

Newsletter



Special Edition

January 2019

Ntengwe for Community Development:

- ζ Joins forces with all sectors of society to defend the rights and dignity of all children.
- ζ Promotes collaboration with all stakeholders to improve support for children with disabilities.
- ζ Supports families to provide better support for children with disabilities, to assist them in their motor and mental skills.
- ζ Promotes integration and fights discrimination.
- ζ Promotes the development of inclusive education in mainstream schools.
- ζ Contributes to the early detection of diseases which can lead to physical disability.

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Child Rights, Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment - a Pre-Requisite for Sustainable Development



Introduction by Elisabeth Markham

Welcome to the Ntengwe for Community Development special newsletter edition. Over the last 10 years, Ntengwe for Community Development has been working in recognizing on strengthening of those who lobby and fight for children's rights. In January 2019, the belated 2018 Matabeleland North Province United Nations International Day for Persons with Disabilities was celebrated under the theme "Empowering Persons with Disabilities and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality" on 4 January 2019 at Siachilaba Secondary School, Siachilaba ward in Binga district, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe. Interactive activities such as speeches held by the Minister of State – Honourable Richard Moyo and

dignitaries, poems presented by children, music & song presented by mothers of children with disabilities and testimonies.

Ntengwe has been actively supporting orphans and vulnerable children in Binga since 2000. Disabled children are particularly vulnerable. They are often discriminated against due to traditions and beliefs. Access to education for children with disabilities is difficult and unsuited to their needs. With the support from the Kindernothilfe (KNH), Ntengwe has since 2012 to date implemented the Integrated Response to Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Binga district promoting child protection, inclusiveness, access to health care, and provision to assistive devices for over 2000 children. As recent as 2017, Ntengwe partnered with Christian Aid Zimbabwe to implement 3 complementing projects aimed at supporting inclusion for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Binga promoting access to education.

This issue draws attention to the United Nations International Day for Persons with Disabilities, the highlights and the achievements that were made possible. The event was sponsored by the Kindernothilfe (KNH) and Christian Aid and this special edition covers highlights, stories, photographs, speeches that were made during the day, testimonies and also how much disability has become part of our inclusive child protection program in Binga.



Provincial Commemorations for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) – 4 January 2019



Developing and Preparing the Commemoration

The main objective of the Matabeleland North Provincial Commemorations for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities was to promote networking and engagement initiatives at the local and national level to support policy and practice benefiting children and young people with disabilities. The preparations for the event began in March 2018. Committees at District and Ward level

were formed to facilitate the organization of the event. Both committees worked to achieve one common objective, which was to ensure that children with disabilities and their caregivers in Binga have a strategic platform to amplify their voice to civil society partners, district and provincial policy and decision makers as well as community members.

A steering committee at District level was created, it consisted of caregivers, Ministry of Health Rehabilitation Department, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, District Administrator's Office, Social Welfare, Ntengwe, JF Kapnek Trust, Rural District Council – Social Services and a representative from the District Committee of Disabled persons, Mr W. Sikaputa. Thereafter several meetings were held with the Siachilaba ward steering committee which included children and people with disabilities, caregivers, village heads, chief, Child Protection Committees (CPCs), Volunteers, the headmaster and social welfare. Several meetings were then held with the District Committee, the Siachilaba Organizing Committee, the Social Welfare Provincial team and the District Association, Head of Departments and dignitaries in Bulawayo to map the event effectively so as to pick out all issues that needed to be addressed by higher office because of high incidences of disability among children in the 25 wards in Binga district. The final meeting at the Provincial Social Welfare Office with Provincial Heads of Departments in Bulawayo concluded with encouragement to document all the issues and approach relevant offices like the National Disability Board, to network and link with like-minded organizations so that the Binga District Association of Persons with Disabilities can grow. Also, the Association should not only focus on Ntengwe's current implementing wards only but should work hand-in-hand with local government to address inclusive child protection in the 25 wards in Binga district.



The Commemoration Day



The commemoration day was graced by 1207 community people of which 121 of them were children. The dignitaries who attended included the Vice Chairman of National Disability Board, Chairman of Zimbabwe Association of Albinism, ZANU PF Representative on Disability, Provincial Education Officer, Provincial Administrator, Provincial Social Welfare Officer, Minister of State – Honourable Richard Moyo, Special Advisor to the President on Disability issues – Honourable Joshua Malinga and two representatives from Older Persons Board-Counsellor Shelton and Mr Public Nkomo. The District Association whose chairperson Mr Donald Muzamba and other members; Mr Wilson Sikaputa, Ms Ntombizodwa Mwinde, Ms Getrude Shumba, Ms Tendai Munkuli, Susan Mweembe, Irene Mugande, Joshua Mumpande, Ngoneni Tshuma, Elizabet Muleya and Enelesi Munkuli managed to interact with the National Disability Board and all the dignitaries who attended the event who are now aware of the presence of a District Association of Persons and Children with Disabilities in Binga district

Address by the Provincial Administrator



In her address, Mrs Round said that it was a real pleasure to launch the Provincial Commemorations for the International Day of Persons with

Disabilities. She was happy to see a great presence of people with disabilities, especially children actively participating in this commemoration. She remarked that it is usually the abled bodied leading these events, but it shows that in this commemoration how Ntengwe is working in Binga, empowering disabled children and their families to share their stories. She also encouraged the parents to send children with disabilities to school and she urged Ntengwe and the local stakeholders to continue to raise community awareness on disability and promote the dignity and welfare of the most vulnerable children.



Speech by Guest of Honour, Honourable R. Moyo

Honourable Richard Moyo, the Minister of State for Matabeleland North Provincial Affairs graced the event and in his key address, mentioned the need for the Government to prioritize and integrate disability issues in its Vision 2030 which aims at achieving a prosperous and empowered Upper Middle-Income Society by 2030. He further gave details on the plans and measures that has been put in place by the Zimbabwean government in ensuring that this vision is achieved. Such plans and measures encompass inclusion and involvement of disabled people in government programs as agents of change, in areas such as education, agriculture, health as well as the creation of an enabling employment environment for the disabled people. In

his key note address, the Honourable Minister further encouraged all Development players to closely work with the government structures such as the Ministry of Public service and Social welfare and the Office of the Special Advisor to the President in enhancing disability programming for especially children with disabilities and their families. The Zimbabwe government is committed to developing policies and programs that reflect the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Honourable Moyo said, “The National Disability Policy has a great potential to bring positive change in the lives of children and adults with disability. Consultation meetings for the Draft Policy will be held with persons with disability where they will be given a chance to express their recommendations and contributions which will be introduced in the final document”. Furthermore, the Honourable Minister outlined government's plans in the restoration of social service delivery for persons with disability including stimulation of entrepreneurship amongst persons with disability through final inclusion initiatives.



I am a child: Children and Youth present poems on need to include children with disabilities within community development and education



The peers from the Girls and Boys Movement (GEM/BEM) addressed social issues affecting disabled children. The Gemmers and Bemmers participated in presenting poems and songs urging for collaborative strategies for enabling children with disabilities to attend school. In their poem “I am my sister's and brother's keeper”, the youth called out to the families, the teachers, the government and the entire community to eradicate environmental and other barriers that might limit the learning possibilities for children with special needs education. One of their poems touched on the barriers that are found both outside and inside the school and inside the family, poverty, community attitude, the physical environment, limited school community information and skills, or inadequate teacher skills.

A Poem by Donald Muzamba “I am a Child”



*I am a child, I can see the difference in me amongst the crowd.
You often laugh at me, others pity me
I can see it in your way you talk to me.
You wonder how much I am aware of – I can see that too.
I am aware of much – let me surprise you, I am disabled, filled with abilities.
Let us free our mind from Disability.
Let us not call the disabled names or look down upon them.
Empower the disabled call them by their potentials or capabilities.*

*I am a child and I can see the difference in me amongst the crowd.
The world seems to pass me by.
Sometimes you see the longing in me to play like other children.
Oh, I need to get something from the other side of my room.
I am depended on you in these ways.
My gift to you is to make you more aware of your fortune.
I give you awareness.*

*I am a child and I can see the difference in me amongst the crowd.
What I do know is joy in simple things.
I am not burdened as you are with conflicts and a complicated life.
My gift to you is to enjoy life, to teach how much you care means to me.*

*I am a child and I can see the difference in me amongst the crowd.
I am your teacher, if you allow me.
I can teach you what is really I mportant in life.
I teach you love, I trust you, I teach you about this precious life.
I teach you giving.
Most of all I teach hope and faith.
I am a disabled child.*

No school is an island

Another poem called: “No school is an island” tells the story of a school which is on a small island. That school is unable to succeed because of the lack of community partnerships and the lack of community ownership. The poem says that only through collaborative efforts children with disabilities can go to their neighbourhood schools alongside their peers. Following the presentation of the poems and songs, teachers, community members' and the youth attended discussions around inclusivity and voiced that it should have a positive impact, and outcomes, for both the family

No school is an island continue.....

and the child, and his and hers immediate community. Inclusive programs should ideally be community owned. The discussions led to a series of experiences in which the community was embedded in a series of activities, which was extended from the broad society, through to the local community, the family, the school and the classroom. They recognized that the process of working towards inclusion must start long before children go to school. Its foundation lies within the communities. The group argued that the development of children with disabilities may be hindered or accelerated by the ideas and attitudes that a community holds about them. They all agreed that the key pillars for inclusive education are lobbying and advocacy around the issue of inclusive education, poverty alleviation and capacity building and must collaborate with government, schools and communities. Mr Chirinzepi, the Provincial Social Welfare Officer embraced this collaborative approach as a strategy to enhance education for children with special needs. He said that attempts must be made to involve the community in the planning, implementation and evaluation of any inclusive program. He said that the goal is for rehabilitation to be perceived as part of the development program through which the general community seeks to improve itself. He further stressed that a very strong commitment was needed seeing it as a community enterprise as well as part of broader community development.

No one left behind

These ambitious words were echoed during the Provincial Commemorations for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 4 January 2019.



The meeting acknowledged that national development frameworks had been overlooked for many marginalized groups such as the Tonga people in the Zambezi Valley, particularly disabled children and their families. The meeting highlighted the need for action to ensure this does not continue. The post 2015 debate has gathered momentum and allowed for opportunities to look forward to a “new world order”.

Questions such as: “how might this influence us in Binga”? were asked. During our discussions with the Provincial Social Services we reflected on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and to use this Commemoration as a platform for advocacy and lobbying for improved Frameworks for Action to help improve the lives of children and youth with special needs, inclusion of children with special needs in early childhood education.

In a case study of Binga district, called “Including Disability Agenda in Development: Myth or Reality?” by Edson Munsaka, 2011, suggests that disability in Binga remains under explored with the result that the experiences of disabled people in Binga remain undocumented. Further to this these experiences of poverty and isolation reinforce each other and are associated with a high prevalence of disability. (Charlton 1998; Yeo, 2001).

The Millennium Development Goals have provided a guide to poverty reduction. However, as many of you will know they missed out key demographics when looking at groups that are adversely affected by poverty – notably disabled people and households with disabled children. As the world looks towards the post 2015 agenda, disability is an area which is significantly gaining momentum and is finally starting to get the attention it has missed out on in the past. The World Bank have noted that disabled people are invisible in development initiatives. Hundreds of thousands of people who see themselves as potential and willing contributors to family and national economic activities, are instead relegated to the margins of society where they are perceived as being a burden.

Many people are calling for Disability to be placed on a par with Gender, and the likes, as a cross-cutting issue. Disabled people, especially children in Binga district are frequently isolated, excluded from the mainstream activities, and regularly counted amongst the poorest of the poor. Intervention concerning disability is often seen as supporting the disabled person in the world as is, rather than developing a more equal society which incorporates their needs.

What are the (disabling) barriers faced in Binga

With limited data being collected on disabled children in the 25 wards in Binga district, it is difficult to really get a feel for the magnitude of the issues faced by disabled children and their families. It is, though, widely accepted that disabled children are among the most disadvantaged children in the world and are over-represented among the poorest of the poor. Over the past years, with the support from KNH and Porticus through Christian Aid we have seen some of the successes of the social model we used in our work with the most vulnerable households and their families in which families and children are included within the society in which they live. At Ntengwe we have had a good response rate so far, and we are grateful for the support we have received from our partners.

If we seriously seek a world where no one is left behind, disability issues must be part of our agenda. Disabled children must be included within everyday life. As people involved in development, we look to the future and this future must include disabled children, youth and adults as full and active community members.



What is next?

The Provincial Commemorations for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 4 January 2019 was a huge collective awareness campaign. The venue, being in a ward with the highest number of people with disabilities, was a good choice. We were able to show solidarity with our communities and we have begun a journey towards finding out what solidarity means for us, and one of the places we have learnt the most was sharing the commemoration event with the most vulnerable communities in Zimbabwe. On that day, spending time with children and their families was the best, sharing conversations and smiles. In return we all have been accepted just for who we are at that moment, recognizing in amongst the crowds in Siachilaba.

The story so far



2019 will be the year to follow up with the people we talked to during the provincial commemoration. On that day we engaged with different groups of disabled people and key stakeholders to find out what's important to them. We also talked to the Provincial Services and the Vice Chairman of National Disability Board, and the Chairman of Zimbabwe Association of Albinism. We asked them what they thought needed to be addressed or changed and the feedback we received has helped us to speak to the policy makers to help us build an action plan and to lobby for a Framework for Action on Independent Living, which should be supported by the Zimbabwe Country Strategic Plan (2017-2021). The framework should provide a more detailed program of action. Tackle barriers and support disabled children so that they can learn how to live independently and exercise choice and control in their daily lives. The framework should take forward programs of work implementing policy for disabled children and young people in the context of getting it right for every child. This should include participation of work with young disabled people, capacity building and networking for parents and carers of disabled children at both local and national level, the creation of a network of Disability Champions, ensuring that disabled children's issues are reflected in policy forums; outcomes modelling and the development of "getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)" practice guidance and case studies for practitioners covering all needs of children including those who are disabled.

The story so far continue..

2019 is the year when the theme of “Empowering Persons with Disabilities and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality” must be strengthened. We must campaign for inclusive education which will be around disabled children's access to schooling, and it is certainly one of the big challenges facing by many communities in Binga district. Well, has anyone suggestions concerning all of the above? If so, we would love to hear from you.

Testimonies



Overcoming discrimination and violence against children with albinism

Albinism is an inherited condition with a relatively high prevalence in populations throughout sub-Saharan Africa. People with oculocutaneous albinism have little or no pigment in their hair, skin and eyes; thus, they are visually impaired and extremely sensitive to the damaging effect of the sun on their skin. Aside from the health implications of oculocutaneous albinism, there are also significant sociocultural risks. The impacts of albinism are particularly serious in areas that associate albinism with legend and folklore, leading to stigmatisation and discrimination.

Like in any other African society, people with albinism in Binga district were regarded as a result of a curse against

their family and that those with children with the condition usually practice witchcraft. There were a lot of negative beliefs and ignorance around children with albinism, as they were regarded as outcasts, and to some extent parents could not send their children to school because of their condition. Most often mothers would even refuse to breastfeed their children with albinism, this could even reach to extent of marriage and family break-ups.

It was an eye opener for me to see what projects and interventions are going on in Binga



As for Maria Muntanga a 22-year-old woman from Muchesu ward in Binga Rural, faced lots of discrimination and stigmatization when she first gave birth to a first-born baby girl with an albinism in October 2017. She said: “People in my community and even my family would tell me that having a child with such a condition was as a result of a punishment for a misbehaviour or misdeeds we might have done with my husband. It was very difficult for me to accept my child's condition and I nearly abandoned my child. Because of shame, I failed to attend my child's monthly check ups and vaccinations and stopped attending other social gatherings such as church and meetings in my community. One day I heard that there was a meeting with Ntengwe for Community Development in my community, addressing issues on child protection and children with disabilities.

I attended this meeting and it became the most important meeting in my life. It was an eye opener as I listened very carefully and I was given hope for the future. I attended training programs with Ntengwe, the social welfare officer and other government officers and I was educated and empowered to stand up for the rights of my child. I learned that according to the Zimbabwe constitution it is illegal to discriminate albinism. Today, I am proud of my child, and that I foresee her becoming a prominent educated girl in my community and she will become a model in the District”. Through empowerment programs in leadership and advocacy in child protection, Maria has become a member of the women support group and is an active agent of change in her community. She is now taking a very strong stance against child abuse and she is blazing a trail for others to follow to help solve child abuse cases.

We are strong in numbers



Like most 14-year-old girls and boys, Refa and Charles enjoy hanging out with their friends, going to school and watch sports in the community. But both have albinism. Refa says: “I stick out in a crowd of my black peers, which is about more than just being different: It's increasingly dangerous. Most painfully, some men think that I have supernatural powers, which makes me a target, they think that having sex with an albino cures HIV. Growing up as child I faced a lot of discrimination in my village or at school. In addition, I have poor vision,

We are strong in numbers continue.....

making it difficult for me to do well in school because often I can't read the chalkboard. Also, the teachers don't have the knowledge on how to handle children with albinism" Refa says. "So, I had no assistance". She then continued to say: "This all changed when Ntengwe came to our ward with the Ministry of Health and government representatives talking to teachers to take albinism into consideration when teaching and encouraging my peers to respect me. I now have glasses and I am more self-determined and I am able to reach out to other children with disabilities to join us for sports or play".

Charles says:

"Ntengwe has made a real difference in our lives and since Ntengwe's programs, discrimination in our ward is beginning to wane. There are more children with disabilities in school and attend sports than ever before. I like to help all kinds of children" he says, be they albinos or disabled children. They must all become part of our society". Refa then closes by saying, "I am inspired by Senzelwe Jubane who was the Master of Ceremony at this Commemoration. She is my idol, I can be like her one day".

people with disabilities and he encouraged parents to send their children with disabilities to school.



The event was a success. A lot of networking and engagement at both local and national level took place and new resolutions were made. One of the positive aspects of the series of the event has been the willingness of people to look at disability with an open mind. The day was observed to bring attention to the United Nations International Day for Persons with Disabilities, but also to the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Clause no. 7 of the Declaration speaks to the Right to Education. Binga district is committed to help nurture the well-being and development of the most vulnerable children, in particular as it relates to children with disabilities to educational opportunities and advancement. Ntengwe and key stakeholders will continue to demonstrate the commitment to implement Action Frames and policies in place in the foreseeable future,

Vote of thanks

A handover of donated materials which include sun protection lotion and hats for 58 people with albinism and two bales of clothes were given to PWDs. Ntengwe for Community Development also donated 700 T-shirts with the theme for the commemorations. Chief Siachilaba gave the vote of thanks. He thanked the communities and all the dignitaries that were present for gracing the event. He encouraged all the community members that were present to ensure that they do not stigmatize

