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**Inclusion and Disability Mainstreaming: A Case of the
Integrated Learning Skills and Entrepreneurship
Advancement Initiative (ILESEA) Project in Binga
District, Zimbabwe**

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Abstract

While the mantra of Sustainable Development Goals reinvigorates aspirations to include everyone, including people and children with disabilities, in development, the situation becomes daunting in developmentally remote and marginalized areas like the Binga district of Zimbabwe. This is because contextual factors including the attitudes, practices, policies and necessary support infrastructure needed for promoting inclusion and disability mainstreaming are the major hindrances in such areas. This paper discusses inclusion and disability mainstreaming as part of a holistic approach that should address the political, social, economic and environmental barriers that militates against inclusion for children with disabilities in education and broader development processes. The major aim of the study was to use implementation research to assess the achievements of the ILESEA programme implemented

by a consortium led by Ntengwe for Community Development in promoting inclusion and disability mainstreaming in Binga district. The research adopted a cross-sectional research methodology in order to gain a more in-depth understanding as well as to triangulate the findings of the study. The major findings of the study reveal that a holistic and consistent focus on inclusion and disability mainstreaming builds the necessary support at child, family, community and institutional levels necessary to change attitudes, practices and policies in support of children with disabilities access to education and development. In addition, the study revealed that, if properly designed to complement and strengthen mandated government line ministries and community structures, actions to promote inclusion can be sustainable. The study concluded by calling upon the government and school governance structures to generate consistent and congruent policies that support inclusion of children with disabilities in development.

Key Words: *Inclusion, disability mainstreaming, policies, ILESEA, marginalized, school, Ntengwe for Community Development*

Background

Binga is a region inhabited by the marginalized Tonga minority ethnic group. The Tonga people are marginalized and discriminated against due to their minority ethnic group status and also the fact that Binga is a predominantly political opposition area. Binga has been neglected and left out of most national developmental interventions. This discrimination is perpetuated by weak implementation of policy frameworks at district level with limited capacity by schools to ensure inclusive education. Most children lack birth certificates while service provision in the schooling system is weak. A strong patriarchal culture and negative social norms, beliefs and practices do not value the right to education, in particular for the children with disabilities. Livelihoods for people in Binga district are generally not resilient to climate change and not responsive to young people's needs and aspirations as they have few livelihood options limited to seasonal subsistence agriculture, fishing and migration.

These contextual challenges limit the district's access to quality education, essential social services and development opportunities for children with disabilities. The rights of children with disabilities have been limited by these aforementioned conditions prevailing in the district. According to the District Education Department (nd), only

10.6% of children in Binga who enrolled for grade 1 in 2004 reached grade 7 in 2011 with a pass rate of 30.65%, of which 50% of these (mostly girls) do not proceed to secondary school, where the pass rate is as low as 13.85%. The sad part of the analysis made by the education department is that it has remained silent on children with disabilities to indicate that there is any effort been made to ensure that these children are included in the education system. Other access issues include general skepticism of value of education vis a vis the need for children with disabilities to work and prioritizing education of the able-bodied over those with disabilities. Children walk long distances to school, which leaves physically-challenged children at the mercy of various forms of violence, abuse and exclusion at large as they cannot manage these distances.

Binga District, where the ILESEA project is located, is predominantly occupied by the minority BaTonga people, who are both geographically and socially marginalized. According to the National Poverty Assessment Study Survey of 2000, Binga is one of the least developed and marginalized districts in terms of human development in Zimbabwe. According to Christian Aid's Binga 2011 participatory vulnerability and capacity assessment (PVCA) and baseline survey which prioritized consultations with stakeholders such as children, young people, community organizations and local government, social safety nets have been weakened by chronic poverty and young people face social, economic and environmental blockages to vocational, life skills and apprenticeship training and informal trade opportunities. A Gender, Power and Social Exclusion Analysis conducted in 2012 by Christian Aid (CA) in Binga revealed that cultural practices such as wife inheritance, child marriages and patriarchal attitudes perpetuate gender inequality and exclusion by keeping children with disabilities, girls and young women out of school. Generally, the district is remote and very poor, with a poverty prevalence of 88.3% (UNDP, 2015), which is high even for Zimbabwe, where the national average was 72% in the same year.

In Binga district, there are many issues of truancy, lack of school fees and uniforms, high dropout rates, low motivation and lack of policies that support dropouts to be reintegrated back into school. The PVCA and baseline also showed that out of the 10,392 children in the target wards of ILESEA implementation, 22.6% are OVC and 228 are disabled. 24% of children do not have birth certificates and are therefore unable to

attend school. Although opening of Satellite Schools (SS) in the past decade has increased access, these SS are poorly resourced, lack inclusive and disability friendly infrastructure, lack trained or motivated special needs teachers, furniture and teaching aides. According to the Education Department (nd), these schools have recorded poor pass rates of 18.5% over the past decade. Binga has 125 primary schools of which 66 are poorly resourced Satellite Schools (SS), 43 secondary schools of which 13 of these schools are SS. Many school pupils travel between 10-20 km to school resulting in huge drop outs and increased risk of violence, especially for those with disabilities.

It is against such a background that Ntengwe for Community Development (Ntengwe) has developed a desire to intervene in these communities of Binga district, to change the communities' cultural values, attitudes and practices in order to promote and support inclusive and equitable education for children with disabilities and stop the culture of keeping the children with disabilities invisible. Appropriately equipping community-based satellite schools has been a priority so as to cut down the distances children with disabilities have to cover to school thus positively impacting on the retention, attainment and reducing exposure of these cadre of pupils to violence and abuse. The ILESEA agenda is to build self-esteem and self-confidence in children with disability and shifting a mindset that they cannot participate in able-bodied dominated environments.

The ILESEA Project

ILESEA project has five outcomes:

- Outcome 1: Targeting disadvantaged children including Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs), the disabled (through provision of learning aids), sexually abused and those without birth certificates are reached. Outcome 1 has a component of block grant approach which directly supports school retention, whereby school infrastructure and equipment is provided to schools in lieu of school fees. Under the same outcome, teachers are being trained in inclusive education and disability mainstreaming in schools where they teach.

- Outcome 2: Foundational literacy and numeracy for reintegration provided to 200 vulnerable children (7 to 20 years) per year who have dropped out and never gone to school using the school-in-a-bag approach has been driven by trained community based volunteers.
- Outcome 3: The project strengthens child participation and protection by enabling at least 10,392 children (aged 0-18) to understand, claim and enjoy their rights through a rights-based approach for adult and child-led CPCs, G/BEM and traditional leaders who are custodians of culture. Sports for Change (SFC) tournaments within schools increase community awareness, build assertiveness in children and promoting interaction with parents, police and leaders.
- Outcome 4: 300 youths, including young mothers, school-in-a-bag volunteers and those living with disabilities will receive vocational and entrepreneurial skills. Trained youths practically test their skills by repairing infrastructure within the block grant system.
- Outcome 5: Using the "Know Your Rights" campaign, children, youths and parents engage and demand accountability from duty bearers on issues that address them through public meetings, position papers, dialogue meetings and the media. It should be noted that the matters of disability mainstreaming and inclusive education are correlated to children's rights and as such this outcome advocates for the rights of all children to be known and observed by communities in Binga district through the use of media.

Jones and Webster (2006) defined disability as a disadvantage and exclusion which arise as an outcome of the interactions between people who have impairments and the social and environmental barriers they face due to the failure of society to take account of their rights and needs. Hence the ILESEA Project has been designed to ensure that the learning environment in schools do not exclude children with disabilities from attending.

Theoretical framework

The social – or human rights – model of disability embedded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) described in the Preamble that: “Recognizing that disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (UNCRPD, 2006). This is the heart of this study which was carried out to unveil the efforts of Ntengwe to promote inclusive education and disability mainstreaming in the rural communities of Zimbabwe, with especial focus on Binga district.

The human rights model of disability was propounded by Degener and Quinn in 1999 and refurbished by Degener in 2014 in her thesis, turning it into the social-or human rights- model of disability. Like any other human rights treaty, the CRPD is a visionary law designed to transform society into a more just society, but visions cannot be achieved overnight and human rights implementation is a process with several agents and many hurdles to overcome (Degener, 2014) of which inclusive education and disability mainstreaming suffer the same causalities.

Degener’s (2014) thesis denotes that the human rights model is a tool to implement the CRPD although most parties to the CRPD are far from comprehending this new model of disability. According to the social-human rights model of disability, disability is not a deviation from the normal health status and the exclusion of disabled persons from society is not regarded as an individual problem and the reasons for exclusion are neither seen in the impairment.

The mantra of the ILESEA Project is to improve attendance, retention and learning outcomes among disadvantaged girls and boys in formal education with special emphasis on children with disabilities. According to Degener (2014), the human rights model focuses on the inherent dignity of the human being and subsequently on the person’s medical characteristics. It places the individual at the centre of all decisions affecting him/her and, most importantly, locates the main problem outside the person and in society. Hence, the attainments of human dignity can be sustainably achieved through the inclusion of children both at home and school in all spheres of living and also

through disability mainstreaming. It is important to acknowledge that the human rights model of disability has been recognised for this study because it values impairment as human diversity and acknowledges identity matters thereby promoting inclusion.

Methodology

This study adopted an implementation research approach which is an inquiry into questions concerning implementation of the ILESEA Project in enhancing inclusive education and disability mainstreaming in schools and communities where Ntengwe for Community Development is operational. In other words, as said by Peters et al (2014), the research is being carried out using this approach with an intention into effect well known as interventions made by Ntengwe for Community Development through the implementation of the ILESEA Project. Although a wide range of qualitative and quantitative research methods can be used in implementation research, this research used a cross-sectional method to achieve the intended objectives of the study. More in-depth criteria have also been proposed to assess the validity of findings specifically to deal with implementation of the ILESEA Project by Ntengwe.

Data collection for this research was done in a couple of phases that involved a review of the already existing literature in the field of study, collection of data from the field that involved observation, question and answer sessions during meetings and workshops with stakeholders and beneficiaries. The researchers have been directly engaged and involved in the process of the implementation of the ILESEA Project in advocating for inclusion of children with disabilities in schools and communities and to also foster disability mainstreaming to ensure that these children have a brighter future.

A total of five wards in Binga district, Zimbabwe - Lubanda, Manjolo, Muchesu, Saba and Siachilaba- were purposively selected based on the fact that this is where the ILESEA Project is being implemented and the beneficiaries of this project can be found. A sample of 24 schools from these wards were further selected based on the category of their vulnerability and levels of development which can cater for children with and without learning challenges. The project's five outcomes have also been studied in a bid to understand how ILESEA is progressing in

advocating for inclusive education and mainstreaming disability in Binga district.

Research findings

In order to promote quality inclusive education, Ntengwe implemented programmes under the ILESEA Project in the five wards of operations. In this section of the paper, a presentation of the findings is outlined to give a picture of the interventions made under the ILESEA Project by Ntengwe to promote inclusion and disability mainstreaming in the rural communities of Binga district of Zimbabwe.

Training of teachers on inclusive education: There is a general skepticism of the value of education vis a vis the need for children with disabilities to attend school. Among the trainings that sought to impart knowledge and skills in communities on issues about disability, training of teachers on inclusive education and working with disabled children has been a priority for Ntengwe in ensuring inclusivity and disability mainstreaming in Binga district. Teachers have been trained so that they can motivate children with disabilities to be more assertive, advocate and lobby for all their basic rights. Teachers in particular have been trained to shape their advocacy skills around children's special needs including familiarizing them with the concept of inclusive education. These trainings were targeted at children and teachers from the 24 selected schools.

The Provincial Sports and Recreation Commission (Bulawayo) was responsible for facilitating these trainings. The commission has since trained 67 teachers from the 24 schools on inclusive education. In collaboration with the SRC officer, the Schools Psychological Services (Binga Education Office) was part of the training in order to ensure a sustainable exit at the end of the project. The major outcome of this training has been that teachers have begun to employ appropriate teaching methods for children with disabilities. In some schools, such as Gaza Primary, the trained teacher has worked with communities to support the enrolment of two children with disabilities.

Equipping of resource units to support children with disabilities -
Ntengwe for Community Development purchased equipment for special

classes and resource units and delivered them to the benefiting schools with an intention to improve the learning environment for pupils who need special attention in schools within the five wards where the ILESEA project is being implemented. The schools which benefitted are Manjolo Primary, Bulawayo Kraal Primary, Simbala Primary, Mupambe Primary, Muchesu Primary and Siachilaba Primary.

The equipment distributed to the mentioned schools have helped to improve the learning environment for children with learning difficulties as they are now remediated, according to the school directors. The equipment that were purchased and distributed to these schools include number-lines, abacuses, boxes of paints, remedial textbooks, children's computers, common errors textbooks, dictionaries, clock faces, pencils, crayons, dolls, coloring books and skipping ropes.

Established Resource Units have assisted an average of 159 children with special needs and increased retention of school boys and girls. Although equipping these resource units made a greater change in the schools' education systems, another challenge was posed another which is the underutilization of these established resource units.

Neglecting children with disabilities due to the absence of the teachers specifically trained to teach children with learning disabilities has been prevalent in these schools as evidenced by the failure to utilize the resource units effectively and efficiently. Siachilaba Primary is one of the schools with a resource unit for mentally-retarded children being underutilized due to a lack of qualified special needs teachers who can cater to children with disabilities.

Training of community leaders on inclusive education and disability mainstreaming: Although there have been a number of proposals for mainstreaming disability in development, none contain a clear, concise definition of precisely what it means (Miller and Albert, 2005). Inclusive education and disability mainstreaming is impossible without the involvement of community leaders, especially the traditional leaders who have control over and administer the rural populations. In fighting stereotypes and exclusion of children with disabilities from both society and schools, Ntengwe has trained 114 community leaders on inclusive education and disability mainstreaming for the benefit of the children and the community at large since they are closer to the people.

The thrust for training the communities' leaders is to ensure that community cultural values, attitudes and practices that infringe the disabled children's rights are changed to promote and support inclusive and equitable education for all children. These trainings used practical learning methodologies focusing on the idea of involving participants in a series of practical exercises and mock sessions in the process which drew lessons from their own communities and identify gaps or challenges and how these can be addressed for improved inclusive community.

Community leaders have been trained on inclusion and disability mainstreaming in order to improve the understanding of community leaders on inclusive education and disability mainstreaming. In addition to this, the trainings capacitated community leaders with skills to deal with issues that relate to inclusive education, and disability mainstreaming within their areas of jurisdiction. The observation made by the researchers was that these trainings raised awareness to the community leaders on the need to enhance inclusive education, and disability mainstreaming and discuss the ways of retaining disadvantaged children in schools using a community driven/based approach.

Awareness campaigns on inclusive education: The community awareness sessions on disability mainstreaming and inclusive education conducted by Ntengwe for Community Development reached a total number of 16,644 people in 2017 that comprised of 8,124 males and 8,520 females. These awareness campaigns have contributed to improved learning environment for children with learning difficulties in schools such as Bulawayo Kraal Primary, Simbala Primary, Siachilaba Primary, Muchesu Primary and Manjolo Primary since the special classes in these schools were equipped with learning materials.

The awareness campaigns on disability mainstreaming and inclusive education were conducted at village level in Lubanda, Saba, Muchesu, Siachilaba and Manjolo wards with the help of the Special Psychological Services officer from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in collaboration with the rehab technicians from the Ministry of Health and Child Care. The campaigns have improved the knowledge and understanding of community members on the fundamental rights of children living with disabilities, especially their right to education which most community members infringe on by keeping children living with disabilities at home. The awareness campaigns against disability exclusion

have led to changed knowledge, attitude and practices that discriminate against children living with disabilities in the communities. Children with disabilities are now attending school although still at a low rate.

The participants who were involved in the awareness campaigns against exclusion included village heads, child protection committees, ward councillors, village health workers, teachers, chiefs, people living with disabilities and the youths. It was also an eye-opener for community members on the need to take health issues seriously because many disabilities are health-related and can be corrected if communities take positive action. This advocacy mission endeavored to cover topics such as disabled children's rights issues, health and educational issues on disability and ensuring a safe learning environment for children with disabilities.

These awareness campaigns have also helped to increase the understanding of both the underlying factors which lead to discrimination and exclusion of children with disabilities at home and school so that children learn better within a single system instead of separation of general and special services (Stainback and Stainback, 1989 cited in Elliot and McKenney, 1998). The campaigns also contributed to increasing good understanding of what inclusive education is and the conditions required to support it, as enshrined in the Zimbabwean Constitution and the United Nations Children's Rights Conference (UNCRC). The move made by Ntengwe to advocate for inclusive education and disability mainstreaming has increased the application of learning and working context and to cascade the information on inclusion to other communities/villages in the district.

School-to-school disability assessment and testing: An assessment of children living with disabilities was conducted in 2017 and reached a total number of 405 children (252 boys and 153 girls). The consolidated findings of the first and second assessments established that 11 females and 11 male learners presented with hearing impairments and are in need of 27 behind-the-ear and inside-the-ear hearing aids, six sign language dictionaries (one per profound hearing impairment), 15 educational children's laptops (one in each of 15 schools where the hearing-impaired learners are); 17 females and 18 males had impacted and discharging ears and they all needed ear syringing and foreign bodies removal at the hospital and lastly 14 female and 18 male learners presented with speech

disorders and these are in need of 32 speech training mirrors (one per learner), 56 jig-saw puzzles (two per learner), and 28 word dominoes (one per child). Furthermore, five children (3 females and 2 males) had albinism and were in need of five floppy sun hats (one per learner), 30 sunscreen lotions (SPF+50; six per learner), and five sunglasses; 14 children (8 females and 6 males) had intellectual challenges and these were in need of 14 molding material (one per child), 14 skipping ropes (one per child), 28 different gardening tools for addressing daily living skills (two per child) and 14 playing balls (one per child). 915 children (461 females and 454 males) needed remediation. They have learning challenges and need alphabetical charts per school. 31 children (17 females and 14 males) need glasses, 39 children (22 females and 17 males) need medicine prescription and 37 children (20 females and 17 males) needed further visual assessment.

Hence, 11 children were referred to Bulawayo Ortho Centre for further assessment of their physical disability, four pupils were referred to resource units, eight children were referred to Mpilo Hospital for further assessment, five children were referred to Binga Hospital for treatment, one child had mental challenges and it was recommended that the child be taken to Engutsheni in Bulawayo, five children were in need of wheel chairs, three children had speech problems and needed speech therapy, three children needed special psychological services, one child was in need of an orthosurgical operation, two children needed vocational training in Ruwa and Jairos Jiri, 11 children needed neuro-developmental clinics and it was further recommended that a three-day workshop be held at Drop-in Centre to train mothers on how to take care of their children. The rehabilitation department also recommended the establishment of a resource centre at Bulawayo Kraal as there are many children with challenges and the building of modified toilets in schools and homes to cater for children who will be using wheel chairs.

The exercise, which was done by Ntengwe Community Development, in conjunction with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education's Matabeleland North province personnel and Ministry of Health and Child Care's Binga district personnel, identified, screened and tested these learners in the twenty four (24) schools supported by Ntengwe. The SPS-SNE team comprising Mr. B. Ndlovu, Mr. P. Sibanda and Mr. D. Mudimba carried out a two-week long identification and screening exercise of the learners suspected to be

having learning challenges as a result of disabilities of some kind.. The goal of the programme was to accommodate all children in school regardless of their physical, physiological, social, intellectual and linguistic challenges thereby furthering the principle of inclusivity.

Schools that were covered are Bulawayo Kraal Primary, Bulawayo Kraal Secondary, Bunsiswa Primary, Cheenga Primary, Gaza Primary, Katete Primary, Katete Secondary, Lubanda Primary, Lubanda Secondary, Lwanzi Primary, Saba Primary, Siachilaba Primary, Siachilaba Secondary, Maacha Primary, Manjolo Primary, Manjolo Secondary, Mankobole Primary, Mpiname Primary, Muchesu Primary, Mupambe Primary, Muchesu Secondary, Mupambe Secondary and Nzovunde Primary. It is under the ILESEA project that Ntengwe has procured assistive devices for children with hearing impairments and 16 children were sent to Bulawayo for further assessment and these included 11 children who were taken to the ortho-centre and five who needed wheelchairs so that they could get further assessment for the actual types and sizes of wheel chairs.

Training children living with disabilities on utilizing assistive devices: Functional impairments can limit a child's ability to participate in the experiences of childhood and this deprivation can, in turn, have a negative effect on such children's development, academic performance, and quality of life, as well as on the lives of their caregivers and families (Henderson, Skelton and Rosenbaum, 2007). Ntengwe has procured and distributed assistive devices to the children with disabilities in order to overcome functional impairments and enable them to participate in daily activities.

However, assistive devices may be underutilized by children leading to follow ups for the children to ensure and train them on how to use assistive devices such as wheelchairs, spectacles, hearing aids, sunhats, sign language dictionaries, and sunscreen lotions. Ntengwe, in collaboration with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (Department of Specialist Psychological Services) and Ministry of Health and Child Care (MoHCC), taught the beneficiaries how to use the devices during the distribution exercise.

Community campaign and education meetings: The ILESEA team from Ntengwe and the Community Liaison and Relations Officer

(CRLO) conducted the community campaign and education meetings in 37 villages in 2017. The meetings aimed to educate the community leadership and members of community about law statutes on crimes related to abuse of children with disabilities. The campaigns have helped to improve the community's understanding of laws that protect children against various forms of abuse, irrespective of their condition. The communities' attitude towards security agents was also changed as some communities pointed out that security agents were poorly managing cases of abuse and this caused people to stop reporting cases of abuse. The police officer taught the communities the procedures for reporting while admonishing them against becoming accessories to child abuse.

These meetings, which held in the 37 villages of the five selected wards, were attended by village heads, headmen, pastors, councillors, village health workers, CPCs, CCWs, parents, youths and community based youth officers. The participants were chosen deliberately since they are the custodians of the traditions and culture of the communities. Culture defines how a community functions and no matter how much a new program or procedure is reinforced, it won't succeed if it is at odds with the community's culture, hence culture was observed to be an elephant that may trump on ILESEA strategies to advocate for inclusive education and disability mainstreaming in Binga (Katz and Miller, 2010).

The community members, especially parents, were made to see the dire effects of refusing to formally educate children with disabilities. This engendered a change of knowledge, attitude and practice by parents on inclusive education and disability mainstreaming.

The meetings also changed the attitude and knowledge of parents on crimes that relate to child abuse as the participants shunned committing crimes after being told that they can be incarcerated. Community campaign and education meetings by the Police CLRO (Community Liaison and Relations Officer) and VFU (Victim Friendly Unit) to educate the leadership and members of community about law statutes on crimes related to abuse of children helped to advance the concept of inclusive education and disability mainstreaming.

Special Psychological Services to special classes: Ncube, Tshabalala and Gazimbe (2015) state that most special units or special classrooms are manned by teachers without the requisite qualifications and schools have inadequate resources to properly cater for the needs of children

with disabilities which infringe on their rights, especially in rural areas such as in Binga. In order to ensure that the resource units and the materials procured and distributed in schools are fully utilized, Ntengwe has engaged the specialist psychological services of the MoPSE.

The conducted visits to these schools have helped to backstop support to special classes and resource units. The backstopping idea arose because the schools children living with disabilities attend do not have teachers with the requisite qualifications to teach such children. Hence this component of the ILESEA project has ensured that schoolchildren living with disabilities gain access to quality education by grade and gender. However, this area still needs much attention as these teachers are only empowered with the basic skills needed to handle children living with disabilities.

Village-level trainings for CPCs on child protection: To increase the protection from violence, exploitation and abuse for children with disabilities, community leaders were trained at village level by CPCs so as to improve their understanding of child protection from violence, exploitation and abuse. The trainings sought to ensure that children, especially those with disabilities, face reduced levels of stigmatization, receive support and are protected from violence.

These trainings were mainly facilitated by CPC members living in the villages that make up the five wards of operations for Ntengwe where the ILESEA project is being implemented. The trained community leaders encompassed village heads, church leaders and traditional healers making a total of 20 participants per village in the 37 villages. Participants with diverse backgrounds were chosen so as to ensure that information is disseminated from various angles in the community thus maximizing the chances of reaching as many people as possible on the need for inclusive education and disability mainstreaming.

The training workshops adopted the practical learning method, focusing on the idea of involving participants in a series of practical exercises and mock sessions. In the process, participants draw lessons learnt from their own communities and identify gaps and challenges and how these can be addressed for improved child protection, inclusive education and disability mainstreaming in their communities.

Know Your Rights' information and advocacy campaign: Hornby (2015) has alluded that inclusive education and special education are based on a philosophy to provide alternative views of education for children with special educational needs and disabilities. To change the way children with disabilities and other in the communities view education, the ILESEA project prints and issues free newsletters which are distributed to the communities and the stakeholders. They serve as communication tools to keep the community updated on the activities that have been done during the implementation of the project and to enable children with disabilities to access information on their rights

Dialogue meetings: Jakes (2010) notes that dialogue forums build disability sensitive capacity in the areas of education, child protection and social services, water, sanitation and hygiene, sexual reproductive health, HIV and AIDS, policy, livelihoods, financial inclusion, and nutrition where persons with disability are lagging behind in current policy frameworks. Ntengwe conducted dialogue meetings which were attended and facilitated by the Ministry of primary and secondary education, Department of social welfare, Ministry of health and child care. A total of 8718 people (4941 M, 3767 F) were reached in 2017 as an advocacy campaign against the exclusion of children with disabilities in the five wards. The communities expressed their concerns on the inadequacy of a safe environment for children with disabilities.

During the meetings, the participants revealed that sanitation for girls with disabilities in schools and at homes are very poor and the participants pointed out that these girls use cow dung, tree leaves, grass and pieces of clothes as sanitary wear during the menstrual periods. In addition to this, children with disabilities during menstruation period dodge lessons and absent themselves from school due to lack of sanitary wears. Hence dialogue meetings have brought children with disabilities, parents, teachers, responsible authorities and other education stakeholders together so that the children can give their voices whereas Ntengwe helped to project and amplify the thin voices through these meetings.

An observation was noted that as children with disabilities are expected to learn, the human resources available in schools is inexperienced and unqualified to handle children with disabilities in schools. As a result, parents of children with disabilities see it

unnecessary to take their children to school since these children are given little or no attention at school and some who are lucky to attend primary education fail to proceed to secondary education after completion. Hence, dialogue meetings became appropriate forum to debunk some mythical cultural instincts and misconceptions that children with disabilities should not or are not supposed to attend school.

Challenges encountered by Ntengwe in promoting inclusion and disability mainstreaming in Binga district

Long distances between homes and schools have negatively affected the project's implementation as there are unfriendly terrains and reliefs in the district. This has negatively affected the implementation of the project as children with physical challenges, especially those whose mobility is dependent on the use of wheelchairs, is hindered by such distances. In addition to this, these schools are staffed with teachers with inadequate skills and knowledge on how to handle children with disabilities. Apart from these, the schools lack disability-friendly infrastructures such as classrooms, ramps and toilets, putting the life and health of children with disabilities at risk. Such diabolical learning environments have threatened the progress of the project to enhancing inclusive education and disability mainstreaming in the district.

The hardest challenge facing disability mainstreaming and the promotion of inclusive education in the district of Binga has been the failure of parents to advance the right of their children with disabilities to identity and good names. Most children with disabilities do not have birth certificates, categorizing them as aliens without a right of existence in the society.

Lack of adequate educational policies that protect children with disabilities and lack of determination by concerned stakeholders in the fight against exclusion of children in schools has posed a great challenge in mainstreaming disability. In addition to this, the MoPSE lacks commitment on inclusive education and disability mainstreaming as this has been evidenced by a failure to produce a curriculum that is aligned to disability mainstreaming. Mitra (2005) argues that the welfare of persons with disabilities is affected by disability-related policies and legislations and it is only through effective education, employment and health policies inclusion can be efficient.

Again, the failure to give attention to children with disabilities has caused many learners to drop out of school as they are often neglected and not remediated. On a sad note, some parents support the withdrawal of children with disabilities from schools as they believe that they are not getting any education from these schools nor see why they should be educated at all. Taking children with disabilities to school is viewed as a waste of resources by the parents and guardians of these children.

Poverty is still a threat to inclusive education and disability mainstreaming in the district and Mitra (2005) acknowledged this by saying that the relationship between poverty and disability is a 'vicious circle'. Regardless of the efforts made by the ILESEA project, the communities in Binga district lack efficient and vibrant economic support bases. The population largely depends on subsistence agriculture for survival and livelihoods which bear little income returns for the families. The situation in the households is diagonally and asymmetrically affecting the progress of inclusivity and disability mainstreaming.

Furthermore, Banks and Zuurmond (2015) state that poverty is a dominant theme that serves as a main reason for children with disabilities not being in school, missing classes or having difficulties with learning. Although economic challenges are a universal barrier to accessing education, there is an argument to be made that households with children with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to poverty and it is to this dispensation that inclusion and disability mainstreaming fails in the district.

The advocacy for inclusive education and disability mainstreaming in schools and communities has been hampered by the deteriorating political and economic situation in the country of Zimbabwe. The economic situation which has made it impossible for Ntengwe to access funds on time from banks coupled with the intermittent supply of fuel negatively are negatively affecting the smooth implementation of the project activities. The national cash crisis is a stumbling block to effective implementation of activities, making it difficult for the organisation to procure needed goods such as assistive devices.

Conclusion

The challenges of inclusion and disability mainstreaming are more pronounced in developmentally marginalized areas such as Binga district.

This is because planning, investment and development decisions continue to deprive them of the support mechanisms needed to reverse exclusion and support the development of children with disabilities. The study has shown that holistic interventions such as the ILESEA programme that address the child, family, community and institutional factors can be key to unlocking attitudinal, policy and practices in favour of inclusion and disability mainstreaming in the long run. By applying interventions that address these structures and complement the government and communities, development partners will be able to build community-rooted structures that can continue to support inclusion and disability mainstreaming in a sustainable manner beyond the short-termism of development projects.

Recommendations on mechanisms to promote inclusive education and disability mainstreaming Zimbabwe

- For Zimbabwe to achieve inclusive education in rural areas, there is a need for the production of consistent and congruent policies on inclusive education and disability mainstreaming in schools by the concerned government ministry.
- Since Zimbabwe has few special needs teachers, it is important that the government of Zimbabwe invests in training more special needs teachers. The staffing of these trained teachers should be even and equitable for the benefit of all the communities, including the rural ones.
- Staff members in schools should prioritize disability mainstreaming and inclusivity in order to reduce stigmatization and segregation of children with disabilities. It should be enshrined in the school policies how the promotion of inclusive education will be mainstreamed in schools.
- There is a need to build more resource units in schools and adequately equip these resource units to ensure that children with disabilities in rural areas get abundant and priceless education like their urban counterparts do despite the poverty status of their parents.

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