

# Assessment of the inclusiveness of early childhood education (ECE)

in Zambia for children  
with disabilities



# Preliminary report

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## Acknowledgment

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I would like to acknowledge and thank all the research participants and respondents drawn from the eight districts of Southern, Lusaka, Western and Eastern provinces for cooperating with the research team and availing their time and knowledge. A special gratitude goes to the parents of children with disabilities who continue to exhibit a sense of commitment to the rights of their education and to quality inclusive education in particular for supporting this process and granting consent for the research team to interact with their children. We also acknowledge the input and support of organisations of persons with disabilities in the areas that were part of this study.

Finally I would like to thank the education authorities in the Ministry of Education at national, provincial and district levels for the support and cooperation rendered to the research team. The provincial staff in the Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities and staff from the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services.

May God reward abundantly all those who made a contribution to the production of this report. This is a job well done. With this information we are poised to develop informed interventions that will enable access to quality inclusive early childhood education for children with disabilities.



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## Executive Summary

Zambia Association for Parents of Children with Disabilities (ZAPCD), in partnership with Able Child Africa had developed an initiative to promote inclusive early childhood education (ECE) in Zambia for children with disabilities. The initiative conducted an assessment on the inclusiveness of early childhood education (ECE) in Zambia for children with disabilities. This was done in collaboration with VITOL Foundation.

The target of this assessment on the inclusiveness of early childhood education (ECE) in Zambia for children with disabilities is to contribute to improving coordination and targeted efforts on inclusion of children with disabilities through the national ECE strategy and design clearly and specific ECE disability targeted and mainstream interventions to address the disability specificities around education for children with disabilities.

Education for individuals with disabilities is not a new phenomenon in Zambia. As far back as 1905, a school for the visually impaired was opened at Magwero in Chipata by the Dutch Reformed Church. Other missionaries opened schools between 1905 and 1963 in various parts of Zambia. The works of these missionaries did not only shape the education provision for children with disabilities but it also helped change societal attitudes towards disability inclusion. It is clear from these efforts that the Ministry of Education (MoE) aims at providing quality education for all which is accessible, all-encompassing and relevant to individual, national and global needs.

For this to be attained, opportunities to learn in schools must exist for all the children regardless of their learning disabilities. To guarantee that inclusive learning takes place in the institutions of learning, research is vital. It is only research like this one that can establish the availability of opportunities to learn being accorded to all the children in a friendly and an inclusive manner. To ascertain the happening of inclusive or none of it prevailing in schools, ZAPCD worked consultants to carry out a national review of inclusiveness of early childhood education (ECE) in Zambia for children with disabilities in the four provinces of Zambia namely Western, Southern Eastern and Lusaka Provinces respectively.

In order to establish a baseline on the opportunities to learn by children with disabilities once they are in school, the study covered a total of 241 participants who included regular teachers, specialised teachers, ECE teachers, Education Standards Officers, Parents of children with disabilities, Provincial Education Officers, Community Leaders, children and youths with disabilities, OPD Leaders and District Education Board Officers. Detailed interview guides for all the categories were administered in addition to the provincial consultative workshops. Pupils with inclusive education needs were interviewed.

Their views on various issues that would affect quality opportunities to learn in an inclusive learning environment were captured through structured Focus Group Discussions involving 10 pupils in each of the sampled schools. Structured Focus Group Discussions involving parents of children with disabilities were conducted. An observation protocol was used to assess the learning opportunities for children with disabilities in all the sampled schools which were reached. This research has not only raised many issues but has also provided recommendations that the government, and the Ministry of Education in particular, must execute if the delivery of quality inclusive education at all levels were to be assured.



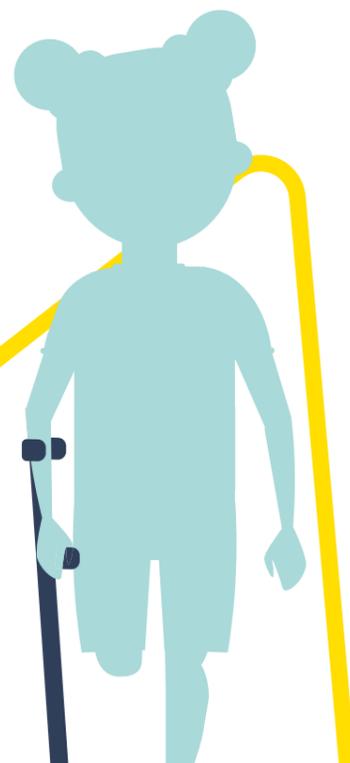
The study findings show that there are many factors prevailing in and outside school which impact on the promotion of inclusive education. These are family factors, Child factors, School factors, Class environment, School environment, Community factors, Support Service, Locational factors and policy factors.

The key areas of concern established by the study were: persistent negative attitudes towards inclusive early childhood education by parents, education providers, policy makers and the general community, absence of screening and child assessment facilities at local levels, inadequate funding to schools, long distance to schools, inaccessible infrastructure, inadequate appropriate and adaptable teaching and learning materials and lack of skills in sign language and braille by teachers for communicating to pupils with disabilities especially those with hearing and visual impairments and non-recruitment of trained ECE teachers with inclusive education background.

There was also an absence of active parent involvement and engagement in the design of ECE delivery models at schools. Respondents also indicated the need for a legal framework and policy on inclusive schooling in Zambia. One observation that researchers also made was that Zambia does not have a policy specifically designed to foster the inclusion of children with disabilities in the regular school system. The lack of such policies has also resulted in difficulties in integrating children with disabilities in the mainstream society.

In order to address the above stated challenges, the respondents and informants suggested that the Ministry of Education should ensure that existing infrastructure is modified so that it is accessible by all pupils and new facilities built using universal design principles. In addition, all teachers should be trained in inclusive education and communication instruction in sign language and braille and all teacher training institutions should include sign language and braille in their curriculum.

Community leaders and policy makers must undergo training in disability inclusion and equality and a robust public awareness programme must be rolled out on the rights of children with disabilities and the benefits of inclusive schooling.



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# Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the Rights of the Child	<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>CRPD</b>	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	<b>PWD</b>	People with Disabilities
<b>CSEN</b>	Children with Special Education Needs	<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>CWDs</b>	Children With Disabilities	<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>ECE</b>	Early Childhood Education	<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>ECD</b>	Early Childhood Development	<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>EFA</b>	Education for All	<b>ZAPCD</b>	Zambia Association of Parents of Children with Disabilities
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion	<b>ZANEC</b>	Zambia National Education Coalition
<b>IECE</b>	Inclusive Early Childhood Education	<b>ZOCS</b>	Zambia Open Community Schools
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview		
<b>MOE</b>	Ministry of Education		
<b>MoGE</b>	Ministry of General Education		
<b>OPDs</b>	Organizations for Persons with disabilities		



# Chapter One

## 1.0 Introduction

Early childhood is the period from prenatal development to eight years of age. It is a crucial phase of growth and development because experiences during early childhood can influence outcomes across the entire course of an individual's life (WHO; 2007). For all children, early childhood provides an important window of opportunity to prepare the foundation for life-long learning and participation, while preventing potential delays in development and disabilities. For children who experience disability, it is a vital time to ensure access to interventions which can help them reach their full potential (WHO; 2007).

As children become older, access to early childhood education and transition to the first grades of primary school are also essential to establishing the foundation for continual learning and development (WHO; 2012). In comparison to other children, those with disabilities are less likely to start school and have lower rates of remaining in school (WHO; 2012). It is estimated that one third of all primary aged children who are not in school are children with a disability (3). Those in school are all too often excluded within the school setting, are not placed with peers in their own age group and receive poor-quality learning opportunities.

Many children with disabilities also require access to additional learning opportunities and/or specialised services such as rehabilitation to maximise their development potential. In many countries programmes and services targeting young children are often inadequate to meet their developmental needs, and when available they are often costly, not inclusive and located in urban areas (Sara; 2020). While some countries have already adopted an approach to deliver services through a variety of settings at the community level, overall there is an insufficient number of service providers with sufficient knowledge of and skills in disability.

Evidence-based research and multi-country experiences make a strong rationale for investing in ECD, especially for children at risk of developmental delay or with a disability.

### Human rights rationale:

Both the CRC and the CRPD state that all children with disabilities have the right to develop “to the maximum extent possible” (CRC; 2006). These instruments recognise the importance of focusing not only on the child's health condition or impairment but also on the influence of the environment as the cause of underdevelopment and exclusion (CRC; 2005).

### Economic rationale:

Children with disabilities who receive good care and developmental opportunities during early childhood are more likely to become healthy and productive adults. This can potentially reduce the future costs of education, medical care and other social spending (WHO; 2007).

### Scientific rationale:

The first three years of a child's life are a critical period. They are characterised by rapid development particularly of the brain and thus provide the essential building blocks for future growth, development and progress. If children with disabilities are to survive, flourish, learn, be empowered and participate, attention to ECD is essential. According to UNICEF (2008), ECD programmes can lead to improved rates of survival, growth and development; and ensure later education programmes are more effective.

Well-organised inclusive ECD programmes for young children with disabilities can provide parents with more time to engage in productive work and enable girls and boys with disabilities to attend school. Approaches combining centre-based programmes and parenting interventions, including home visiting programmes, may help parents and professionals to detect developmental delays early, improve children's development, prevent abuse and neglect, and ensure school readiness (UNICEF; 2008).

### Inclusive Education:

Inclusive education aims at strengthening the capacity of the education system in reaching out to all learners including those with disabilities and can thus be understood as a key strategy to achieve EFA (UNESCO; 1990). As stated in Article 24 of the CRPD, children with disabilities should not be excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability and should have access to inclusive, quality and free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the community in which they live (CRC; 1989).

Inclusive pre-school and early primary schooling offers children with disabilities a vital space in which to ensure optimal development by providing opportunities for child focused learning, play, participation, peer interaction and the development of friendships. Children with disabilities are often denied early years of primary schooling, and when enrolled due to a lack of inclusive approaches and rigid systems they often fail, need to repeat and/or are encouraged to dropout during this critical developmental period.

# 1.1 Background

Zambia has a very young population, with 66% under 24 years old. The 2015 [National Disability Survey](#) published in 2018 estimated the prevalence of disability to be 10.9 per cent among adults (18+ years). It was higher in urban than in rural areas, and higher among females than among males. Among children (2–17 years), the prevalence was estimated to be 4.4 per cent.

Despite a rapidly growing economy, 54.4% of people live in poverty rising to 81% for people with disabilities, perpetuating the exclusion of children with disabilities in many areas (Ndhlovu et al: 2016).

Inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood education in schools has great benefits to children themselves, their families and the nation but these children seem to be neglected. They are often overlooked in mainstream programmes and services designed to provide early education. They also do not receive the specific support required to meet their rights and needs.

Children with disabilities and their families are confronted by barriers including inadequate legislation and policies, negative attitudes, inadequate services, and lack of accessible environments. If children with disabilities and their families are not provided with timely and appropriate early education and support, their difficulties can become more severe and resulting into negative lifetime consequences, increased poverty, and profound exclusion.

By 2013, Zambia had more than 133,000 children with disabilities who were out of school despite being of school age (Ndhlovu et al: 2016). Most of these children were below the age of eight. Despite government's effort and implementation of early childhood education, children with disabilities were not visible or catered for in any of the developments, very little if anything has been happening to ensure that the children with disabilities acquire early education and gain or benefit the way able bodied children do.

This inability to support such children can be seen from several factors. For instance, in the budgets made by government towards early education in 2012 and 2013 financial years, there was no mention of early education for children with disabilities (Ndhlovu et al: 2016).

The allocation to education in the Zambia national budget dropped from 20.2% in 2015 to 11.5% for 2021, representing a 46.3% reduction in the last five years. In a recent statement, ZANEC said the budget to Early Childhood Education, which is a foundation for a solid education system, continues to receive diminishing funds. The 2020 budget had only allocated K11.2 million compared to the K13.9 million received in 2019 showing a decline of 19%.

Among the teachers recruited, very few teachers have specific training towards children with disabilities. Even teachers for ordinary preschool children have been deployed in other classes rather than preschool.

In addition, most of the schools have no materials that can be used for early education in general and specifically for children with disabilities. This sad situation only leaves to show that most of the schools that have been newly established as providers of early childhood education, teachers

and administrators have not been prepared for the program. It is believed that if children with disabilities are given early education, they can develop cognitively, socially, and physically to the betterment of their wellbeing and society.

Although Zambia has made varied progress in terms of its education systems over the years, it faces several challenges. One indicator of this is that Zambia is ranked 13th out of 15 countries for literacy and numeracy by the Southern African Consortium for Measuring Education Quality. The Persons with Disabilities Act 2012 instructs full and equal human rights and freedoms to persons with disabilities covering education, health, information, and a range of other public services. However, there is a clear gap between the legislation and its implementation.

No inclusive education policy or statements that outline the need for inclusive education at any level exists in Zambia, with as few as 22% of children with disabilities in Early Childhood Education (ECE), 52% in primary, and as few as 12% completing secondary education; figures that are considerably lower than children without disabilities (Ndhlovu et al: 2016).

Government recently put in place guidelines for inclusive and special education training which are ineffective in the absence of a supportive policy and legal framework. The needs of children with disabilities are not properly considered in government plans, with national data and evidence desperately needed to inform and influence the government to address the ECE needs of children with disabilities in Zambia.

Despite strong evidence globally supporting the fundamental importance of ECE for all children to support their functional development and lay the foundations for learning, many children with disabilities are rejected from government ECE services or fail to benefit.

Recognising that education starts at pre-primary level, focusing on efforts to improve the accessibility and inclusiveness of ECE for children with disabilities can offer a real opportunity to give children the best start possible to progress through their educational journey.

Zambia Association of Parents of Children with Disabilities (ZAPCD), in partnership with Able Child Africa had developed an initiative to promote inclusive early childhood education (ECE) in Zambia for children with disabilities. The initiative conducted an assessment on the inclusiveness of early childhood education (ECE) in Zambia for children with disabilities. This was done in collaboration with Vitol Foundation.

The target of this assessment on the inclusiveness of early childhood education (ECE) in Zambia for children with disabilities is to contribute to improving coordination and targeted efforts on inclusion of children with disabilities through the national ECE strategy and design clearly and specific ECE disability targeted and mainstream interventions to address the disability specificities around education for children with disabilities.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

Zambia introduced its education policy document, Educating Our Future in 1996 and along with it the Inclusive Schooling strategy which aimed at benefiting among others, children with inclusive education needs. It is not, however, known to what extent these policy initiatives have impacted on the provision of appropriate and quality education to children with inclusive education needs. It is not also clear on whether the education provided to these learners of good quality in terms of teaching and learning.

It is against this background that Zambia Association of Parents of Children with Disabilities (ZAPCD), in partnership with Able Child Africa saw it imperative to conduct an assessment of the inclusiveness of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Zambia for children with disabilities in four provinces of Zambia.

## 1.3 Purpose and Scope of the Assessment

### 1.3.1 Objective

The assessment's main objective was to ascertain the inclusiveness of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Zambia for children with disabilities, formulate recommendations to the Government and other stakeholders on inclusive early childhood education and develop a comprehensive and tested Theory of Change to underpin ZAPCD's IECE Zambia programme.



### 1.3.2 Specific Objectives

To carry out qualitative data collection and analysis with regards to Inclusive Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Zambia for children with disabilities. Specifically, the purpose of this assessment was to:

1. To establish the general perception and understanding of inclusive early childhood education in Zambia
2. Assess the existing policies and frameworks on inclusive early childhood education in Zambia
3. Assess the extent to which early childhood education in Zambia is accessible and inclusive to children with disabilities.
4. Assess the challenges in implementing inclusive early childhood education in Zambia
5. Establish existing gaps in ECE provision for children with disabilities in Zambia.

## 1.4 Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

1. Why are children with disabilities not enrolling for ECDE?
2. How is the policy and legal environment supportive of ECE for CWDs?
3. What opportunities to learn are being provided by schools for children with disabilities?
4. What is the attitude of parents, communities and fellow learners towards the education of children with disabilities?
5. What are the environmental and institutional barriers that must be overcome to enable IECDE for children with disabilities?

## 1.5 Conceptual Framework

Success in education could be defined in a number of ways, but for practical purposes the degree of the child's participation in the processes of education was seen as a useful general indicator of success. In order to identify the critical factors that enhance success in education, it was necessary to establish the broad range of possible factors that might influence successful inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood education setups. One way of capturing this range was to consider the problem at several thematic areas of analysis such as the ones shown in Figure 1 below.

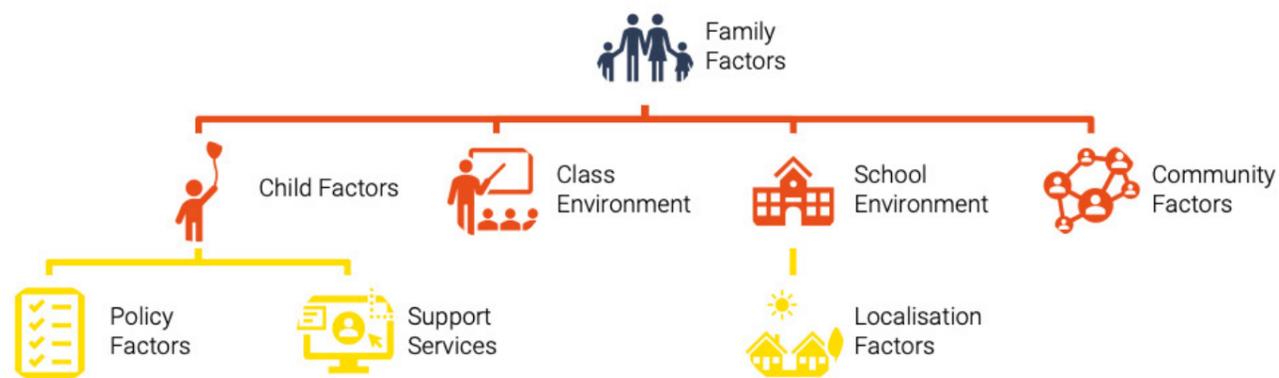
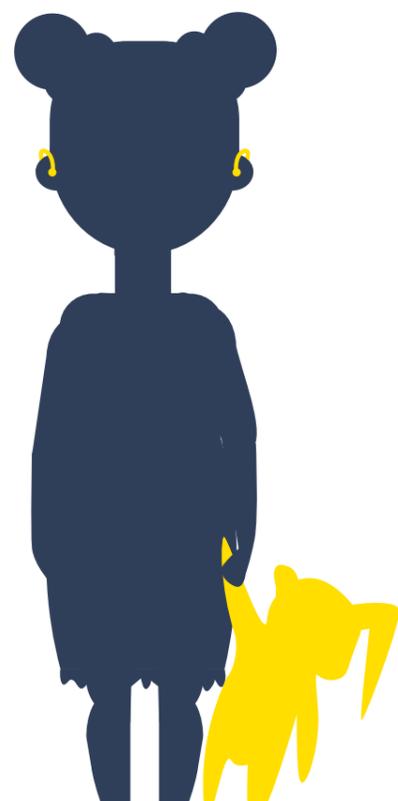


Figure 1: Possible factors that influence inclusion of children with disabilities - Source: ZOCS (2013)



### Child factors:

These included amount of vision, presence of additional disabilities, gender, personality, academic ability, attitudes towards education, etc.

### Community:

Attitudes towards disability from people in the community

### Class environment:

Under class environment, factors included; class size, attitude of the class teacher, training of teacher, teaching methods, access to resources, specialist equipment, and attitudes of other children.

### Locational factors:

Accessibility of school facilities.

### School environment:

Attitude of teaching staff, location of school, policies, culture, practices within the school as well as retention rates.

### Support Services:

Availability of child assessment facilities and expertise, braille books, assistive devices, and other learning materials.

### Family factors:

These included social/economic status of family, attitudes towards disability, proximity to school of family/home, and family awareness of educational possibilities.

### Policy factors:

These included national educational policies in relation to curriculum, legislation and practice with regard to inclusive education.



# Chapter Two

## 2.0 Literature Review

An estimated 93 million children worldwide live with disabilities. Like all children, children with disabilities have ambitions and have dreams for their futures. Like all children, they need quality education to develop their skills and realise their full potential (UNICEF; 2012).

Yet, children with disabilities are often overlooked in policymaking, limiting their access to education and their ability to participate in social, economic, and political life. Worldwide, these children are among the most likely to be out of school. They face persistent barriers to education stemming from discrimination, stigma, and the routine failure of decision makers to incorporate disability in school services.

In addition, Inclusive education has been advocated as the solution to inequities in schools (UNESCO, 1994). However, for young children in early childhood settings, inclusion is a fragmented and complex experience. It is important to note that these children need to be identified and brought on board. Further still, early childhood education inclusion for children with disabilities must be supported by an intention to provide quality education and educational opportunity for all.

It is also believed that through an inclusive education approach, it is possible to bring about changes to the school culture and to the education system so that the school can effectively welcome and educate any child. Inclusive education acknowledges that all children can learn, and that they learn at different rates. But unfortunately, children with disabilities are often excluded or overlooked in mainstream ECD programmes, therefore missing out on important opportunities to receive the specialist support and services they need to meet their rights and needs. Without the appropriate early interventions, support and protection, their impairment or disability could become more severe or complex, potentially leading to long-term consequences, increased poverty, and marginalisation (WHO, 2012).

Many international organisations have acknowledged ECEC's value and benefits, which are greatest for at-risk children. The UNCRC recognises that the youngest children are vested with the full range of human rights (UN, 1989). Article 28 of the UNCRC sets out the child's right to education on the basis of equal opportunity. It calls upon States Parties to make primary education compulsory and freely available to all. Although the UNCRC does not explicitly refer to ECEC, Article 6 states that children have a right to develop to 'the maximum extent possible' (UN, 1989).

In September 2005, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child issued a general comment on Implementing Child Rights in Early Childhood, which underlines the importance of early childhood

development (UN, 2006). It emphasises that the right to optimum development entails the right to education during early childhood with systematic and quality family involvement. It highlights the need for States Parties to develop a comprehensive framework for early childhood services which ensure the child's best interests. Access to services for all children – especially the most vulnerable – should be guaranteed. The Committee calls on States Parties to ensure that the services responsible for early childhood comply with quality standards and that staff members 'possess the appropriate psychosocial qualities' (UN, 2006).

The child's right to rest, leisure and play needs to be addressed within ECE. The document emphasises the importance of ECEC for children with disabilities as a means for early identification. The Committee states that young children with disabilities 'should never be institutionalised solely on the grounds of disability' and that 'it is a priority to ensure that they have equal opportunities to participate fully in education and community life' (UN, 2006). The Education for All (EFA) goals also stress the crucial role of early learning for all children. EFA is a global commitment, launched in 1990 by UNESCO, the UN Procurement Division, UNICEF, and the World Bank.

In 2000, 164 governments met in Dakar and identified six goals intended to meet the learning needs of all children and adults by 2015. The Dakar Framework for Action affirmed the importance of ECE by including it as the first of its six main goals: 'expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children' (UNESCO, 2000).

The Dakar Framework recommended that ECEC programmes 'should be comprehensive, focusing on all of the child's needs and encompassing health, nutrition and hygiene as well as cognitive and psycho-social development' (ibid., p. 15). ECEC should also contribute to identifying and enriching the care and education of children with disabilities.

The EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007 urges countries to develop national early childhood policies to promote young children's holistic development. The report underlines that governance is a key element of an ECEC policy. Policy decisions about governance have implications for the types and quality of children's experiences before they begin school (UNESCO, 2006b). Its importance was made clear in September 2010, when UNESCO held the first 'World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education' in Moscow (UNESCO, 2010).

The World Bank has also stressed the major role of early childhood development in its Education Strategy 2020. It sets the goal of achieving 'Learning for All' through the following three pillars: invest early, invest smartly, and invest for all (World Bank, 2011). The World Bank strategies on health, nutrition and social protection also involve early childhood development.

In 1996, the OECD developed an ECEC network. It aims to help countries develop effective and efficient education and learning policies during the early years of children's education. This network has released major publications in the field of ECEC, such as Starting Strong I, II, III and IV (OECD, 2001; 2006; 2012a; 2015a). These reports focus on analysing key components of successful ECEC policies and promote data collection in this field.

One of the eight key elements of successful ECEC policies, identified in the Starting Strong I report, is a 'universal approach to access, with particular attention to children in need of special support' (OECD, 2001, p. 126). The report highlights that a universal approach to ECEC access is more effective than targeting particular groups. However, children in need of special support



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The World Bank has also stressed the major role of early childhood development in its Education Strategy 2020. It sets the goal of achieving 'Learning for All' through the following three pillars: invest early, invest smartly, and invest for all (World Bank, 2011). The World Bank strategies on health, nutrition and social protection also involve early childhood development.

In 1996, the OECD developed an ECEC network. It aims to help countries develop effective and efficient education and learning policies during the early years of children's education. This network has released major publications in the field of ECEC, such as Starting Strong I, II, III and IV (OECD, 2001; 2006; 2012a; 2015a). These reports focus on analysing key components of successful ECEC policies and promote data collection in this field.

One of the eight key elements of successful ECEC policies, identified in the Starting Strong I report, is a 'universal approach to access, with particular attention to children in need of special support' (OECD, 2001, p. 126). The report highlights that a universal approach to ECEC access is more effective than targeting particular groups. However, children in need of special support require particular attention. Including children with SEN in ECEC appeared to be an important goal for all countries that participated in the review (OECD, 2001).

The Starting Strong II report (OECD, 2006) expresses the need for greater social inclusion in ECEC services. It highlights that: Access is often inappropriate for children with disabilities and/or additional learning needs, so much so that directors of centres may not allow them to enrol, or parents – seeing the difficulties involved for their children – simply desist (ibid., p. 82).

Therefore, there is a critical need to support ECEC for children with disabilities. Early childhood services are particularly important, as they can contribute to children's health and social and cognitive development. ECEC services make an important contribution for at-risk children and their families, as they allow for early screening and identification of disabilities (ibid., p. 97). UNESCO (2009a) states that the early childhood imperative for the rights of children with disabilities is clear. Early years experiences provide a special opportunity to foster developmental gains and implement intervention programmes that enable young children to fully develop their potential (UNICEF, 2013). Early identification of a child's disability helps to provide a diagnosis that allows parents, healthcare providers, teachers and others to better understand and plan for the child's needs (ibid.).

The World Report on Disability also highlights that early intervention can reduce the level of educational support children with disabilities may require throughout their schooling and ensure they reach their full potential (WHO and World Bank, 2011). Access to early childhood intervention, support and education is particularly significant for children with disabilities. This is because it can 'reduce disabling conditions and significantly increase capabilities of children with disabilities' (UNICEF, 2012b). According to UNESCO (2009a) early intervention is most effective when families are involved, as they gain relevant information about how to optimise their child's learning potential.

The government of Republic of Zambia has also recognised the important role of early childhood education in child development as reflected in the Seventh National Development Plan (2016-2021). The plan notes that at the Early Childhood Education (ECE) level, notable achievements were made with the shifting of the mandate of providing ECE from the Ministry of Local Government and Housing to the Ministry of Education.

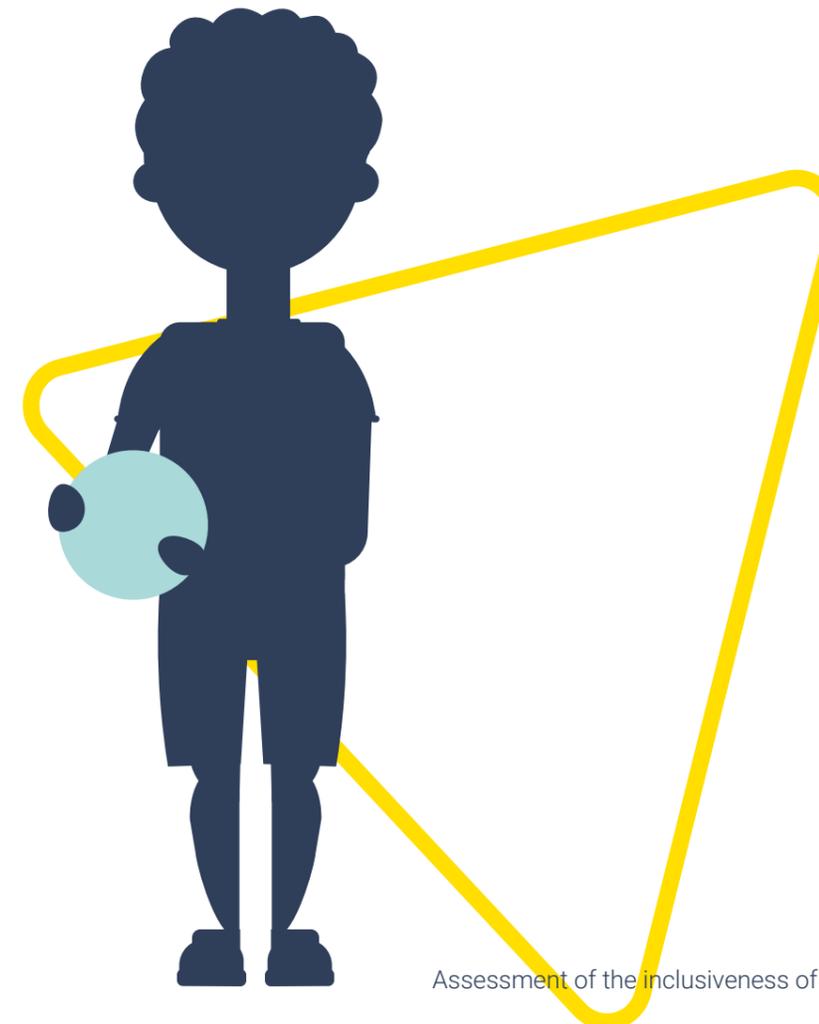
The proportion of learners with ECE experience starting school, rose from 20.3 percent in 2005 to 24.4 percent in 2015. However, much needed to be done to enhance access to ECE, to meet the target of 30 percent of new Grade 1 entrants with ECE experience. The government commits to programmes aimed at enhancing equitable access by all persons, including those with disabilities, to school places at all levels of education in the medium to long-term.

The policy on education – Educating Our Future of 1996 also brings out the importance of early childhood education in building early experiences in the child. In addition, the policy brings out the need for early childhood education in building up "cultural capital" and to compensate for disadvantages that may arise from disadvantaged homes where reading, writing, or other education-related materials are absent (Ministry of Education (MoE 1996).

The government aspires to increase access to early childhood education from the current 17 percent to 30 percent by the year 2015, as a result, Zambia has increased budgetary allocation to increase access to early childhood education. In the 2012/2013 financial year, for instance, government provided six-billion-kwacha (six million Kwacha rebased) equivalent of GBP 300, 000, to the establishment and provision of early childhood education.

In order to show further commitment to this cause, the government recruited one thousand and one hundred (1100) preschool teachers in October 2013 (Post newspaper, 15th October, 2013). Certain schools were chosen to provide early childhood education and newly recruited teachers were deployed.

With the creation of early childhood centres and deployment of early childhood teachers, it was hoped that many children would access early childhood education in public early childhood centres. However, this is not the case especially for children with disabilities as 133,000 were still out of school in 2013 (Ndhlovu et al: 2016). They are deprived the chance of being part of a group with their peers, to play and to learn together with them. Such a situation is worrisome because the benefits of having them educated are immense as highlighted above.



The topic of inclusive education or at times known as inclusive schooling has brought questions about whether schools are really inclusive to children with disabilities in Zambia. Inclusive education is being questioned because like it has been stated above; by 2013 Zambia had 133,000 children with disabilities out of school despite being of school age. The majority of these children were below the age of eight (ZOCS, 2013). This is the age group that needs early education.

The 2019/2020 Zambia Education Statistics bulletin does not have information on learners with disabilities in Early Childhood Education but provides information for primary and secondary school. At primary school Zambia has 54 600 male learners with disabilities and 51, 464, learners with disabilities giving us a total of 106, 064 learners with disabilities between Grade 1 -7. Zambia has 11, 017 boy with disabilities in secondary school and 10, 868 girls giving us a total 21, 885. The total number of learners in the entire school system is 127, 949. Compared with 2018 there was a drop in enrolment of 10, 553 children with disabilities. There was a 6.9 percent reduction.

One may ask, as to what inclusive schooling is all about. Globally, an inclusive school is a place where every pupil regardless of his or her disability belongs, is accepted, supports and is supported by his or her peers and other members of the school community in the course of having his or her educational needs met. In addition, all pupils are expected to be provided with appropriate educational opportunities and resources within the mainstream environment (Ainscow: 2003) and (Ndhlovu and Simui: 2009).

The concept of 'within the mainstream environment' used in the above description inclusive schooling has most times been misunderstood to the point of placing pupils in a class where they cannot benefit from the teaching. For example, placing a pupil with hearing impairment in a class where the teacher does not use sign language to communicate what he or she is teaching. Such a pupil may be at a loss or disadvantaged resulting in dropping out of school or performing poorly.

Inclusion emphasises on providing opportunities for equal participation of children with disabilities whenever possible into general education, but leaves open the possibility of personal choice and options for special assistance and facilities for those who need it (Ainscow, 2003). To the contrary, there are some pupils who have been 'dumped' in a hostile environment or classes in the name of receiving inclusive education.

The authors wonder why pupils who cannot benefit from teaching because the teacher or teachers do not have the skill to communicate to them either in sign language or braille are placed in such classes. Surely the Education policy and the Education Act in Zambia do not allow such placement to mean inclusive schooling. Instead, the Education policy document; Educating Our Future of 1996 states that;

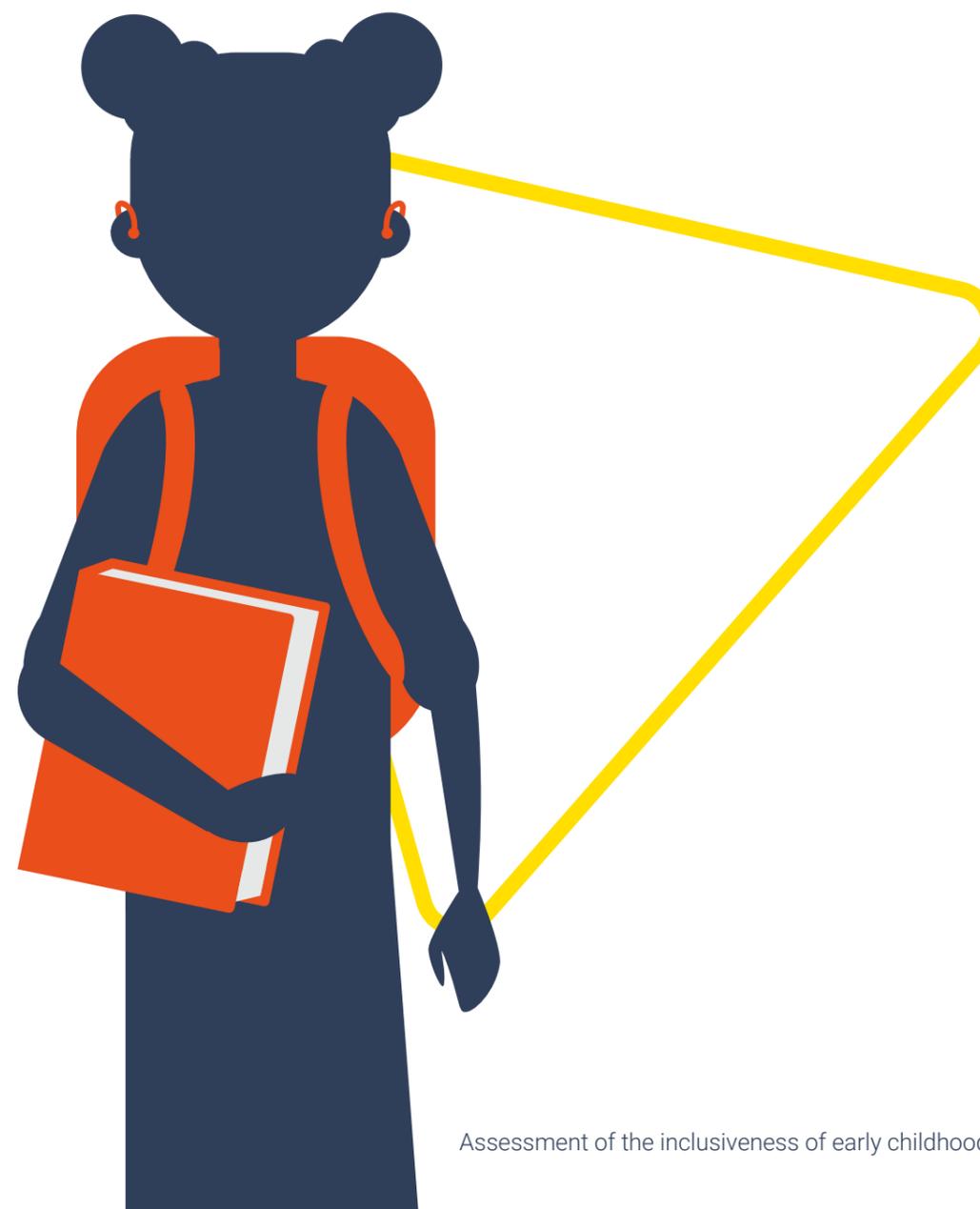
*"To the greatest extent possible, the Ministry will integrate pupils with special educational needs into mainstream institutions and will provide them with necessary facilities. However, where need is established, the Ministry will participate in the provision of new special schools for the severely impaired."*

(MoE, 1996:69)

Additionally, the Education Act of 2011 Section 129 on medium of instruction for hard of hearing learners states that "an educational institution shall use sign language as a medium of instruction to any learner who uses sign language as the learner's first language or who has special need for sign language."

Despite the few highlighted policies towards inclusive education in Zambia, the needs of children with disabilities are not properly considered in government plans therefore this study will aim at providing data and evidence desperately needed to inform and influence the government to address the ECE needs of children with disabilities in Zambia as well as deepen the understanding of ECE for children with disabilities in Zambia.

The study findings will also be used to build momentum with key change makers in order to maximise buy-in and pledges of commitment to realise improved inclusive ECE in Zambia. The study will also be used to identify existing resources, initiatives and will highlight the way forward on some ECE issues that will emerge.



# Chapter Three

## 3.0 Methodology

### 3.1 Research Approach

The assessment approach emphasised capturing first-hand knowledge of children with disabilities and their parents, in addition to identified key change-makers. This approach aimed to facilitate the objective gathering, organisation, and analysis of information and testimonies, unlock obstacles, encourage participation, and ensure that an inclusive research methodology was achieved.

The approach was based on fundamental principles of client ownership of project deliverables and the transparency of the assessment process. The approach was grounded in creating ownership, developing trust, ensuring transparency, building capacity and confidence, collecting as much information as possible, and supporting inclusivity.

### 3.2 Survey Design

In order to fulfil the aim of the study, the Consultants used the descriptive research design (UNICEF, 2006). The major purpose of descriptive research is describing the state of affairs as they exist. Kerlinger (1969) points out that the descriptive research is not only restricted to fact findings, but may often result in the formulation of important principles of knowledge and solutions to significant problems (Justin D. Congdon, n.d.).

A Qualitative method was proposed in this study in order to enhance research findings as it provided a good approach to understanding access to early inclusive childhood education in Zambia. The qualitative strand ensured the achievement of a holistic view of the early inclusive childhood education in Zambia by exploring feelings, experiences, and perceptions (Creswell & Cresswell, 2018).

### 3.3 Study Area

The assessment of the inclusiveness of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Zambia for children with disabilities was undertaken in 4 provinces of Zambia, which were Lusaka, Southern, Eastern and Western provinces. These sites were chosen to balance between rural and urban areas. Two districts in each of the four provinces were visited. The table below provides the names of districts that were targeted for the study.

SN	Province	Selected Districts
1	Lusaka	Lusaka Chongwe
2	Western	Mongu Kalabo
3	Southern	Choma Zimba
4	Eastern	Chipata Chadiza

Table 1: Participating Districts by Province

### 3.4 Study Population

The assessment targeted respondents in the following categories: government officials, teachers, community members, and children with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities and ZAPCD staff and Organisations for Persons with Disabilities representatives.

The assessment was gender-balanced and ensured the representation of views of women and girls on early inclusive childhood education in Zambia. The total sample population was 241 persons. This was a lower figure than what was projected in the proposal but much higher than the figure that was estimated in the TOR. This is due to the introduction of KIIs and broadening the FGDS to six per province with the community group which took up to ten respondents. Out of the total sample population the study captured 56 children with disabilities of which 21 were girls and the rest boys.

### 3.5 Sampling

Sampling is the process of selecting units (e.g., individuals, groups) from the survey population of interest to study these units in detail to draw conclusions about the larger population. This study utilised a multistage sampling approach. The final survey sample size was based on the population of government officials, teachers, community members, children with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities and Organisations for Persons with Disabilities representatives in each district, as well as input from the lead partner.



### 3.6 Sampling Distribution

Sampling is the process of selecting units (e.g., individuals, groups) from the survey population of interest to study these units in detail to draw conclusions about the larger population. This study utilised a multistage sampling approach. The final survey sample size was based

Total number of districts that are targeted for the study	<b>8</b>
Total number of key informant interviews	<b>13</b>
Total number of focus discussions	<b>24</b>
Total number of stakeholders meetings	<b>4</b>

Table 2: Sampling distribution and parameters

Total number of key informants (National, provincial and district special education standard officers, education sector OPD heads, head teachers, curriculum specialists, leaders of parents groups etc.)	<b>11</b>
Participants to Focus Group Discussions	<b>168</b>
Total number of stakeholders to attend meetings	<b>73</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>241</b>

Table 3: Total number of respondents

#### 3.6.1 Number of Key Informants Interviewed in Each District

A total of 13 key informant interviews were conducted across four provinces. The number of key informants that were interviewed was determined by the level at which information was collected such that Lusaka as the nation's capital provided more key informants. There were two KIIs in each of the other three provinces which targeted the provincial special education standard officers and district special education standard officers with a few selected interviews with OPDs.

All KIIs were purposely selected from government ministries, academia, civil society and Organisations for Persons with Disabilities representatives in the districts.

#### 3.6.2 Number of Focus Group Discussion Held in Each District

Focus group discussions formed an essential part of this assessment. A total number of 24 FGDs were conducted during the entire assessment. Group members of FGDs were randomly selected, taking into account the balancing of genders. Generally, the FGDs were gender-balanced and ensured representation of views of women and girls. An environment for free expression was created and ethical considerations emphasised.

SN	Province	Selected Districts	KIIs	FGDs
1	Lusaka	Lusaka	4	3
		Chongwe	1	3
2	Eastern	Chipata	1	3
		Chadiza	1	3
3	Western	Mongu	1	2
		Kalabo	1	3
4	Southern	Chomba	1	3
		Zimba	1	3
<b>Total:</b>			<b>11</b>	<b>24</b>

Table 4: Proportional Allocation of Key Informant Interview and FGDs per District

#### 3.6.3 Sampling for Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews

##### Key Informant Interviews

The assessment utilised key informant interviews to get more qualitative information on Inclusive Early Childhood Education (ECE) services in Zambia. A total of 11 interviews were conducted with 5 in Lusaka and two in each of the remaining provinces as described earlier.



## Focus Group Discussions

Participatory methods such as focus group discussions were used for the Inclusive Early Childhood Education assessment of children with disabilities. Each of the 8 selected districts had a determined number of focus groups purposively selected as follows:

Focus Group Member	Number
Children with disabilities	8
Community Leaders (OPDs and duty bearers)	8
Parents of Children with disabilities	8
<b>Total:</b>	<b>24</b>

## 3.7 Data Collection Methods and Analysis

The Inclusive Early Childhood Education assessment of children with disabilities used qualitative research method to collect reliable data from primary and secondary sources. Qualitative methods were employed to provide deep insight in relation to the study. Moreover, this method addressed gender issues, elderly and disability issues, and appropriate representation of women, children and people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

### 3.7.1 Primary Data

For the collection of primary data, the study used of interview guides and focus group discussion guides in order to explore and the deepen understanding of ECE for children with disabilities in Zambia. The interview guides were researcher-administered in order to increase responsiveness and provide explanations for some terms. Face-to-face interaction was also helpful as it captured verbal and non-verbal ques. Further, the ensured accurate screening as individuals were unable to provide false information during screening questions such as gender, and to some extent age.

The consultants working with the clients (ZAPCD and Able Child Africa) produced a consultation programme with tools containing key topics and methodologies for the two days consultative meetings in each province. These meetings were key to assessing the levels of awareness and understanding of ECE and inclusive education by stakeholders but also for consolidating the understanding of the common barriers and key advocacy issues to be pursued.

It was also a platform to triangulate the views and lessons from the national forum with DPOs which was held at the beginning of the assignment in Lusaka with the realities of actors on the ground. Information gathered in these platforms enriched the Theory of Change to underpin the ZAPCD national action.

Specifically, the study covered multiple aspects such as the views and experiences of multiple groups, understanding current gaps in IECE service provision for children with disabilities in Zambia and a deep understanding of ECE for children with disabilities in Zambia.

### Qualitative techniques used included:

- Provincial Consultation Meetings (PCMs)
- Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)
- Observational techniques (during KII interviews)
- Mobile phones to capture photos related to the assessment objectives.

### 3.7.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data collection was collected through a desk review of key international and national documents on Inclusive Early Childhood Education. The primary documents included Quality Inclusion of Young Children with Disabilities: Taking a Stance to Support Early Childhood Leaders, Early childhood education in Zambia: inclusion of children with disabilities, Early Childhood Development and Disability: A discussion paper, Educating Our Future of 1996, Sixth National Development Plan (2011-2015) and the 2012 Persons with Disabilities Act and guidelines for special and inclusive education in Zambia among others.

This review aimed to enlighten the researchers on the key IECE issues on children with disabilities, informed the study in terms of methodology (design of questions, data analysis), and framing of recommendations.

### 3.7.3 Child Participatory Data Collection Methods

Focus group discussions and interviews were also used to collect data from children. According to Davis, 2001; Doswell and Vandestienne, 1996; Hoppe et al., 1995; Hurley, 1998; Morgan et al., 2002; O'Dea, 2003; Vaughn et al., 1996 children are generally comfortable and familiar with the process of discussing matters in groups. Focus groups in schools are therefore a congruent and appropriate research approach to gauge children's views (Horowitz et al., 2003).

The main purpose of the focus groups will be to enable and allow children with disabilities to discuss and articulate 'in their own words' their perceptions, understandings and experiences in relation to play, exercise, sport and physical activity.

In planning the focus groups we will ensure that we use our experience in both research methods and in working with children and young people with disabilities to consider the effects of group dynamics, peer pressure, gender dynamics and development stages within the groups. Child-friendly information sheets and clear explanations of what we will need to talk with the children about will be developed.

The researchers will also incorporate activities into the groups that will provide both variety and interest for the children and to stimulate their thinking and discussion about the focus on physical

activity and its associated people, places and spaces. One particularly productive approach will be the 'show me'. Children will be asked to 'show me' physically and directly in relation to play, activity and places.

Another child participatory data collection method that was employed was mapping. To make the focus groups more interactive and interesting for the children and to allow them to express their own perceptions of play and activity spaces visually, they were invited to draw and discuss a map of the social and physical environments where they are most likely to participate in physical activity. Studies have shown that children as young as four years from various cultures have 'mapping abilities' including the perceptual and scale interpretation abilities to read and understand simple maps (Blades et al., 1998; Blaut et al., 2003). Such mapping exercises have proved valuable in other studies of children's perceptions of their environment (Morrow, 2001, 2003).

Mapping also encourages free responses and individual interpretations related to the focus group topics. Mapping enables children to portray graphically play, activity, places and spaces in their lives, to visually site themselves within their families and social environment and perhaps expand on their verbal accounts.

Children were also offered the opportunity to draw images or write slogans that they felt would encourage children's physical activity. At each focus group non-participating observers kept detailed contextual and observational notes which were subsequently transcribed, discussed, confirmed and distributed among the research team.

The theoretical basis for our decision to ask the children to draw maps of and photograph their environments is not that we believe that children were unable to articulate their experiences and thus capable only of visual expression. Backett-Milburn and McKie have critiqued as the 'quick fix' approach to researching children that limits their potential to 'draw and write' (Backett-Milburn and McKie, 1999). Rather, we believe that, if a respectful and sensitive inquiry approach is taken, children can and would describe and discuss their perceptions, experiences and understandings related to the central questions of physical activity, places and spaces in their lives.

### 3.8 Data Analysis and Coding

Information collected was analysed qualitatively. Qualitative data was systematically grouped into related themes, analysed and interpreted qualitatively, discerning emerging trends to inform actions and recommendations. Qualitative data was analysed and presented using qualitative techniques; respondents' stories, narratives, and viewpoints are analysed and presented verbatim and in boxes for outstanding narratives.

The initial coding phase was completed through the process of structural coding, in which the initial raw data (taken from brief notes collected by the researchers during the interview process) will be labelled. From the structural coding of the raw data themes emerging themes was developed.

Analysis involved coding and classifying data into different categories. This was aimed at making sense of the data collected and to highlight the important findings. Similar responses were grouped and given different codes under each theme that was identified. A system of

categorising the findings was developed. The table below shows the system that was used. As indicated, when a finding is reported as "most respondents" this means that 35 or more participants responded a certain way. When a finding is reported as "many households" this means that the number of households who reported a certain way was between 20 and 34 and so on and so forth.

A consensus in Focus Group Discussions was counted more than interviews with single respondent. Therefore, every instance of something established in a focus group discussion was counted three times.

Number of counts	Category
Above 35	Most
20-34	Many
10-19	Some
1-9	Few

### 3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns were at the forefront of the design and implementation of this assignment. Steps were taken to ensure this was prioritised throughout the process, including after the research had been completed.

#### 3.9.1 Informed Consent

Exceptional interest in safeguarding the integrity and dignity of the respondents was taken. Therefore, the respondents were debriefed on the purpose and intention of the study. The respondents had to consent in order for them to participate in the research. No respondent was forced into the study. Consent was provided for those who accepted participating in the study; they were also expected to sign the consent form.

#### 3.9.2 Confidentiality and Privacy

This included guarantees of anonymity of participants in the study to ensure confidentiality, the motivation of respondents to co-operate, arousal of respondents' interest with appealing opening remarks and questions. In all cases, the researchers ensured that the respondents (male, female, youth) fully understood their role in the study. The researchers explained the applicable methodologies for collecting the data and confidentiality to ease their concerns. The researchers also ensured that respondents knew that they could withdraw their consent at any point.

### 3.9.3 Limitations of the Study

This study primarily focused on capturing first-hand information and testimonials from respondents to inform the development of the IECE Zambia programme Theory of Change and recovery for more inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood education. The assessment had limited time and resources to undertake the study in all provinces in Zambia. In this sense, the report, to a degree, lacked full representation to sufficiently make suggestions of the significant IECE challenges faced by children with disabilities on the ground.

The COVID-19 restrictions presented unique challenges to the research team. It was also noted that this study was time-bound – the interpretation of the findings must therefore be mindful of this timeframe and the rapidly evolving situation of the pandemic and the national response.

### 3.10 Logistics and Support

The consultants relied on the coordinating team's support and expertise through the Zambia Association of Parents of Children with Disabilities (ZAPCD) and Able Child Africa. Specifically, the support included the following:

1. Logistical support by facilitating transportation means for going into the field
2. Ensuring the timely and adequate availability of the required stationery
3. Scheduling interviews and confirming availability of all the respondents
4. Procurement of personal protective equipment
5. Securing venues for consultative workshops
6. Transport and daily subsistence allowance for the two consultants to travel to all the provinces
7. Facilitate the availability of sign language interpreters where needed, and plan for other reasonable accommodation requirements



# Chapter Four

## 4.0 Presentation and Discussion Findings

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### 4.1 Introduction

This section presents the findings of the study. The findings are presented based on six broad themes. The first theme deals with general perception and understanding of inclusive early childhood education. In the second part, we present the activities that children enjoy most in school in Inclusive Early Childhood Education. Issues relating to community factors reflecting family involvement, community participation and awareness are dealt with in the third part.

The fourth part presents challenges in implementing inclusive early childhood education in Zambia. Section five presents the suggestions in addressing challenges in inclusive early childhood education in Zambia whereas section six deals with the existing policies and frameworks on inclusive early childhood education in Zambia.

In order to make the report easier to follow, the presentation and discussion of findings have been combined based on the main areas of focus as outlined above.

### 4.2 General Perception and Understanding of Inclusive Early Childhood Education

The study revealed that most respondents have an understanding of inclusive early childhood education. During focus group discussions respondents were asked to define inclusive education, it is important to note that most of them showed no problem in giving the definition. They referred Inclusive early childhood education to a process where all children between the ages of 1 to 7 for those without disabilities and up to 14 years for those with disabilities learning in the same classrooms or in the same schools. This observation shows that inclusive early learning gives real learning opportunities for groups who have traditionally been excluded who are mostly children with disabilities.

This also tells us that people have a positive perception and understanding of inclusive early childhood education because they know that inclusive early childhood education is the foundation for children's future development and that it provides a strong base for lifelong learning and learning abilities and social development. This was noticed during in-depth interviews with duty

bearers and Focus Group Discussions with community leaders and a number of youths and children with disabilities.

It was also observed that the respondents who expressed good perception and understanding of inclusive education had some basic training in inclusive education or special education either through college or workshops. Similarly a number of researchers have shown that not only teachers' skills and knowledge but also their positive feelings on inclusive education are important for teachers to be a successful inclusive education practitioner (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; de Boer, Jan Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011).

A literature review by de Boer et al. (2011) indicated that teachers' attitudes towards including pupils with disabilities in regular classes were depended on their training in inclusive education, their experience in teaching pupils with disabilities, and types of pupils' disabilities.

Meanwhile few of the respondents expressed ignorance about inclusive early childhood education; they said that it is not possible for a child with disability to learn in the same class with non-disabled children. This was common during focus group discussions with parents and community members. Below are some of the sentiments reportedly said by some Parents of children with disabilities:

**“Mwana olemala sangaphunzile pamodzi nabosalemala nikuononga che ndalama na ntawi”**

(It's not for a disabled child to be in the same class with non-disabled children, it's a waste of money and time)

**“Bolemala kulibe vamenebachitamo mu class so nikubasungache munyumba”**

(Disabled children do not benefit anything from school so it's better to just keep them home)

### 4.3 Activities that children enjoy most in Inclusive Early Childhood Education Classes

When children in inclusive early childhood education classes were asked about what they enjoy most in classes and school, many children reported playing with fellow learners and drawing. It was found that children as young as two that had disabilities specifically physical disabilities indicated that teachers guide them through important transitions of their lives as well as teachers help them to oversee their adjustments.

The study further found that “learning through play” as indicated by both disabled and non-disabled children provides them hands-on and interactive atmosphere which enables them to learn about themselves through playing with other children.

**“Timaphunzila che mushe nabonse mu class kuikako nauja wamene ayendela pa wheelchair timatandizana notandizana”**

(We interact very well in class with everyone including the one on the wheelchair)  
(A child without a disability in ECCE in Mongu)

Meanwhile some of the children indicated that they enjoy counting activities. From the discussions with children and observations it is evident that this activity enables children to count from memory long before they understand the quantity that each number represents. It was also evident that physically counting objects is an important step in teaching a child about numbers and helps children to understand that every object can only be counted once. When asked about what materials they use during this activity, they indicated using materials such as buttons, bottle tops, small sticks or whatever they may be playing with.

It is also important to note that the study also revealed that a few of children respondents indicated alphabet learning and singing as an activity that they enjoy most in school. They further indicated that this activity causes the body to feel good and makes them active all the time in classes as well as learn to concentrate on tasks.

From the observations it was evident that singing helps children to develop imagination and creativity. It was observed that alphabetic principle is critical in reading and understanding the meaning of text by children. Children indicated that this activity helps them to learn to use of the alphabetic principle fluently and automatically.

According to Sigita (2018) drawing is an especially important activity for preschool children who do not yet possess verbal skills to express their feelings. Children all around the world enjoy drawing. This is due to their inner creativity finding its way through visual cues as well as motor, cognitive, and emotional development. Drawing is an especially important activity for children who do not yet possess verbal skills to express their feelings. It is through drawing that they reveal both joyful and worrisome issues as valuable and important aspects of their lives. Adams, 1990; Ball & Blachman, 1991; Bond & Dykstra, 1967; Chall, 1967; Foulin, 2005; McBride-Chang, 1999; Muter, Hulme, Snowling, & Stevenson, 2004; Piasta, Petcher, & Justice, 2012 reported that early acquisition of alphabet knowledge is important. Knowledge of the alphabet at kindergarten entry is one of the two best predictors of reading and spelling acquisition, including comprehension

### 4.4 Community Participation and Awareness

Community participation is of critical nature for successful inclusion of learners with disabilities within the school system as well as the community structures. This is simply because children spend most of their time in the community than they do at school. Thus, successful integration of learners with disabilities can only be achieved when there is a strong home- school relationship as this would yield a wide range of commitments and benefits which might include among others; awareness and sensitisation and attitude change. This would in turn enhance integration of these learners into society.

The study aimed at establishing the level of community participation in inclusive early childhood education and the nature of participation. Particularly, we were interested in establishing the

attitude of the wider community towards children with disabilities. Community leaders, parents of children with disabilities, children and youths with disabilities as well as teachers and duty bearers were asked to rate the attitude of the community as to whether or not it is negative.

The study found that most respondents indicated that the attitude is generally positive while few respondents indicated a negative attitude. Respondents reported a few sentiments reportedly said by some community members towards children with disabilities in their communities:

**“Uyu sangapite kusukulu ali mpofu.Palibe chamene angaphunzire”**

(This one cannot go to school because he is blind. There is nothing he can do at school)

**“Sangapite kusukulu. Kulibe ma teacher ophunzitsa bana bamenesibaona”**

(This one cannot go to school because there are no teachers at this school who can teach blind people)

On community participation, the study revealed varied levels of community participation. Many respondents observed that community members were actively involved in the construction work and payment of the minimal fees required by school. They further said that schools were part of the community and that the government alone cannot manage to run all the schools. This was revealed during Focus Group Discussions that most of the developments in schools are being done with the help of the community although the turnout at times is not encouraging looking at the number of learners' schools has. Nearly all the parents and community leaders mentioned the use of community school meeting gatherings to educate parents on inclusive learning and also how parents can help to develop the schools where their children learn from.

School contributions and fundraising ventures are also agreed in these meetings. This finding is in line with Heneveld & Craig (1996) who recognised parents and the community support as one of the key factors in determining school effectiveness in Sub-Saharan Africa. Denny (2017) also reported that community participation remains an important element of well-being for people with learning disabilities and a key component of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

However, some respondents indicated very little participation from community members whilst few respondents indicated no participation from community members and this was due to lack of interest in education, community-school relations and low family income. In concurrence, Chevedza, Wadesango, and Kurebwa, effort to provide educational support resources for their children in the homes and school, thus, most parents have low morale and negative attitudes towards participation in providing education.

On the other hand, Capper (1993) cited in Howley and Maynard (2007) posit that communities in rural areas do not seem to value the education of their children. Capper further argued that most of the rural parents have lower levels of education than parents of children in urban schools, and they did not feel comfortable in being involved in school procedures and meeting with teachers. In agreement, Howley and Maynard (2007) argued that parents who themselves had not engaged

in education beyond primary education usually failed to perceive the value of education for their children and they had a resistant attitude towards participating in providing education.

## 4.5 Challenges in implementing Inclusive Early Childhood Education in Zambia

The study sought to establish challenges faced by ECE centres in the provision of inclusive education. Below are the participants' responses;

Most participants in the study which included the Education Standards Officers-Special Education (ESO-SP.ED), Specialised ECE teachers, teachers, community leaders, parents, OPD leaders and children with disabilities indicated the challenges face in inclusive ECE centres. The ESO-SP.ED who represented the Ministry of Education at the District and Provincial levels indicated challenges, among them being lack of qualified ECE teachers in special education, inaccessible ECE infrastructures, and inadequate transport for the ministry to monitor inclusive early childhood education centres and attitudinal barriers from teachers.

**“Parents may have the enthusiasm to take a child to school but the school authorities will not have a supportive attitude so the child is left on its own”**

(A parent with of a child with a disability)

This finding is in line with Angrist and Lavy (2001) who noted that lack of adequate and proper training received by teachers lead to a reduction in their pupils' test scores. Lack of proper special education training is reflected in the failure by teachers to handle both CSEN and the so-called “normal children” in the same classroom.

Education International (2010) further reported that low numbers of qualified teaching staff is a challenge in most developing countries and that it has negatively affected the provision of ECE. This challenge affects the performance of CSEN who needs special attention from their respective teachers.

A senior special education official at the Ministry of Education observed that the enrolment of children with disabilities in ECE is a challenge that starts with parents. When parents take their children to an ECE centre they do not want their child to be identified as having a disability hence the child is not recorded as such. When these public run ECE centres encounter difficulties the response by most parents is to transfer their children to private schools. The special education official observed:

**“The processes of identifying these learners are very poor in Zambia hence it is difficult to have proper assessment and allocation of children with disabilities to ECE centres that have facilities that are suited for their needs. There is a high dropout rate for children with disabilities with over 80, 000 children dropping out of the system annually The system has got better teachers for children with special needs at primary school level but not at ECE and at secondary level.”**

**“Lack of transport makes it difficult for us at the district to monitor the inclusive early childhood education centres regularly in the district. As you may be aware that Monitoring is very important as it enables the District office to evaluate teachers’ teaching and know where the centres need help. However, in this case, it difficult to embark on monitoring tours regularly due to inadequate transport”**

(ESO-SP.ED)

Throughout the study, the researchers observed that, despite efforts by Ministry of Education to introduce inclusive education in Zambia, infrastructure was not yet modified to accommodate children with disabilities. For example, there were no ramps, no rails along the corridors and no acoustic materials in most schools that were visited during the study. Doors in most school buildings did not allow wheel chairs to pass.

This situation made the learning environment somewhat hostile to pupils with disabilities. Reno (2017) reveals that in the city of Padang, Indonesia, the maintenance of inclusive education is carried out in a balanced manner according to the environment and resources it has. In this case, the people of Padang city really maintain the state of the facilities and infrastructure for inclusive education to maintain the quality of education in these schools. Reni and Vitri (2016: 41) stated that the facilities and infrastructure for inclusive education, both software and hardware, are quite important to optimise teaching and learning activities and are a means of supporting the mobilisation of children with disabilities in these schools.

The maximum possible educational facilities and infrastructures must be provided when referring from this perspective so that learning activities of children with disabilities can be carried out properly. The availability of educational facilities and infrastructure for children with disabilities is sometimes hampered by costs, and the inability of educators to prepare for the needs of students with disabilities, this is expressed (Winda 2012: 195). This research was conducted to measure the availability of facilities and infrastructure in inclusive schools to support learning activities for children in these schools.

Meanwhile many of the respondents indicated lack of adequate and appropriate teaching and learning materials, over enrolments in ECE centres, attitudes of parents and ordinary pupils in ECE centres. This was mostly echoed by duty bearers and parents, they indicated that lack of or inadequate teaching and learning resources in schools contributed to hindering schools from practicing effective inclusive education. Similarly, Mandyata (2002), found out that, inadequate provision of specialised training and resources to equip teachers in handling children with special educational needs in ordinary classes contributed to many pupils dropping out of school. On over enrolment, participants indicated that some classes were large and overcrowded due to over enrolment making it un-conducive for children with disabilities. Such overcrowding of classes is what Mandyata (2002) also reported to have caused some teachers in Kasama to refuse accepting children with special educational needs in their classes. It is hoped that if class sizes were minimal to acceptable standards, teachers would accept children with special educational needs in their classes.

Some respondents attributed low enrolments of children with disabilities in ECE centres to long distances to schools, inadequate funding and lack of commitment towards inclusive education. They indicated that schools are not centrally located for easy access but most of them are 10Km away from where they stay so this acts as a barrier for many children with disabilities. This was

common among youths with disabilities, parents and teachers. Respondents who were mainly OPD leaders and parents of children with disabilities indicated the following; the only way to shorten the distance to schools is by providing assistive devices, bicycles, guides and other mobility support.

**“I used to walk on foot to and from school which is 8km from where I stay on a daily basis with my child on the back but I gave up and my child is just home now because I could not continue walking almost 20 Km every day with him on my back”**

(A parent of a child with a disability)

Such findings were also reported by Moberg and Kasonde-Ng’andu (2001). They reported that 40% of school children with disabilities in Western and North Western provinces of Zambia dropped out of school system because they could not afford transport to school, food or uniforms. Those in rural schools had to walk an average of 11 kilometres to school. The situation became almost impossible for children on wheel chairs or crutches.

On inadequate funding and lack of commitment towards inclusive education they indicated the issue of inadequate funding to schools to a great extent hinders implementation of inclusive education in Zambia. One ECE teacher said that:

**“Unsuitable infrastructure, inadequate learning resources, inadequate trained teachers in special education are all be attributed to inadequate funding by the government”.**

Similarly, Kelly (1991) reported that the amount of money spent on education had been declining substantially in real terms to the point that education could account about 2.5% of the Gross Product (GDP) compared to 5 to 6% in the mid 1980s. UNESCO (1994) suggested that government should increase resources such as funding, teaching and learning materials in the mainstream when learners with special educational needs are included. A specialist at Ministry of Education said:

**“There were very few teachers trained and even those trained in university do not go out to teach. Those are the issues that have brought problems. Teachers are frustrated and running away from teaching these learners. The motivation for such teachers is very low unlike in the past when teachers had 30% special education allowance. ZAMISE has a big challenge with higher percentage of non-specialised lecturers. It has become diluted.”**

In addition, Ministry of Education (2006) states that non-governmental organisations and the community should also supplement the efforts of the government in supporting the implementation of inclusive schooling programme. Such support would minimise the problem of inadequate funding by government to schools. In turn more children with disabilities may access education.

On the issue of lack of commitment towards inclusive schooling, parents, community members and leaders as well as OPD leaders reported that it was not the disability of children that were hindrances to inclusive education but social factors such as lack of commitment by some school managers, ordinary teachers and to some extent the government due to a number of schools in all the districts that were visited had a lot of barriers to inclusive education. To them it is the schools and governments responsibility to ensure that schools are conducive and have materials. Similar findings were reported in 2001 by Moberg and Kasonde-Ng'andu (2001).

Reasons for lack of commitment included lack of laws and policies to give direction to all educationists in the education system to promote inclusive schooling. Bunch (1997) suggested that the key areas for policy and action for implementing inclusive education were in-service teacher development, student assessment and placement, parental collaboration, and involvement of the larger community.

These four areas were seen as central indicators in the successful implementation of inclusive schooling programme. There was need therefore, for an inclusive policy so that educationists were guided in regard to issues of inclusive schooling in Zambia.

Meanwhile few respondents indicated cultural, economic and communication barriers. They reported that teachers did not have skills to communicate with pupils with disabilities especially in sign language and braille. These findings were consistent with those of Kalabula (1991) who reported that, implementation of inclusive education in Zambian schools had faced many challenges such as lack of teachers with the skills in sign language.

On cultural barriers, the study revealed that certain beliefs about disability that people hold have resulted in stigma for example in most communities there is a belief that families that have persons with disabilities are cursed and usually such families community members avoid to associate themselves with. They further said that for persons with disabilities and their families, this form of stigma often results in a lowering of status within the community.

One parent told us that locals believe in the myth that if a pregnant woman sees a child with albinism, she will also give birth to a child with the same condition. This therefore reflects that the myths concerning disability are as much a reality today as they were in the past.

**“My neighbour cannot allow his kids to play with my kids because of the disabilities because he thinks my child’s condition is contagious”**

(A parent of a child with cerebral palsy).

This finding is in agreement with Baruchin (2011) who noted that Stigma in turn can lead to discrimination against a person with a disability, a family member, or someone associated with a person with a disability. As a result of stigma and discrimination, persons with disabilities may face exclusion and dehumanising treatment in all areas of their lives - including work-places, health-care services and educational institutions.

**“It is not easy for a CWD to go for early learning. One neighbour with a child took a child to Limulunga and the teachers refused to admit her insisting she must go to a special school. After they were talked to they allowed the girl to attend class and she is trained to use her feet to write. For parents who are weak the child can never go to school.”**

(A parent of a child with a disability disclosed)

At the individual level, stigma and discrimination against persons with disabilities can also result in internalised oppression and feelings of shame. When confronting stigma on a regular basis, persons with disabilities may face great challenges in overcoming the negative views of their community or societies to achieve self-acceptance and a sense of pride in their lives. In this way, when stigma is internalised by persons with disabilities, it creates yet another barrier that must be overcome.

Negative perceptions in society can also create feelings of shame among families who may hide their child with a disability from public view (Baruchin; 2011). For example, surveys conducted in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Senegal, Uganda and Zambia disclosed that 38% of respondent caregivers of children with disabilities reported hiding them away, or forbidding them to take part in social activities owing to stigma or in order to protect them from perceptions and stigmas.

In some instances, as a result of misguided beliefs children with disabilities are not permitted to attend school. For example, fear and ignorance about the causes of epilepsy can result in exclusion from school for children with seizure disorders. Advocates in Gabon report that persons who are deaf are considered incapable of pursuing an education. Children whose parents have disabilities may also experience stigma on this basis (Serge; 2013).

They also said that economic factors such as poverty and unemployment contribute greatly to exclusion of children with disabilities from accessing education. Most parents of children with disabilities were unemployed and poor. This echoed by parents, community members and leaders as well as teachers and OPD leaders.

Similarly, Kelly (1991) reported that children with disabilities especially girls were victims of poverty. Their parents in most cases were poor and had to struggle to feed and clothe them. Paying school fees was a luxury for such parents. As a measure to economic barriers, especially the issue of school fees, the Government of the Republic of Zambia abolished payment of school fees from grades 1 to 7.

MOE (1996) stated that government would disperse all direct educational costs for children with special educational needs and would provide bursaries for such individuals at all levels of education. Sensitisation campaign is therefore, required to parents, children and teachers for them to know that basic education especially grades 1-12 will be free in Zambia beginning next year. There is also need to empower parents of children with disabilities so that they could meet the educational needs of their children. Non Governmental Organisations could also supplement government efforts by providing bursaries to vulnerable children and those with disabilities.

## Barriers for Girls with Disabilities

Participants in this study were also asked on the barriers to education for young girls with disabilities, almost all the participants indicated sexual harassments and parents preference of boys with disabilities over girls. They indicated young girls with disabilities are more vulnerable vices such as defilement and sexual harassment because they cannot support themselves during tough times nor notice red flags of unhealthy relationships or protect themselves once they are attacked by unknown people. They also talked about parents preferences of which child to take to school.

The study revealed that such decisions always favour a boy child because parents believe boys are more superior to girls. These cultural barriers cut across countries, cultures and levels of development: From Kenya: "The African society places more value on boys than girls. So when resources are scarce, boys are given a priority. A disabled boy will be sent to school at the advantage of the girl" (Naomy Ruth Esiaba, development consultant and activist, personal communications, 4/11/03 and 4/17/03). There are similar examples from Ghana (Nyarko, 2003) and Tanzania (Macha, 2002). The need for sensitisation to parents who often prefer to educate the boy child over the girl was emphasised by almost all the respondents.

## 4.6 Measures in addressing challenges in inclusive early childhood education in Zambia

With regard to the measures that need to be put in place to overcome challenges faced by inclusive ECE centres, the participants indicated the following;

Most respondents indicated increasing funding towards inclusive education in Zambia, empowering parents of children with disabilities and training more teachers in inclusive education. They said that inadequate funding affects a lot of things in the implementation of inclusive education in Zambia such as school monitoring visits, schools cannot acquire enough furniture, teaching and learning materials nor make school facilities accessible by making modifications to the structures. However, this finding is in line with the observation made by Kilbride & Kilbride (1990) who observed that financial constraints can lead to ineffective implementation of ECE.

He further noted that to run these early education centres adequate funds are needed to procure items needed and to maintain the environment safe for the young children. In addition, Alabi & Lijaiya (2014) also noted that in ECE, adequate funding needs to be provided for the provision of many resources and activities which include stimulating materials for teaching and learning, training and re-training of ECE teachers, sensitisation of programs through regular workshops, monitoring, feeding, immunisation, supervision and inspection among others. This indicates that the importance of funding to successful implementation of ECE cannot be overemphasised.

Kalabula (2007) also noted that while the provision of education for CSEN was an integral part of the governments overall programs of extending education for all, this type of education has been starved of funds. Inadequate public funding is responsible for the much of the Ministry of Education's inability to meet fundamental mandates and obligations to provide the necessary facilities and ensure universal availability of quality of education for all learners.

Ndhlovu (2008) also confirms that inadequate funding to schools was to a greater extent a hindrance to special education and provision of quality education. Throughout the entire review it was observed that this situation of inadequate funding makes the administration of inclusive ECE in general difficult. A lot and assorted equipment is needed to run inclusive ECE centres so that all the learners are not deprived of their right to education. Therefore, this would deprive learners especially CSEN of their educational rights to accessing long-life skills imbedded in inclusive ECE centres.

On empowering parents of children with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, teachers, community and OPD leaders indicated that parents of children with disabilities need to be empowered so that in turn they can support their children with disabilities. The concept of empowering parents was consistent with what Savolainen reported in 2000 in Philippines.

Savolainen et al (2000) reported that equipped with the needed skills parents were successful to some extent in raising public awareness and support to educate their children. The Philippines government was also lobbied and made modest contributions to support inclusive education in five piloted projects. It is necessary therefore, to consider empowering parents and their children with disabilities so that they can be able to meet costs demanded by schools.

They further emphasised on training more teachers in inclusive education. This emphasis was echoed in almost all the districts that were visited. They believe having teachers with the right qualifications and training would improve children with disabilities participation in schools as well as their academic performance and that having trained teachers would help improve inclusion practices.

Similarly Tanya and Amerena (2006) reported that teachers are arguably the most valuable human resource available to promote inclusive practices. If they do not have the right training in inclusive education, they can become a major barrier to progress. Aldzi (2006) also observed that teachers were a critical factor in ensuring learning and it is important to have qualified and well trained teacher in the early years of school. The study findings revealed that most of the teachers lacked special education knowledge because they were not trained in it as a full course in their respective teacher training colleges hence the poor management.

Katwishi (1995) further points out that there is no single discipline that provides complete training for staff to undertake early intervention programmes for CSEN. This means that most trained teachers lack the knowledge of handling CSEN. To help resolve this problem, all teacher training colleges should train would be teachers in special education and this should be a detailed or full course to enable all teachers to handle CSEN with less difficulties.

Meanwhile some respondents indicated sensitisation activities to be the only solution to addressing challenges faced in implementing inclusive education in Zambia. They said government, parent support groups, teachers, the media, community and OPD leaders should all be involved in sensitising people on the rights of children with disabilities and importance of inclusive education. One community leader indicated the following;

**“There is need to address stigmatisation through sensitisation. Stigmatisation is common and comes about in school system where fellow learners laugh at the child even making fun of the body parts. Sensitisation must start from school head teachers to the teachers then learners. Inclusive Education is fine it just needs to be supported through sensitisation and awareness and creating an enabling environment. CWDs are very sensitive and need a lot of support. The deaf children when people laugh think they are laughing at them”.**

Respondents showed a strong belief that this action would help address issues of negative attitudes and cultural beliefs that people have towards disabilities. Eleni (2015) mirrored this finding and reported that in order to address the attitudinal barrier children with disabilities face, developing country partners need to develop communication strategies focusing on awareness raising and sensitisation of parents, education stakeholders and communities, of the value of educating children with disabilities.

Few respondents indicated having adequate teaching and learning resources and parent and community involvement in the education of children with disabilities by developing a partnership with the school and share relevant information about children with disabilities education and development. They also indicated that they can contribute positively in addressing certain challenges such as helping in making different teaching and learning aids for children in early learning centres as well as help in constructing schools, identifying children with disabilities in communities and providing assistive devices to children with disabilities and campaigning for inclusion of children with disabilities in communities.

Studies by Ndhlovu, (2004), Tanya and Amerena (2006), and UNESCO, (2009) found that countries which have made the most progress towards inclusion in education are those countries with strong parents' and community organisations which have campaigned for their children to be included. In addition, UNESCO (2009) found that it was most effective when families were closely involved in the assessment process, enabling them to seek appropriate diagnostic and therapeutic services to support their child's well-being and development.

The following were noted to be measures that ECE teachers have put in place to overcome challenges they are facing in inclusive ECE. The teachers are using local materials to make teaching and learning aids. Teacher group meetings are also utilised to make different teaching and learning aids and also to share on teaching demonstrations. It is in these meetings where teachers share their challenges and successes. Teachers also revealed that they do attend workshops in inclusive education and it's there where they gain a lot of knowledge on inclusive education. One teacher said the following on the continuous professional development (CPDs) held in their school;

**“The CPD's are helping us a lot in terms of sharing the challenges and successes we face in our various classroom especially on inclusive education”**

The above finding is consistent with that of MoGE, (2016) which states that all educational institutions offering special education shall be mandated to conduct CPD on SEN for administrators, academic as well as auxiliary staff. These are the times in schools where teachers should learn from one another in terms of successes and challenges. Such meetings build the

teachers in different ways and help them to solve the challenges they face in their different classrooms. For example, a demonstration lesson on inclusive education would help teachers lacking such knowledge to handle CSEN in their classrooms. MoGE, (2016) further states that in inclusive institution, there should be a Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) who shall coordinate SEN activities in the institutions. Additionally, one male teacher in Zambia said the following;

**“Children in ECE classes usually depend on play but most schools do not have learning materials and usually depend on local materials although most of the times they are difficult to make and find”**

Klaus (2003) also documented that producing teaching and learning locally can help in the addressing of the shortage of teaching and learning materials. This is in line with what all teacher training colleges encourage their student teachers by being innovative and resourceful when they go in the field to teach.

Another interventional measure that was echoed by a few respondents was the issue of long distances to school. They indicated providing free transport to schools for children with disabilities. They said that since most families with persons with disabilities are poor there is need for government to come to their aid in ensuring that children's transport for those that are in distant schools are provided with free transport to and from schools.

They indicated that this action would reduce cases of children with disabilities quitting schools and missing classes due to distance. It was evident throughout the study that for students living in rural areas, the long distance to educational establishments presents an additional barrier. In fact, rural Zambia faces the most obstacles in keeping children in school because there are few schools, often far from students' homes. Most rural Zambians cannot afford the costs of transportation to schools because rural areas face a higher rate of poverty. Therefore, the suggestions that we got from respondents of government providing free transport for children with disabilities would greatly help.

**“Due to long distances to schools and since we cannot afford transport costs if it's for girls it's better to just marry them off to ease the economic burden on the family”**

(A parent of a child without a disability)

According to Ezra (2016) in one of the studies in Rwanda, school buses provide some relief for children as they tend to manage time better and provide a more relaxed way to travel to school. Although in Africa school buses have not been fully adopted as is the case in developed countries, the trend should be encouraged. This is because the time it takes for a child using a bus to get to school is shorter, and the experience is not as stressful as that of a child who must walk to school.

The study further revealed that the quality and distance to school will always matter to serious parents because it determines the child's performance. Research studies by the United Nations

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) show that long distances from school contribute to poor school attendance.

## 4.7 Policy and Frameworks on Inclusive Education

Almost all the respondents in the study indicated need for a legal framework and policy on inclusive schooling in Zambia. The lack of a legal framework on inclusive education had also been identified as a gap to inclusive education in Zambia by Moberg and Kasonde- Ng'andu. For instance, Kasonde-Ng'andu (2001) sighted lack of laws and policies to give direction to all educationists in the education system in relation to inclusive education.

The study also found that the policy that government still uses is the policy on education – Educating Our Future of 1996 that also brings out the importance of early childhood education in building early experiences in the child.

The following observations were made throughout the review by the researchers, it is clear that national policy aspires to have children with disabilities in the mainstream, but there seems to be no clear implementation framework of how this aspiration would be achieved at the school level. The lack of a well-coordinated implementation framework casts a lot of challenges in the effective implementation of inclusive education for children with disabilities whose learning modalities substantially differ from the other children in an inclusive class.

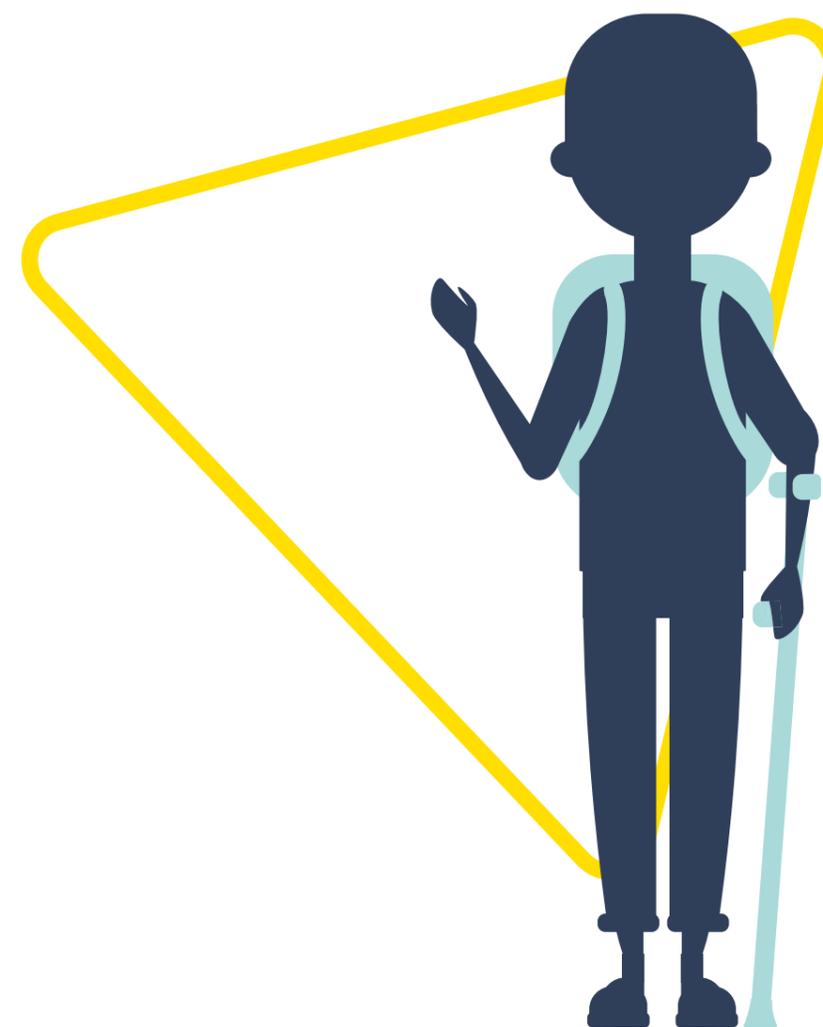
According to ZOCS (2013) the Ministry of Education with the help of other stakeholders should, therefore, ensure that there is a harmonisation of the special education policy with a well-defined implementation roadmap. In the absence of a well-coordinated policy implementation framework, the principles and tenets of inclusive education would merely be rhetoric.

Respondents further observed that while the policy is important in bringing the children with and without disabilities together, the schools are facing a lot of challenges in effectively implementing the programme, they also stressed on need to establish a directorate specifically for inclusive at the Ministry of Education headquarters as this would help push for progressive policies and improve funding towards inclusive education.

Duty bearers and the teachers who participated in this study echoed the views of the community leaders and parents that most schools are facing a myriad of challenges to support successful implementation of inclusion. Kasonde-Ngandu and Moberg (2001) further observed that there is need for workable policies on inclusive education for inclusive education to be successful. The social inclusion theoretical model states that effective inclusion is fostered or hampered by the presence or absence of structures. The structures can be in form of policies or legal framework. According to this model, inclusion in social activities of the disadvantaged group such as people with disabilities can best be promoted by the presence of good social policies and legislative frameworks (de Haan, 1998).

When applied to the inclusion and participation of children with disabilities in the mainstream school system, there is need to have in place legal and policy frameworks focusing on the promotion of such programmes.

One observation that researchers made was that Zambia does not have a policy specifically designed to foster the inclusion of children with disabilities in the regular school system. The lack of such policies has also resulted in difficulties in integrating children with disabilities in the mainstream society. This is because schools play an important role in integrating people in the mainstream society. However, Zambia is also making efforts by training and recruiting more teachers and officials to spearhead the inclusion of children with disabilities in ordinary schools. There are efforts to overcome the many challenges that children with disabilities face. Various measures have been put in place- measures such as the Community Based Rehabilitation Programme (CBR). It is hoped that this will foster the inclusion of people with disabilities in social activities, there is also a need to ensure that people with disabilities are integrated into the mainstream school system and have access to facilities regardless of their abilities. There is therefore a need to have collective social values that will enhance societal relations.



# Chapter Five

## 5.0 Conclusion and recommendations

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### 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the findings of the study. This chapter summarises the research findings. At this point, it must be confirmed that this study endeavoured to assess the inclusiveness of early childhood education in Zambia for children with disabilities in 4 provinces of Zambia. Furthermore, in this chapter, the conclusion is drawn on the basis of the findings of the study and thereafter recommendations are made. **Finally, the chapter ends by suggesting areas for further research based on the findings of the study.**

### 5.2 Conclusion

This study has determined that in practice all public supported ECE centres do not have a supportive environment for inclusive education; this does not help considering the already high negative attitudes by parents towards inclusive early childhood education.

The major barriers identified are inadequate funding to schools, long distance to schools, infrastructure not being user friendly, inadequate appropriate teaching and learning materials and most teachers having no skills to communicate with pupils with disabilities especially in sign language and commencement of braille instructions were challenges faced by children with disabilities in inclusive early childhood education centres in the process of accessing education as indicated by respondents.

Looking at the data collected and the observation done in the selected study areas, children with disabilities are being accepted in the centres and accorded the chance to learn together with children with non-disabled children but due to the highlighted challenges it was observed that few children with disabilities are being enrolled in schools therefore a lot needs to be done to improve the situation. A multi-disciplinary approach need to be undertaken and it has to start policy makers who need to show the political will of supporting inclusive education in Zambia.

ECE is a right to all children regardless of their social- economic status, hence the policy of inclusion. This points to the fact that inclusion is based on the principle that all children and young people, despite different cultural, social and learning background, should have equivalent learning opportunities in all kinds of learning institutions (UNESCO, 2008).

## 5.3 Recommendations

1. There is need for the government through the Ministry of Education to increase budgetary allocations towards inclusive ECE. A dedicated budget line must be introduced in the overall ministry budget to inclusive education as consistently recommended by reports from Joint Annual Reviews undertaken in partnership with cooperating partners. The standard guidelines of 1 to 5 should be applied in the release of school grants, this entails that schools that cater for learners with disabilities must receive a grant that is five time higher than a regular school.
2. The government through the Ministry of General Education should construct appropriate, accessible, and user-friendly infrastructure to cater for all children in ECE centres. Modifications can be made to existing physical facilities to make sure they are barrier-free therefore easily accessible to all learners.
3. There is need to build capacity for child assessment closer to families so that children can be identified early enough and placed in ECE centres with appropriate facilities. This requires a multi-disciplinary approach and the skills sets required are often not available at district levels, most parents have had to travel to Lusaka.
4. There is need for robust public education programme on inclusive education and its benefits targeted at the community, parents, education policy makers, education providers and the media.
5. Inclusive ECE class- sizes and child- teacher ratios should be considered when enrolling children for quality education provision to all learners.
6. There is need to establish strong collaboration between the school, communities and parents. This will facilitate attitude change towards implementation of inclusive education.
7. There is need to establish a directorate specifically for Inclusive education at the Ministry of Education headquarters. Whilst it is commendable that a directorate for ECE exists a directorate for Inclusive Education is needed
8. All teacher training colleges and universities should include sign language and braille in their curriculum so that the graduates are empowered with skills to communicate with pupils with hearing and visual impairments.

**9.** There is need to create a mechanism for parent support structures that will facilitate the involvement of parents in providing support to the learning of their children with disabilities in ECE centres.

**10.** The local schools must be supported to establish school inclusion committees that will have representation of various interest groups around the school and its community where practical ideas for inclusion will be mooted and implemented with an addition function to undertake monitoring.

**11.** A recruitment drive for ECE teachers must be accelerated with teachers with special education or inclusive education training receiving preferential consideration.

**12.** An initiative to pilot inclusive ECE can explore the possibility of addressing mobility challenges by means of supporting the construction of boarding spaces including for care givers.

**13.** The parents of children with disabilities need linkages to livelihood support initiatives to enable them raise money to meet the disability specific needs of their children.

**14.** There is need for enhanced advocacy for the inclusion of homes of children with disabilities on robust social protection programmes including COVID-19 social cash transfers.



# Annexes

## Annex 1:

### 3.11 Stakeholder Matrix

SN	Stakeholder	Role or relevance in project
1	The Minister of Education	The principle target for policy advocacy.
2	The Minister of MCDSS	The principle target for social inclusion and policy
3	Ministry of Health	Facilitate assessment of children with disabilities Community health committees and volunteers
4	The Permanent Secretary	The PS is responsible for implementation of policy
5	The Provincial Education Officers PEO PESO Senior Education Standards Officers – Special Senior Education Officer-Guidance and counselling	Provide information on the status of IECE in the province. Recruitment of teachers Monitoring of quality of learning Provide number of special schools in their districts Supervise the standard officers Provision of research services Provision of guidance
6	The District Education Board Secretaries (DEBS) DESO ESO – Special District Guidance Coordinator	Provide information on the status of IECE in the district Recruitment of teachers Monitoring of quality of learning Provide number of special schools in their districts Supervise the standard officers Provision of research services Provision of guidance

SN	Stakeholder	Role or relevance in project
7	Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities (ZAPD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Registration of children with disabilities</li> <li>Support identification of children</li> <li>Coordination of stakeholders around the action including DPOs</li> <li>Register OPDs</li> <li>Support in access to assistive devices</li> <li>DMIS for disaggregated data</li> <li>Provide a mechanism for rehabilitation and habitation</li> <li>Awareness and education on rights of children with disabilities</li> <li>Training of stakeholders in disability inclusion</li> <li>Coordination and monitoring of other govt depts</li> </ul>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS)</li> <li>Directorate of child development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social protection programme implementation</li> <li>Provision of community engagement structures e.g CWACs</li> <li>Provision of assistive devices</li> <li>Provide disability policy and implementation framework</li> <li>Functional literacy support</li> </ul>
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disability Service Organisations (DSOs)</li> <li>Such as World Vision, UTHONGATHI, Kocebuka Community Foundation, Nakube Foundation</li> <li>Eastern tilimbe club of the blind</li> <li>Eastern Albinism Association</li> <li>Gondar Chikondi Club</li> <li>Lutembwe Tikondane Club</li> <li>Eastern Association for the deaf</li> <li>Mpezeni Park Chiyamiko Women Group of children with disabilities</li> <li>CBID Network</li> <li>Cheshire</li> <li>St Ann's Parent Support Group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training</li> <li>Technical support</li> <li>Resource mobilisation</li> <li>Advocacy capacity building</li> <li>Mobilisation or provision of assistive devices</li> </ul>

SN	Stakeholder	Role or relevance in project
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organisations of Persons with Disabilities OPDs</li> <li>ZAFOD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocacy for IECE policies</li> <li>Activism</li> <li>Mobilisation of PWDs and their children</li> <li>Training in life and vocational skills</li> <li>Support identification of children</li> <li>Training in disability rights and inclusion</li> <li>Mobilisation of resources</li> <li>Participate in monitoring and evaluation</li> </ul>
11	Churches and other religious organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sensitisation</li> <li>Advocacy</li> <li>Mobilisation</li> <li>Venues for meetings</li> <li>Making their meeting places accessible to persons with disabilities</li> <li>Awareness raising</li> <li>Social, spiritual and emotional support</li> <li>Identify vulnerable congregants</li> <li>Mobilisation of material support</li> <li>Skills training</li> <li>Meeting venues</li> </ul>
12	Zambia National Education Coalition ZANEC	Advocacy support to the project
13	The media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Platform for advocacy</li> <li>Dissemination of information</li> <li>Public education on inclusion</li> </ul>
14	The Universities and other training institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training of teachers in inclusion</li> <li>Research services</li> </ul>
15	National Action for Quality Education in Zambia NAQUEZ	Support advocacy for IECE
16	Zambia Open Community Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide linkage to community schools</li> <li>Provide the project with expertise in ECDE programmes</li> </ul>

SN	Stakeholder	Role or relevance in project
17	District Commissioners	They can coordinate participation of government departments and ministries in project activities They can also provide administrative support
18	Traditional leaders	Facilitate mobilisation in their areas Host meetings Influence policies at local level Mobilisation of community resources
19	Civic leaders	Develop supportive legislation through Acts of Parliament and by-laws Provide meeting venues e.g constituency offices Provide checks on balances e.g questions in parliament Mobilise resources for the action Sensitise communities on the rights of children with disabilities Mobilise community leaders and members Pass by-laws and resolutions in favour of education Allocate CDF resources to project objectives
20	Culture and traditional affairs	Must be sensitised on negative cultural practices that affect the right to education for children with disabilities.
21	Ministry of local government and rural development	Is the custodian of the Constituency Development Funds CDF which must provide for funding for construction of ECE centres that are inclusive.
22	Traditional Healers Associations	Must be sensitised to encourage parents to take children for early medical assessment and avoid harming the health of children with disabilities.

## Annex 2:

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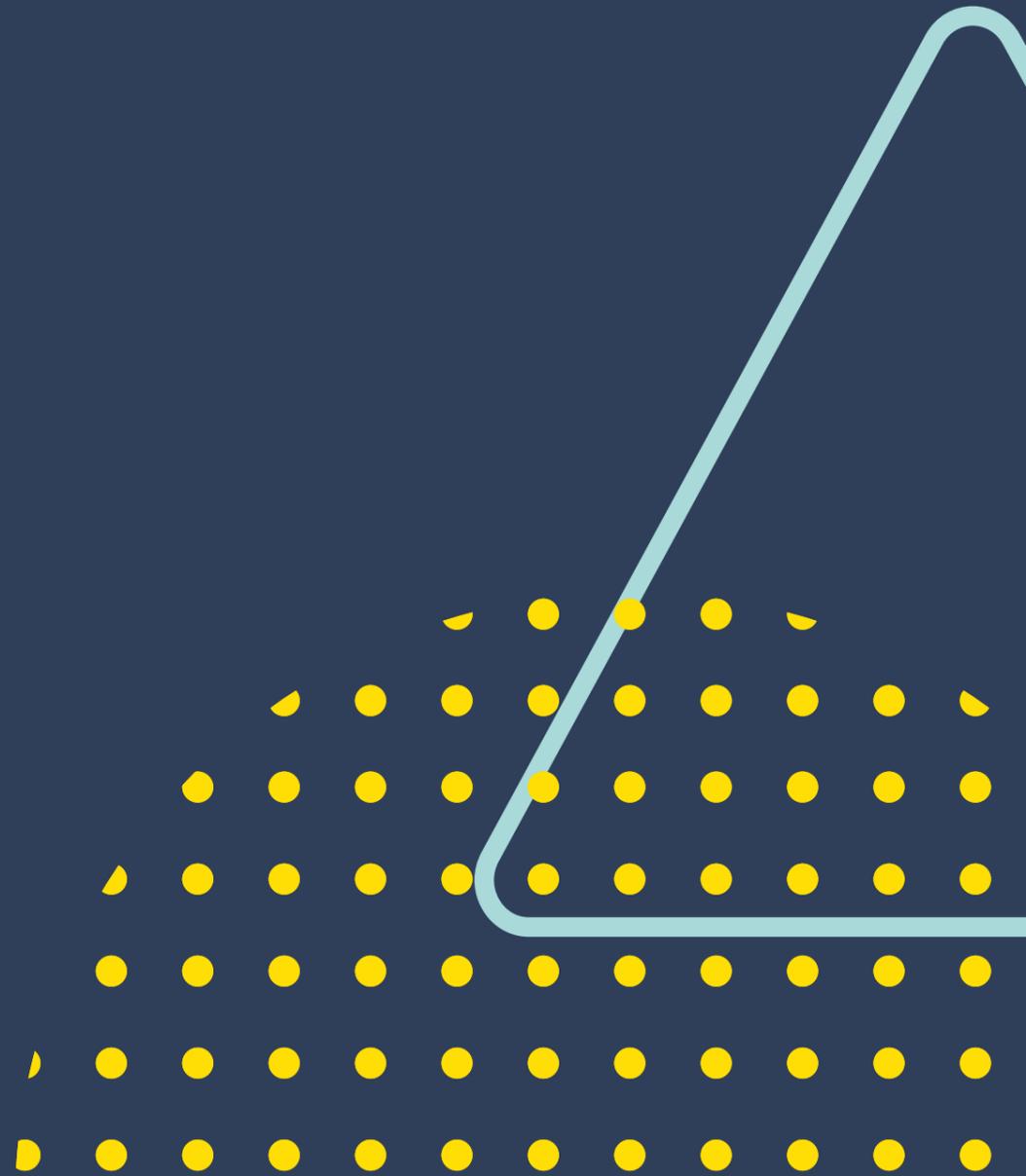
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