



# **Disability and Child Care Reform**

Ministry of Community Development and Social  
Welfare

# Introduction

- Persons with Disabilities in Zambia like in many other countries are among the worst affected by negative socio-economic conditions and face stigmatisation and social exclusion. The situation is usually worse for children with disabilities (WHO, 2011).
- Need has arisen to place support for children with disabilities at the core of child care reform efforts.
- The presentation therefore, highlights the current legal and policy frameworks on disability and the need for implementers of these policies to include children with disabilities in the child welfare system reforms/plans.

# What is Disability?

Disability means “a permanent physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment that alone, or in combination with social or environmental barriers, hinders the ability of a person to fully or effectively participate in society on an equal basis with others. (Persons with Disabilities Act No. 6 of 2012)

## Situation Analysis

- According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), Persons with Disabilities constitute 10– 15 percent of the population of most countries.
- Depending on the methodology used studies indicate that 14% to 35% of children have disabilities
- The 2010 Census shows that 2.1 percent of the Zambian population are persons with disabilities (including 0.4% of children aged 0-14 years)
- Preliminary results of the national disability survey in 2015 indicate 7.2 % disability prevalence.

# Policy and Legal Frameworks

- ❑ The Revised Sixth National Development Plan (Disability considered as a crosscutting issue)
- ❑ MCDMCH Strategic Plan
- ❑ The Persons with Disabilities Act No. 6 of 2012
- ❑ The National Policy on Disability and its Implementation Plan
- ❑ The National Social Protection Policy (Disability Pillar)

## Why the Call to place Disability at the core of child Care Reform?

- Evidence indicates that approximately one third of children in residential care residential care have disabilities.
- Substantial evidence shows that such care is extremely harmful (lack of attachment, inadequate rehabilitation especially in large scale institutions)
- Children with disabilities face different challenges in their daily lives and indifferent attitudes from society.
- They place additional economic burden on families.
- Any reform efforts must accept and accommodate children with disabilities and welcome them as children with equal rights

## Why the Call to place Disability at the core of child Care Reform? Cont'

Internationally agreed standards (CRC,CRPD)call for equality of treatment and family based care for children with disabilities

- These standards are enhanced by the guidelines for Alternative Care of Children.
- Together these instruments highlight;
  - the need to end unequal provision in children's care and use of institutional care for children with disabilities
  - Support care in families and communities



## Why Children with Disabilities are Placed in Residential Care

- High degrees of stigmatization and social exclusion
- Limited support to families caring for children with disabilities and consequent high poverty levels
- Lack of access to health or educational facilities
- A belief in the medical model of disability that children with disabilities can only be cared for by trained professionals
- Limited interest to foster or adopt children with disabilities
- Evidence suggests that with the right investments in recruitment, service provision and support, families can be found for children with disabilities.

# What needs to be done to place disability at the core of child care Reform

1. We need to challenge discriminatory attitudes and move away from the medical model of disability towards the social/human rights approach

- ❑ Negative beliefs about disability can lead to marital breakdown and child abandonment

2. There is need to create a political will for change

- ❑ Disability people's organisations can play a central role in creating the will for change

- ❑ Need to enhance the evidence base on disability and to challenge the current invisibility of children with disability

# What needs to be done to place disability at the core of child care Reform

3. Formulation and implementation of national legislative frameworks and policies

The RSDNP, PWDA, NSPP and the NDP mainstream disability. The challenge is with the implementation

4. We need to build on the community based Rehabilitation (CBR) model and integrated systems of child protection

CBR is used to support children with disabilities and their carers

# What needs to be done to place disability at the core of child care Reform

## 5. Focus on preventing a loss of parental care and support families

Some commonly needed forms of support include;

- ❑ Provision of adequate social support e.g. the SCT programme, WEP, FSP, Village Banking
- ❑ Reducing violence and abuse in homes- violence, abuse and neglect are major violations of children's rights and are common causes of loss of parental care around the world.

# What needs to be done to place disability at the core of child care Reform

6. Ensuring access to basic and specialized services for persons with disabilities including children

7. Providing parenting support – self help groups and DPOs can play a major role through CBR programmes

8 Ensuring proper gate-keeping, care planning and re-integration efforts- with the participation of children with disabilities and their carers

**“NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US”**

9. Ensuring that foster care and adoption are options open to children with disabilities.

10. Support a limited role of for small group homes – for those with severe disabilities and in need of specialist medical and therapeutic services

## Conclusion

There is need for consented efforts to achieve much needed comprehensive reform of alternative care and child welfare systems which recognize the rights of all children, including those with disabilities.

*“No one who works in the field of child care or children’s services must continue to think that children with disabilities are someone else’s concern. We are all responsible” (Cousins)*

***Thank you for your attention***