Zambia Inclusive Education Programme Final Evaluation
Executive Summary

Author
McCall Education Consultancy Ltd

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DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMME

This end of term evaluation is designed to assess progress of the Zambia Inclusive Education Programme (ZIEP). ZIEP was initiated in 2011 as a three year programme to strengthen national capacities for inclusive education with a budget of 588,319 Euros (75% EU 25% Sightsavers). The project focused on improving access to quality education provision for children who are blind, and children with low vision and refractive errors. It targeted 615 children who are blind, who have low vision or refractive errors and was implemented in eight districts: the Mufulira and Ndola districts of Copperbelt Province and the Kazungula, Monze, Choma, Kalomo, Livingstone and Mazabuka districts of Southern Province. The programme partners were The Ministry of Education (MOE), Zambia Open Community Schools (ZOCS), ChildHope, The Zambia Federation of Disability Organisations (ZAFOD) and Sightsavers.

The key programme goals were to:

- improve access to quality primary education for blind and low vision childrenand children with refractive error as close to their homes as possible
- influence MOE policy and practice in inclusive education (IE)
- improve coordination for inclusive education
- develop positive attitudes towards, and increased support for IE

The main activities of the programme involved:

- strengthening national coordination for IE through lobbying and consultative planning meetings and improving district coordination for IE by strengthening district monitoring and information systems
- providing training and awareness raising for administrators, teachers and communities
- improving access to quality education for children with Visual Impairment (VI) and children with refractive error through the provision of specialist learning materials, equipment and aids

ZIEP's outputs are summarised in the Table 1 below:

TABLE 1 Outputs of ZIEP

Outputs	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Gender	Total
Children	6	60	862	Male 492 (53%) Female 436 (47%)	928
Specialised Teachers	16	16	13	Male 8 Female 5	13
Regular Teachers	46	0	767	Male 447 (55%) Female 366 (43%)	813
Sensitisation	1518	1202	1863	Unknown	4583
IEC materials	3000	1550	1300	N/A	5450
Radio Programmes	13	8	3	N/A	24

The evaluation finds that the key goals of ZIEP have been met to at least a satisfactory and, in some aspects, to a high standard. Some elements of the programme have the potential to provide reference for effective practice in other environments. ZIEP overcame initial difficulties to score well on relevance, effectiveness and impact, reaching 928 children with VI and refractive error against an initial target of 615 and meeting or exceeding its ambitious training and awareness raising goals. Ongoing activity should serve to consolidate efforts that were continuing at the time of the evaluation to improve coordination for quality education.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVE/QUESTIONS AND PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation sought to verify the achievement of intended results and outputs described in the project proposal and in the ZIEP logical framework, and measure the extent to which ZIEP has strengthened capacities for inclusive education in Zambia.

The evaluation also sought to identify examples of best practices that can be replicated in other development interventions. The framework for the evaluation is the questions defined in the Terms of Reference (TOR) for this study.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE METHODS/ANALYTICAL STRATEGY

The data driven analysis was conducted within a collaborative context, facilitating opportunities for stakeholders in the programme to reflect freely with the evaluation team on ZIEP's effectiveness in meeting the programme goals. The evaluation used quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques in order to address the themes outlined in the Terms of Reference (TOR) and the issues raised in the review of documentation, and in particular in the EU Result Oriented Monitoring (ROM) Report (2013).

Preliminary desk research on the background of the programme was used to contextualise the study and to establish study questions relating to the relevance and coherence of the programme. Data were analysed from ZIEP documents, relevant literature and publications.

The effectiveness and impact of the programme was primarily assessed through fieldwork, which also provided opportunities to evaluate the programme's coherence and the quality of its coordination and efficiency. Data *for this phase of the evaluation* were gathered through questionnaires, focus group discussions, semi-structured individual interviews with key informants, observations, inventories and case studies. Interviews and discussions were annotated by hand as they occurred and digitised shortly afterwards.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

A. RELEVANCE

The ZIEP programme is relevant to local and national development priorities and practices. There are well established special schools and Units in Zambia and a long history of specialist teacher training through the Zambia Institute of Special Education (ZAMISE), and there has traditionally been a strong focus on children with complex needs such as severe sensory impairment and severe learning difficulties. This focus on complex needs remains in some aspects of national development policies and there is a need to push the agenda on towards promotion of inclusive practices in mainstream schools that cover a wider range of children with additional needs. ZIEP has added value to local and national development policies in relation to inclusion by moving the agenda on towards a better understanding of inclusive practices, particularly at a local level.

The beneficiaries of the ZIEP strategy were predominantly children with visual impairment and children with refractive error, however teacher training and awareness raising at a district level also helped promote the interests of children with other needs. By tapping into the new decentralised structures in education such as school clusters, ZIEP was able to impact directly on practice in schools of different types.

For all the reasons given above the programme relevance is rated as Highly Satisfactory.

Relevance	***Rating:* Highly satisfactory:** G

B. EFFECTIVENESS

The evidence seen suggests the programme has substantially met its key objectives, of:

- improving access to quality primary education for blind and low vision children and children with refractive errors as close to their homes as possible
- influencing MOE policy and practice in inclusive education
- improving coordination for inclusive education
- developing positive attitudes towards, and increased support for, inclusive education

ZIEP has promoted changes in practice that have resulted in the education of children with low vision closer to their homes. Equipment such as low vision aids has improved access to education for children with low vision and refractive errors. Children who are braille users have improved access to braille.

ZIEP has influenced the MOE to take account of the needs of children who are braille users in curriculum planning.

There was evidence in the districts that were visited to show that resources such as bicycles and motorbikes are facilitating the coordination of inclusive education and that the inclusive practices have increased at district level and at the level of school clusters.

There is persuasive evidence of effective intervention to increase support for inclusive education among teachers and communities. Teachers who have been trained remember their training and are able to use the skills in the classroom. The teachers can provide specific examples of how to modify their teaching styles to make them more inclusive.

Parents of children with disabilities are able to explain how training has changed their behaviour to include their children in village life. There is ongoing work to consolidate improvements in coordination for IE at district level (eg database) but, on the basis of the achievements above, a Highly Satisfactory rating is merited overall.

Effectiveness	***Rating:* Highly Satisfactory:** 

C. EFFICIENCY

In spite of the slow start, largely caused by inadequate project start up planning, programme implementation in the final eighteen months was impressive. There was effective leadership shown by the Sightsavers Zambia Country Office team, the partners took ownership of elements of the programme that met with their strengths and expertise and they worked together effectively to meet the ambitious targets for delivering training and raising awareness.

The modifications to the original bid agreed with the funders (eg the inclusion of children with refractive errors) meant that some elements of the programme were telescoped into a short timeframe. There remain some 'snagging' activities that will need continuing attention eg in relation to the provision of software for embossers and the delivery of spectacles to some children who have been refracted but Sightsavers has indicated that these areas will be addressed before project close.

Financial resources were used effectively to fast-track the refraction element of the programme and key national and local individuals with appropriate expertise were co-opted into the programme as necessary. An extension to the programme was necessary to consolidate achievements and for this reason, the efficiency of the programme rates as satisfactory rather than highly satisfactory.

Efficiency ***Rating:*** **Satisfactory:** 

D. IMPACT

The main changes produced by the programme include:

- a higher profile for inclusive education at a local level in the districts covered by the programme and an increased willingness in schools where teachers have been trained to take responsibility for children with disabilities

- a change in the role of special schools and units for children with visual impairment. The programme has helped schools for the blind focus their expertise on children who are blind and who need to learn through braille and has improved opportunities for access to braille for these children.

ZIEP has made it easier for special schools and Community Schools to engage in outreach work that delivers training to mainstream schools and helps identify children with disabilities in communities.

It has facilitated the transition of children with low vision towards education in local mainstream schools through advocacy and the provision of low vision aids. This represents a significant and lasting change.

It has identified a group of children whose needs have previously gone unmet. Hundreds of children with refractive errors have benefitted academically and socially as a result of the prescription glasses.

ZIEP has increased the institutional learning and expertise in inclusion among the partner organisations

The perception of ZIEP among its beneficiaries appears uniformly positive. Impact on beliefs and practices at a district level appears effective. There is evidence that the project has influenced the practice of other NGOs on educational inclusion. For example Leonard Cheshire Disability has replicated elements of ZIEP in its own work. More work needs to be done to influence change at policy level and efforts should focus on advocacy for the development of a national implementation plan for inclusive education but on the evidence

of the findings above, a Highly Satisfactory rating for the impact of the rating is fully deserved.

Impact	***Rating:* Highly Satisfactory*:*** 

E. SUSTAINABILITY

The programme appears more closely integrated into local and district level education system planning because the plans and budget are developed by the district teams and are then fed into the national system planning. This is a direct result of the decentralisation of education. At a local level the programme offers a good fit with district and community systems of organisation and management. National system planners have been supportive of ZIEP although the plans for a national symposium on Inclusive Education have yet to be realised.

It should be possible to sustain the gains of ZIEP because of the continued engagement of the partners in the districts where ZIEP operates. Sightsavers has well established links with the districts through its eyecare programme and other partners such as ZOCS and ZAFOD have links across the country where the institutional learning developed by the programme can be applied. The challenge will be to embed the gains at a district and local level into national planning and to evidence the success of the ZIEP strategies in promoting access to education and the educational attainment of children with disabilities through an effective database that captures improvements in children's access and attainment.

There are questions about the long term sustainability of the support for children with refractive errors and specifically the provision of glasses to children with refractive errors. This is an innovative but logistically complex initiative that has brought real gains to children who have received glasses. It has afforded valuable institutional learning among the partners but would require substantial additional funding to sustain, and a review of the programme results and a cost benefit analysis would be needed before the programme could be scaled up.

For these reasons a sustainability rating of Satisfactory rather than a Highly Satisfactory is suggested. However if ZIEP can embed the database into national and district planning systems then a Highly Satisfactory rating would be merited.

Sustainability	***Rating:* Satisfactory*:*** 

F. COHERENCE/COORDINATION

ZIEP has created synergies with other programmes at district level in the areas where it has operated.

The programme has served to link Community Schools that have a tradition of including disadvantaged children directly to organisations within districts for and of the disabled through links with ZAFOD and ChildHope. The training has helped link together special schools with mainstream provision. The programme of refraction and the assessment of children with low vision has increased expertise in an area that previously received little attention and created direct links between District Education Board Secretaries (DEBS), schools and services that have the potential to benefit children with low vision nationally over time through strengthened links between health and education.

ZIEP has built around existing provision for children with disabilities, taking a balanced view and seeing strength in a continuum of provision that includes special schools, specialist units attached to mainstream schools, state and Community Schools all working together at a zonal level.

ZIEP has been coordinated with district level initiatives. It has built on some earlier government initiatives such as INSPRO (Inclusive Schooling Programme) and the training of SENCOs (Special Education Needs Coordinators). There are opportunities for possible links with work of other agencies that are operating in Zambia. For example, the evaluation revealed that VISIO, a Netherlands based organisation, are involved in plans to develop low vision training at ZAMISE and that there is a major project in the Western Province related to inclusive education that is supported by the MOE and the Finnish government. As stated earlier, ZIEP has already helped influence the practice of Leonard Cheshire Disability and this opens up possibilities for further collaboration.

A key element of ensuring ongoing support and monitoring of the ZIEP activities is the database that was planned to be established at district levels. This is one of the areas of the programme that needs further development due to a combination of a late start, a lack of technical expertise among senior teachers and administrators at district level and the lack of appropriate technology. This is an aspect of the programme that will need continuing attention and further training sessions to ensure that the software that has been developed and supplied is used to capture the progress of children involved in the ZIEP interventions.

The satisfactory rating for Coherence/coordination reflects the fact that ZIEP has met most but not all of the criteria in this area.

Coherence/co-ordination	***Rating:* Satisfactory*:*** 

G. SCALABILITY/REPLICABILITY

There is evidence that some elements of ZIEP are already being scaled up through the work of other NGOs such as Leonard Cheshire Disability. Some of the key elements of the programme are replicable and merit replication and further investigation, specifically:

- the work on children with refractive errors has potential for influencing practices in eyecare and education internationally.
- the concept of focusing intervention at cluster level is a strength replicable in other countries.
- the focus on Community Schools is innovative and worth additional investigation.

The reason a Satisfactory score has been given for Scalability/Replicability reflects the fact some key elements of the programme strengths such as the work with clusters is specific to the Zambian system, and without further research and evaluation the work on refractive errors cannot be considered replicable at present.

Scalability/replicability	***Rating:* Satisfactory*:*** 

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The key recommendations arising from the evaluation are for the partners to:

1. Draw up lessons learnt from refraction exercises and continue to collect data on attainment of refracted children.

The screening of children in mainstream schools for refractive errors is a particularly interesting element of ZIEP. In most countries in the South there are many children with refractive errors in mainstream schools. Children who have refractive error are often effectively excluded from aspects of education in the mainstream classroom. For example children who are very shortsighted may not be able to read from the chalkboard and children who are longsighted may find it uncomfortable to read from books for prolonged periods. This is likely to impact on these children's academic performance and ultimately their school attendance. With the correct prescription the refractive errors can normally be corrected to normal. There are findings in the ZIEP programme that deserve further investigation, specifically in relation to the impact that refraction has on academic attainment and social inclusion and to the issues raised by the implementation of large scale screening and the management of the process of sourcing and distributing glasses in rural areas.

Valuable lessons have already been learnt about the need to provide guidance to children, parents and teachers about what spectacles and low vision devices are for, when they need to be used and how they should be stored and maintained, also of the need to take into

consideration the robustness of spectacle frames when they are prescribed for use in the classroom and playground.

This aspect of ZIEP merits follow up and further investigation, perhaps through a joint health/education funded longitudinal study that tracks children who have received spectacles and provides a cost/benefit analysis of the correction of refractive error.

2. Develop a strategy for deployment of ZAMISE trained teachers at Community Schools – input at community and zonal level.

The ZIEP programme funded 13 teachers from Community Schools to attend a two year training programme at ZAMISE for teachers of the visually impaired. The role that these teachers will perform when they return to their schools is not well understood by the teachers themselves or by the DEBS in the districts where these teachers will work. In order to maximise the effectiveness of their training, these teachers will need opportunities to be released from their responsibilities as class teachers to contribute to the development of IE practices in their districts. This work might take a range of forms including providing in-service training; advice and support for colleagues working with children with additional needs in mainstream classrooms; outreach work in communities to raise awareness and identify children with disabilities out of school; and the orientation of regular classroom teachers in inclusive practices.

Unless there is direction from national and provincial level administrators and a consensus among education managers and administrators about a sustainable strategy for the deployment of these teachers, there is a danger that these teachers will not be able to use their new skills and expertise.

3. Follow up the development of the ZIEP database to ensure that all districts covered by ZIEP incorporate the facility into their practice.

The database developed and distributed by ZIEP has the potential to impact positively on the capacity of districts to track the recruitment, retainment and the academic attainment of children with severe visual impairment. The database also has the capacity to be extended to children with refractive errors who have been treated by the programme, in order to measure the impact over time of refraction and the effectiveness of the spectacles provided to them. The database also has the capacity to be extended to capture information on children with other disabilities. Linking the information in this database to existing databases kept at provincial and national level may help to provide a better understanding of the coverage and effectiveness of education services for children with disability in the country as a whole.

4. Provide the MOE with lessons from ZIEP that can help promote inclusion in other districts at no cost.

There are elements of ZIEP that merit replication in other districts outside the ZIEP areas. Some of these can be applied at low or no cost. One example would be to exploit the potential the cluster system to promote understanding among teachers in mainstream schools of issues of IE. It would be possible for example to make discussion of inclusion issues a required component in termly zonal level In Service Training (INSET) meetings for teachers. The experience and expertise gained by ZIEP in the training of teachers in mainstream schools could be captured in the guidance manuals for potential trainers in other districts. A simple guidance booklet could provide trainers with advice about the organisation, content and delivery of training to mainstream schools on inclusive education. The content should focus on how teachers can be encouraged to change their classroom practices to make them more inclusive and how schools can adapt their environments to welcome all children.

Similarly, building on the ZIEP expertise gained in training in communities relating to the inclusion of children with disabilities, templates for awareness raising sessions could be distributed to other NGOs and agencies involved in similar work in other regions of the country.

5. Continue to develop a pan-disability approach in the work of the partners that takes account of children with additional needs already in mainstream schools.

Although the main focus of the ZIEP programme was on children with visual impairment and refractive error, elements of the programme, such as training in mainstream schools and community awareness raising, addressed the wider issues relating to other children with different forms of complex disability. Perhaps crucially, the training provided some guidance about the classroom management of children in mainstream schools who have additional needs, which although not severe, impact on their attainment. This group includes children such as those with moderate learning difficulties and children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. There is still a pervasive focus on children with complex disabilities in the dialogue on IE education in Zambia, and ZIEP has demonstrated the need for agencies that work in disability to extend the scope of their work to promote understanding of the broader range of children with additional needs who are, and always have been, in mainstream classrooms.

6. Continue to influence change in specials schools and units that will enable them to share their expertise with mainstream schools and allow children from specialist provision to transfer to mainstream schooling where it is in the children's interests.

There have been interesting developments in ZIEP that stem from work with special schools and units. ZIEP has influenced practice in residential schools for the visually impaired by encouraging them to focus on children who need to learn through touch. In many countries children who have low vision (such as children with albinism are inappropriately placed in schools for the blind and taught through touch when, with appropriate support, they can learn to read and write through print and find success in mainstream schools. ZIEP has supported the transfer of children with albinism from residential special schools and bases to mainstream provision closer to their homes, increasing the understanding of special schools about low vision and helping district education managers to understand issues relating to the educational placement of children with low vision. Also by using teachers from special schools and units to design and deliver training programmes for teachers in mainstream schools, ZIEP has helped special schools forge links with schools in the nearby community, opening up potential opportunities for children with visual impairment and other disabilities who are currently in special schools to receive at least some of their education in local schools.

7. Continue to press for a national symposium on inclusive education that will take forward the debate in Zambia.

Attempts by ZIEP to facilitate a national symposium on Inclusive Education have been unsuccessful to date. Although policy in Zambia recognises the need for a view of inclusion that goes beyond narrow categories of disability, practice in Zambia is still largely focused on support for children who have complex disabilities. ZIEP partners should continue to advocate for a national symposium, led and owned by the MOE, that will promote the development of a coordinated national strategy on inclusive practices in mainstream schools and will develop a shared understanding among stakeholders about IE practices. There are already some very positive steps taken by the MOE in this area, such as the incorporation of an element of special needs education into all initial teacher training that a national strategy can build upon.

8. Adopt a proactive approach to ensure that the expertise and lessons learnt from ZIEP are shared with other NGOs and INGOs operating in related areas.

There are encouraging signs that this is already happening, for example through the adoption by Leonard Cheshire Disability of successful ZIEP strategies into their work on disability and education. However there are initiatives such as the planned the involvement of Visio, an NGO from the Netherlands, in a project with ZAMISE related to training in low vision that ZIEP partners should engage with. A proactive response by ZIEP partners to new initiatives in IE will ensure that the valuable lessons learnt from the work of ZIEP will inform new developments, help prevent duplication of effort and allow them to build on the synergies ZIEP has created.