEL has been collaborating with the Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education (MESVTEE) to provide improved access to mainstream skills development programmes to young men and women with disabilities. Five institutions are participating under a pilot inclusive vocational training initiative: four mainstream colleges including Mansa Trades Training Institute, Kaoma Trades Training

Institute, Lusaka Technical and Business College, Luanshya Technical and Business College, and National Vocational Rehabilitation Centre, which previously catered only to students with disabilities.

In the nearly three years since the pilot programme began, the number of students with disabilities enrolled in the four mainstream colleges has increased slowly and has improved further in 2015 due to increased marketing and community outreach. The ILO-Irish Aid initiative is in line with Zambia's national TEVET policy on increasing access to skills training to reflect labour market demand.

A first step in the process involves disability audits based on international standards. The audits are designed to identify barriers, measure ease of use of premises as well as options for improving the accessibility of the built physical environment of the colleges, the flexibility of the curricula and appropriateness of training materials and tools for students with disabilities. Following this, reports are provided with recommendations to be implemented by the participating colleges and TEVETA.

A second and equally important step includes disability awareness training for managers and staff of the training colleges, i.e., instructors, teachers and other training and support staff. ILO Disability Equality Training (ILO DET) is designed to give participants the opportunity to explore, in addition to the physical aspects of disability, how people are disabled by society's barriers and attitudes, and to identify ways of overcoming these barriers and positively influencing attitudes. A central pillar of this awareness-raising is looking at disability from a human rights perspective.

Third, building on the disability audits and DETs, a new in-service course for teachers on Inclusive Technical Vocational Education and Training was developed by PROPEL. The course, accredited by TEVETA, is being pilot tested with a group of 20 teachers from the participating institutions beginning in August 2015. In the future, the course can be delivered by any training provider

recognized by TEVETA as having met the essential requirements. Working towards this aim, building capacity among a selected number of trainers and further disability sensitization within the TVET sector are among the pre-conditions that must be met before starting the national roll-out.

The fourth component of the sustainability effort involves the introduction of a module on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the training curriculum used to train new vocational skills teachers. The module, provided by PROPEL, was inserted and adopted as part of the national curriculum.

The colleges supported by PROPEL have developed their own strategies for ensuring vocational training includes women and men with disabilities and are implementing the Government's policy on inclusive vocational training.

At Luanshya Technical and Business College (LTBC) and Mansa Trades Training Institute, efforts to build an accessible, physical environment are visible. New ramps have been constructed in the administration buildings and reception desks with lower cabinets and a low counter to facilitate interactions between wheelchair users or persons of short stature and the receptionist or staff have been installed.

Across all participating colleges, enrolment of learners with disabilities has improved. The Mansa Institute, for example, had 36 learners with disabilities enrolled during the 2013 academic year, an increase of 11 per cent over 2012 despite limited resources to support equal opportunities for training. And enrolment of disabled persons has increased each year. Eleven women and men with disabilities, largely learners who are deaf or hearing impaired, graduated in 2014.

Mansa appears to be a leader in practicing inclusive vocational training, judging by the numbers of persons with disabilities enrolled each year. Yet, this has not happened by chance—it is a result of consistency in actively promoting a culture of inclusion. Each year

the training institution turns down a number of applications from prospective students from other provinces because of the reputation it has built as an institution of choice for vocational skills, regardless of one's background.

At LTBC, the ILO's DET has helped build knowledge and raise awareness levels among staff on disability and the rights of persons with disabilities. It has also fostered the development of an enrolment strategy targeted at persons with disabilities through advertising in the media, posters, community outreach and discussions with families of disabled persons, and strategic networking with other learning institutions. Marketing efforts have also contributed to an increase in the number of learners with disabilities for the fall of 2015. The college had an average of five learners with disabilities over the three years since 2012. Now the institution has 21 learners with disabilities, 17 of whom are deaf, while one has a physical impairment and three have intellectual disabilities.

"Our goal is to be a fully inclusive vocational training institution within three to five years", says Samuel Moyo, Principal and Chief Executive of the LTBC.

Kaoma Trades Training Institute, located in the Western Province of Zambia, began participating in the pilot programme in 2013 when there were no disabled students. Representatives of the college's administration, staff and lecturers took part in the ILO DET. Today, of the 104 students on campus, 16 are learners with disabilities, representing some 15 per cent of the total student population.

The National Vocational Rehabilitation Centre (NVRC) in Ndola, which previously catered only to persons with disabilities, has opened its doors to learners without disabilities. Today, the inclusive programme adopted at NVRC helps provide training in the food production and agriculture programme to some 150 learners, 75 per cent of whom are non-disabled students. The decision to accept non-disabled students was based on the need to ensure that the school's learners with disabilities have exposure to an integrated setting. "When we began our enrolment of non-disabled learners, enrolment was at 5 per cent of the total enrolled student body but now stands at 10 per cent. With the technical support of the ILO, we now realize that the world has adopted a social model which entails that we need to include persons without disabilities in order to strike a balance," says Mary Kamanga Lungu, Principal of the NVRC.

Ms. Mary Thonga, a lecturer in the hospitality course at Lusaka Business and Technical College, explains that the college has developed individualized programmes for learners with intellectual disabilities, which includes extending their study to four years instead of two.

"I spend a lot of time outside class hours to attend to learners with disabilities to make them understand and catch up with their colleagues. Communication is also key, so we take time to learn sign language, for instance, and we now prepare accessible hand-outs, even in large print for learners with visual problems," Mary explained.



Mike Nkandu, Lweendo Kabinga, and Delphine Njolomba are among the 17 deaf students enrolled at Luanshya Technical and Business College.

Iness Mwape a graduate from Mansa Trades Training Institute

Iness Mwape from Kabunda village in Mansa wasn't born with a physical impairment. She became disabled at the age of five, following an illness. She was raised by both parents who are peasant farmers and is the second in a family of two.

"The community I have grown up in does not really believe that a child with a disability can amount to much. They did express sympathy with my family, but no one encouraged them to educate me. My parents did try to do so despite our poverty situation. It is really a painful form of stigma that people in my condition face," Iness said.

Iness dropped out of school in 1998 in the 9th grade due to lack of financial support.

Thanks to an outreach programme aimed at encouraging persons with disabilities to acquire life skills, Iness successfully completed her training in tailoring at Mansa Trades Training Institute in 2013 and is now practicing her trade in her home village.

"Today with a sewing machine I do better quality work with the skills I've got. I can produce multiple patterns for clients. Even the way people see me has changed a lot and I feel more dignified since I am providing a service to my community and I am paid for it," says Iness.

The money she earns from her tailoring is used to meet the school fees for her children. In the past, Iness encountered difficulties in providing food and balanced meals for her family but manages because of her new skills. She is working hard to save money to buy her own sewing machine and set up a tailoring shop where she can even employ others.



Iness Mwape attending a class at Mansa Trades Training Institute.



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This story is part of the publication entitled
"Moving towards disability inclusion: Stories of change",
ISBN: 9789221302988; 9789221302995 (web pdf).