Policy brief: How inclusive are Zambia’s Education, Health, Employment and Social Protection Policies of Disability?

Key policy messages

- Policies are available that, if properly implemented, should ensure adequate access to health, education, employment and social protection in Zambia.
- Detailed assessment shows that, even though the policies are well articulated in terms of rights, access, inclusiveness and implementation plans, they are not detailed enough with regard to budgets and enforcement mechanisms.
- Policy documents should be clear on budgetary allocations for programmes targeting persons with disabilities, including detailed enforcement mechanisms that clearly spell out the consequences of non-compliance, as well as the incentives accompanying compliance. Finally, monitoring plans for policies and programmes should be disaggregated by disability status as well as type of disability, as opposed to including persons with disabilities together with other vulnerable groups.

Overview

Persons with disabilities are among the poorest and most socially excluded groups in society (WHO/World Bank, 2011). Persons with disabilities are disproportionately represented in lower income countries, and it has also been shown that poverty and disability are both cause and consequence of each other (Yeo and Moore, 2003). A large proportion of disabled persons live in rural areas where access to basic services is limited. Due to misconceptions and myths, persons with disabilities are denied the opportunity to engage in socioeconomic activities as they are considered to be incapable of carrying out day-to-day activities. In comparison to their non-disabled counterparts, persons with disabilities also encounter additional challenges in realising their potential as they tend to have limited access to infrastructure, health care, education and employment, leading to further social and economic exclusion.

The Zambian Government has not been oblivious to the plight and challenges being faced by persons with disabilities. To this effect, Zambia has ratified a number of international and regional treaties that go back as far as the pre-independence period. Notable among these are the ratification of the International Labour Organisation’s Convention 159 on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities (1989), and the signing of the United Nations Conventions on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (2008). At the national level, the country has had disability-related policies and legislation since 1961. Prominent among these include the Blind Persons Ordinance (1961), the Handicapped Persons Act (1968), the Persons with Disabilities Act (1996, revised 2012), and the National Disability Policy (2015).
These results and policy recommendations are drawn from analysis of selected national policies related to education, health, employment and social protection. Included under the education domain are the Technical Education, Vocation and Entrepreneurship Training Policy (1996); National Policy on Education (1996); Education Act (2011); Zambia Education Curriculum Framework (2013); and the Higher Education Bill (2013). In the health domain, the National HIV/AIDS/STI/TB Policy (2005); National Reproductive Health Policy (2008); National Health Strategic Plan (2011); Adolescent Health Strategic Plan (2011) and the National Health Policy (2012) were included. For the employment domain, the National Employment and Labour Market Policy (2006); the Citizens Economic Empowerment Act (2006); the draft Land Administration and Management Policy (2006); the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise Development Policy (2008); and the National Agricultural Policy (2011) are included. Finally, under social protection, the National Social Protection Policy (2014); National Gender Policy (2014); National Youth Policy (2015); and the Gender Equity and Equality Bill (2015) are included.

These documents are analysed against seven criteria in terms of content: rights, accessibility, inclusivity, national implementation plan, enforcement mechanisms, budgetary concerns, and information management concerns for issues relating to persons with disabilities. Each of these criteria is scored on a scale of 1 – 4, depending on how disability is addressed: 1 (weak); 2 (questionable); 3 (medium); and 4 (high). Specifically, ‘high’ means that the policy explicitly acknowledges the right to services and programmes and any issues addressed in that policy for persons with disabilities and specifically mentions persons with disabilities; ‘questionable’ means the policy states the right to services but does not mention persons with disabilities; while ‘weak’ means no mention of access to services in the policy or the rights to services by persons with disabilities. The results presented here form part of a larger research project: Bridging the Gap: Examining disability and development in four African countries. The research programme is based at the Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre, UCL, UK, and is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and the UK Department for International Development.

Results

Figure 1 presents the comparisons of the average scores for the different policies under each of the four domains. As is expected, the policies under the social protection domain scored the highest average (3.0 out of 4.0) followed by the policies under the employment domain (2.6 out of 4.0). The health domain scored the lowest average (2.1 out of 4.0).
Figure 1: Average scores for the combined policies under the different domains

The policy domains are also analysed with regard to their average performance on the aspects of rights to services/programmes, inclusivity of the programmes, clearly defined implementation plans, enforcement mechanisms, budgetary concerns and information management. These are also scored on a scale ranging between 1 and 4, depending on how the above thematic areas are covered or included in the documents from all domains in relation to persons with disabilities. The results (Figure 2) show that overall, the policy documents tend to score relatively highly on the rights of vulnerable persons, including persons with disabilities, with regard to services and programmes (average score of 3.0 out of 4.0); inclusiveness and accessibility of services and programmes and implementation plans (2.8 out of 4.0 respectively). However, the policy documents tend to score poorly with regard to enforcement mechanisms (1.8 out of 4.0), budgetary concerns (1.9 out of 4) and information management (2.1 out of 4.0).

Figure 2: Average performance of the education policies in the different thematic areas

Finally, comparisons are also made across the different domains with regard to how comprehensive the policies are in relation to rights, accessibility, inclusiveness, implementation plans, enforcement mechanisms, budgetary concerns and information management as they relate to persons with
disabilities. Table 1 shows that across all the thematic areas, the social protection domain outperforms all the other domains, with an average score of 3.0 out of 4.0. The domain with the lowest score is education (2.1 out of 4.0).

Table 1: Comparisons across the different domains in the different thematic areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Area</th>
<th>Average for domain</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusiveness</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>2.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enforcement mechanisms</td>
<td>1.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Budgetary concerns</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information management</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average (out of 4)</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key message 1

Overall, Zambia has adequate policies that tend to be inclusive of the needs of persons with disabilities. With the exception of a few, the policy documents formulated after Zambia ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities tend to fair relatively well, reflecting positive efforts aimed at domesticating the articles enshrined in the UNCRPD into local policy documents after ratification.

Key message 2

Even though the policy documents tend to be quite articulate and rate fairly well with regard to rights of persons with disabilities, accessibility of services and programmes, inclusiveness of services and programmes and the implementation plans, the same amount of detail lacks when it comes to budgetary concerns, enforcement mechanisms and information management. These weaknesses imply that, even though the policies may appear comprehensive in theory, implementation on the ground may be a challenge.

Key message 3

The policy documents also tend not to have disability disaggregated monitoring plans. In most cases, persons with disabilities are covered under vulnerable populations, which masks the additional challenges that persons with disabilities face in accessing services and makes planning for them difficult. The policy documents also tend to consider persons with disabilities as a homogenous group and do not distinguish depending on different impairments, ignoring the varied challenges that persons with different disabilities face.
Key message 4

Finally, the lack of detailed enforcement mechanisms means that it is not clear on the implications of non-compliance, as well as the incentives that come with compliance. This also contributes to the lack of effectiveness of the policies.

Recommendations

Analysis of selected policies in the four domains show that the policies are quite adequate and elaborate with regard to rights, accessibility and being inclusive of the needs of the persons with disabilities. However, the same cannot be said when it comes to budgetary allocations, enforcement mechanisms and monitoring, all of which tend to be quite weak. In this regard, it is recommended that:

1. The budgetary sections of the different policy documents be recast to clearly include financial allocations specifically targeted for issues dealing with persons with disabilities. This is because including persons with disabilities together with other ‘vulnerable populations’ without disabilities tends to mask the additional challenges that persons with disabilities may be facing.
2. The lack of clear enforcement mechanisms makes it difficult to ensure compliance. To this effect, where provisions are made specifically to address challenges faced by persons with disabilities, these should be accompanied by clearly articulated enforcement mechanisms, as well as the specific penalties or incentives that go with non-compliance or compliance.
3. Finally, the tendency of considering persons with disabilities as a homogenous group, or indeed in most cases not acknowledging that persons with disabilities tend to have special needs from those of the general population, results in the failure to disaggregate monitoring data by disability status or indeed by type of disability. This makes planning and programming difficult, as the resultant interventions are not tailored to specific needs of persons with disabilities. To this effect, it is recommended that, to the extent possible, data for monitoring policies be disaggregated by disability status as well as type of disability.

Further reading


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