

## Introduction

Zambia is a signatory to international human rights instruments such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which Zambia ratified in February 2010 and also put in place other supportive laws and policies to realise the right of persons with disabilities to quality inclusive education.

The disability movement in Zambia spearheaded by Disability Rights Watch (DRW) has been among other pertinent issues on access to quality inclusive education as envisioned in the Sustainable Development Goals being advocating for:

1. The revision of the National Policy on Education (Educating Our Future Policy);
2. The Curriculum Framework.
3. Increase of appropriate teaching and learning aids, including assistive technologies.
4. Increase of sign language interpretation in learning institutions.
5. Administration and marking of examination for learners with disabilities especially those with hearing and visual impairments.

The National Disability Policy (currently under review) was equally put in place in 2015 which acts as a work plan for the implementation of the Persons with Disabilities Act No 6 of 2012.

The National Policy on Disability of 2015 provides for increased access to appropriate formal and non-formal education and skills training including life-long learning by putting in place an INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM at all levels. This is equally the position in the National Policy on Education (Education our future). The Persons with Disabilities Act # 6 of 2012 equally highlights free and compulsory Primary, Secondary and Higher Education; Inclusive quality education; Reasonable accommodation; Consideration of additional needs.

Sustainable Development Goal No. 4 (Quality Inclusive Education) and the General Comment No. 4 on Inclusive Education among its reference documents is equally a guiding principle for ensuring equity within the education sector.

Disability Rights Watch recognises that there are many players in the field of IE advocacy in Zambia and has partnered with other Disability Organizations to advance the cause for IE for learners with disabilities. In view of this, DRW established the IE Advocacy Working Group. The IE Advocacy Working Group is part of the Disability Rights Independent Team (DRIMT). The organisations, which form the IE Advocacy Working Group include:

- i) Norwegian Association of Disabled (NAD)
- ii) Zambia Federation of Disability Organisations (ZAFOD)
- iii) Zambia Association of Parents for Children with Disabilities (ZAPCD)
- iv) Mental Health Users Network of Zambia (MHUNZA)
- v) University of Zambia (UNZA)
- vi) Archie Hinchcliffe Disability Intervention (AHDI)
- vii) Cheshire Homes Society of Zambia (CHSZ)

- viii) Sightsavers International
- ix) Zambian Institute of Inclusive Education (ZIIE) also called Abacus Institute.
- x) Voluntary Services Organization (VSO) Zambia
- xi) Albinism Foundation of Zambia (AFZ)
- xii) Deaf-Blind Association of Zambia (DBAZ).
- xiii) Vilole Images Production
- xiv) Zambia Association of Employment of Persons with Disabilities (ZAEPD)
- xv) National Action for Quality Education in Zambia (NAQEZ)

The IE Advocacy Working Group will be responsible for strategic advocacy towards the actual realization of IE in Zambia. The National Annual IE Symposium forms part of the advocacy process. It seeks to act as an advocacy review platform by different stakeholders in education service delivery, teacher education, curriculum developers, examinations and assessments, cooperating partners and activists including organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs).

Thus the importance of bringing together all stakeholders working in the field of IE to share experiences and learning, hold open and honest discussions and seek to influence the strengthening of policy, legislative measures and their domestication in order to facilitate effective inclusion in the general education system.

### **2023 IE Symposium Resolutions**

The 2023 symposium made some key recommendations as follows:

1. There is a crucial need to establish a Directorate on Inclusive Education in the Ministry of Education of Zambia.
2. Zambia needs to put in place an education policy that carries clear inclusive education principles anchored on human rights standards and best practices.
3. The Ministry of Education must ensure adequate and appropriate teaching and learning materials including ICT based learning materials.
4. The Ministry of Education must support all in-service teachers with access to Continuous Professional Development (CPDs) on inclusive education in addition to the pre-service teacher training going on.
5. Investments must be made in closing the gap on knowledge and awareness of disability rights and inclusion to address negative attitudes.
6. There is need to ensure the revision of the curriculum framework takes into account the concerns of learners with disabilities. There is need to address the challenge of accessibility of the curriculum. Most of the school subjects are inaccessible for learners with disabilities because of the methodologies being used.

The 2024 symposium continues to recognize the importance of bringing together all stakeholders working in the field of IE to share experiences and learning, hold open and honest discussions and seek to influence the strengthening of policy, legislative measures and their domestication in order to facilitate effective inclusion in the general education system.

### **Background to the 2024 Symposium on Inclusive Education**

It is observed that the process of developing an up-to-date National Policy on Education that reflects the true principles of IE has taken very long. This is also in light of the fact that there has been inadequate teaching and learning materials for learners with disabilities in schools and higher learning institutions; learners with disabilities, in particular those who are blind do not learn mathematics and science.

This is amidst Zambia's commitments to the implementation of the CRPD and the SDGs among other international and national instruments. Zambia was reviewed by the CRPD Committee in March, 2024 after submitting its State Report. Recommendations, including on the need to implement IE were given to the government by the Committee for implementation. Zambia has also committed itself to the Global Disability Summit 18 and 22 (GDS 18 and GDS 22) on enhancing IE.

## **Goal**

The goal of the symposium is to contribute towards enhanced advocacy for the realization of Inclusive Education at all levels through a supportive policy environment for the purpose of sustainable budget allocation towards implementation and rolling out of quality IE.

**Theme: "Quality inclusive education for all - NOW"**

## **Objectives**

- To evaluate progress in the implementation of IE in line with the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2012, the 8<sup>th</sup> National Development Plan together with the Recommendations in the Concluding Observations of the CRPD Committee in relation to IE.
- Increase effective advocacy efforts for supportive inclusive education policy and legal framework.
- Assess the effectiveness of the national budget allocation to education in realizing inclusive education in Zambia.
- To assess the extent to which the recently rolled out curriculum framework will promote innovation and support the realization of inclusive quality education

## **Paper Presentations**

DRW secretariat will set out the topics for paper presentations through the IE Advocacy Working Group. Presenters will then be identified and informed.

In line with the theme and objectives, the following sub-themes are proposed for paper presentation:

### **A. Inclusive Education and Human Rights**

- i. The implications of the CRPD committee observations and recommendations on inclusive education in Zambia.

### **B. Inclusive Education financing**

- i. Examining the extent to which the Zambian government has invested in the education of learners with disabilities at all levels

### **C. Inclusive Education policy and law**

- i. What would an ideal inclusive education system in Zambia look like?

### **D. Innovative methodologies and practice.**

- i. Unpacking the new curriculum framework and its implication on the education of learners with disabilities in Zambia

### **Output of the Symposium**

- i. A Communique outlining the recommendations from the symposium.
- ii. A conference short video documentary
- iii. A conference digital photo gallery
- iv. Symposium Report

The set date for the symposium is 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

### **Participants**

The participants to the 2024 symposium will be drawn from: Government ministries, CSOs, Organisations of/for Persons with Disabilities, International NGOs, UN system, Cooperating Partners, academia/researchers, private sector, mass media and other key influential persons.

### **Submission of abstracts.**

Kindly submit your abstract on any of the topics above to [info@disabilityrightswatch.net](mailto:info@disabilityrightswatch.net) and [rodgers@disabilityrightswatch.net](mailto:rodgers@disabilityrightswatch.net) in word format (No more than 300 words). The deadline for receiving abstracts is 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024, any abstract received after the deadline will not be accepted.