

UPDATE REPORT ON VICTIM ASSISTANCE: ZIMBABAWE

Preamble

- Since independence in 1980, the Government of Zimbabwe has invested in the provisions the provision of social services and social protection with a special focus on vulnerable groups that cover the elderly, children, women, youth and Persons with Disabilities who include Victims of Land Mines and other explosive remains of war (ERWs). This commitment has been evidenced by the number of Acts of Parliament and policies put in place to address the needs of all the vulnerable groups.
- Through the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET), the country's socio-economic blueprint, Zimbabwe hopes to achieve sustainable development and social equity anchored on indigenization, empowerment and employment creation.
- As one of the four pillars of ZIMASSET, the Social Services and Poverty Eradication sector is mandated with the restoration of quality social service delivery in health, education, housing, water and sanitation services among others. In addition, this sector is also responsible for implementing government's social protection programmes.

PROGRESS UPDATE

- Zimbabwe has put in place a comprehensive legal framework that by and large, addresses the needs of vulnerable groups that include Persons with Disabilities among whom fall victims of landmines and ERWs.
- This update therefore focuses on policies and programmes in place specifically addressing the needs of Persons with Disabilities and simultaneously covering the major components of victim assistance in an integrated manner. These include *Legislation and Policies, Access to Emergency and Continuing Medical Care, Physical and Functional*

Rehabilitation, Psychological and Psychosocial Support and last but not least, Social and Economic Inclusion

(i) Legislation and Policies Update

- The Constitution of Zimbabwe in part 3 section 83 defines the Rights of Persons with disabilities and provides for the need for Persons with Disabilities realize their full potentials,
- The Government of Zimbabwe enacted the Disabled Persons Act 17:01 of 1992 to spearhead the realization of ideals.
- On 23 September 2013, Zimbabwe ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities thus ensuring the attainment of ideals of Persons with Disabilities.
- Currently, the country is in the process of aligning all pieces of legislation to the new constitution.
- The country is in the process of designing around the domestication of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Towards this end on 22-26 September 2014, the Government of Zimbabwe and the Africa Disability Alliance, a regional body representing Organizations of Persons with Disabilities based in South Africa, jointly organized and held a round table conference in Zimbabwe. The conference brought together various organizations of Persons with Disabilities from within the Southern African Region to participate with their government counterparts from the region to discuss issues pertaining to the Rights and Welfare of Persons with Disabilities.
- As one of the direct outcomes of the meeting, the Government of Zimbabwe and Africa Disability Alliance agreed to initiate a Memorandum of Understanding for purposes of implementing the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities, development of a National Disability Mainstreaming plan and promotion of disability objectives in the African Union Social Policy framework among other objectives.
- The draft MoU was subsequently on 18 June 2015 presented before the Cabinet Committee on Legislation (CCL) and unanimously adopted. The draft now awaits Cabinet approval within the shortest period of time.

- The draft National Policy on Disability, which was wholly initiated by Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and their membership in consultation with other stakeholders, now awaits Cabinet approval within the shortest period of time.
- All these events indicate a renewed impetus and vigour by the Government of Zimbabwe and the community of Persons with Disabilities to mainstream disability.

(i) Access to Emergency and Continuing Medical Care

- The Social Welfare Assistance Act (Chapter 17:06) implemented by the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare provides for health assistance to vulnerable groups.
- Those in need who include victims of land mines and other ERWs (and their families) apply for this service at Department of Social Services offices located in all the districts. They are then granted the Medical Treatment Orders (AMTO) to access the medical services at government hospitals and institutions.
- The AMTOs are later redeemed by the hospitals to the Department of Social Services for payment.
- The wide range of social protection programmes accessed through the Social Welfare Assistance Act (Chapter 17:06) cover income and health security, institutional care, assistance with travel warrants to enable vulnerable groups to access care centres, especially for those referred from rural clinics to district and provincial hospitals.

(ii) Physical and Functional Rehabilitation

- In Zimbabwe rehabilitation services for victims of land mines and other ERWs are provided by both government, non-government organizations and other non-state actors.
- On the part of government, Ministry of Health and Child Care provides rehabilitation programmes that are decentralized to provincial hospitals, district hospitals and mission hospitals. These include the community based rehabilitation and the Community based Nutrition programmes.

- The major workload is undertaken at provincial and national levels which are fairly equipped to with qualified manpower and material resources to provide the essential rehabilitation work. However, only two government hospitals run orthopaedic departments and these are Parirenyatwa group of hospitals in Harare and the Bulawayo Central hospitals in Bulawayo. The other orthopaedic centres are run by privately.
- Apart from the Ministry of Health and Child Care institutions, Government has through the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare set up infrastructure for comprehensive rehabilitation and empowerment of Persons with Disabilities at three other centres namely the National Rehabilitation Centre (NRC) Ruwa in Harare province, NRC Beatrice in Mashonaland East province and NRC Lowden Lodge in Manicaland.
- NRC Ruwa offers comprehensive rehabilitation through a multi-disciplinary team of professionals in the categories of medical care (emergency and continuing medical care, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, orthotics and prosthetics), Psychosocial Support (through professional Social Workers and other Social Science Practitioners) and Vocational, Technical and Entrepreneurial Skills Transfers. Beatrice offers technical and vocational skills training while Lowden Lodge offers foundation skills to empower Persons with Disabilities whilst the NRC Lowden Lodge targets the girl child with disabilities and provides primary education.

These programmes are offered free to persons with disabilities: the costs are borne by government to ensure access by persons with disabilities"

- A fourth Rehabilitation Centre, Tsanga Lodge is administered by the Zimbabwe National Army specifically for the rehabilitation of Zimbabwe Defence forces.
- Apart from the government run centres, the Jairos Jiri Association, a registered private voluntary organization runs Orthopaedic workshops at its rehabilitation centre in Bulawayo. However, even with these services in place, demand is still very high for rehabilitation services.

- The majority of alumni from these Centers are employed in the mainstream open job market whilst an equally large portion embark on entrepreneurship in various trades.

(iii) Psychological and Psychosocial Support

- Counselling sessions with the target groups which are an integral part of support to persons with disabilities are continuously undertaken.
- The highlight of the annual calendar for Persons with Disabilities is participation at the Danhiko Annual National Paralympic Games at Danhiko Institute, Harare.
- Sports Clubs from the SADC region and from all corners of Zimbabwe congregate each year to participate in the various sporting disciplines at the Danhiko games, whose Patron is the First Lady, Amai Dr. Grace Mugabe. Participation in these games has grown with sports teams coming from Namibia, Botswana to compete with their peers on the Paralympic sports arena.
- More of such national games are now being organized provincially.

(iv) Social and Economic Inclusion (Pillars of VA)

- Zimbabwe is committed to removal of impediments to allow for the equal participation of Persons with Disabilities in all sectors. The Disabled Persons Act (Chapter 170:1 of 1992) which falls under the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare provides for the establishment of the National Disability Board. This is a national body whose members drawn from the organizations of Persons with Disabilities and thus ensuring full representation. The main function of the board is to work with government in enhancing the educational, social and occupational interests of Persons with Disabilities, through a fund namely the Disabled Persons Fund (DPF) to cater for the needs of Persons with Disabilities. The fund receives direct parliamentary allocation of resources and as alluded to is administered by the Director of Social Services working with the Disability Board.

- Through the DPF, direct financial support with monthly per capita and administrative grants are provided annually to Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (DPOs), Advocacy organisations and institutions that compliment government in the provision of care and vocational training to Persons with Disabilities.
- DPF also funds a revolving micro-finance facility for viable self-help income generating empowerment projects targeted to Persons with Disabilities. The loan facility was created to pool resources by both the state and civil society to promote self-reliance, social protection and reduce structural poverty amongst Persons with Disabilities.
- Current policy in the Public Service in Zimbabwe ensures that there is no discrimination against Persons with Disabilities in the terms and conditions of employment and deployment.
- In addition, in staff deployments of Persons with Disabilities within the Public Service, the working environment is carefully considered in order to avoid discomfort on the part of the disabled member.
- In Zimbabwe every child in Zimbabwe has the right to school education. This covers every child in the country, including children with disabilities who now are able to attend mainstream schools through the inclusive education concept.
- Government has taken a leading role in the facilitation of communication with those hard of hearing and service providers countrywide. Already, a sign language dictionary for Zimbabwe and sign language charts have been printed and distributed to educational institutions, Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and vocational training centres countrywide.
- These has also been extended to the public examination systems where again appropriate media, such as Braille, large print and audio and visual equipment are made available on request to cater for Persons with Disabilities.
- Social inclusion has meant among other things, access by Persons with Disabilities to social protection and poverty reduction programmes.

- Children with Disabilities have special protection is guaranteed through the Children's Act (Chapter 5:06) implemented by Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Services. This Act provides for special care and education, the provision of school fees and uniforms to indigent Children with Disabilities.
- The Government has also instituted Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM), which provides school-fees waivers in primary and secondary schools, for orphans and other vulnerable children who now enjoy increased access to education.
- 10% of the BEAM budgetary allocation is set aside for persons with disabilities and is always adjusted upwards as per need to cater for all disabled persons undertaking formal education.
- .Persons with Disabilities and their families in need also access various other social protection programmes that include the **Harmonised Social Cash Transfers**. Through this programme, households receive a monthly cash allowance dependent on the size of the households. The programme is targeted to assist at the climax, over 100 000 labour constrained and food poor households.

(v) **The Productive Safety Net Programme**

- provides temporary employment to vulnerable households that have excess labour. These households participate in communal projects for a 15-day working month supervised by the local authorities.
- Whilst the wage rate allows for beneficiaries to purchase food items and other basic commodities whilst not diverting labour from other productive activities.
- The programme has therefore gone a long way in creating employment, thus cushioning the poor against risks while at the same time developing community infrastructure.