



## THE WEEKEND READER

"Your Weekly Read on Debt, Development & Socio-Economic Justice"

# INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES 2022

Inclusion is intentional. It is about identifying and removing barriers so that everyone can participate to the best of their ability.

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The International Day of People with Disability (IDPD) was proclaimed in 1992 by the United Nations General Resolution 47/3 citing the need to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. IDPD is observed on the 3rd December every year. IDPD recognizes the need for accessible and sustainable development which leaves no one behind. In 2022, the running theme is "Transformative solutions for inclusive development: the role of innovation in fueling an accessible and equitable world." We observe the need for deliberate action to not only for their inclusion but PWD holding positions of power, leadership and spearheading development. In Zimbabwe, much as been done to ensure inclusion of PWD but still, more needs to be done. Primary concerns include accessibility in public spaces, in public transport, stigmatization, unemployment etc. These factors limit the social economic participation of PWD and hence raising our concern for socioeconomic justice.

## **Of Concern**

### **Accessibility**

Accessibility is when the needs of people with disabilities are specifically considered, and products, services, and facilities are built or modified so that they can be used by people of all abilities. Mundane activities such as getting into a bank or public office remain a challenge for PWD as ramps for wheelchairs are not installed in majority of public spaces. Furthermore, not enough has been done to develop material for the blind in the same public spaces. Disability rates are also higher in rural areas. While rural areas already have accessibility issues due to their remote nature, PWD fare even worse. Distances traveled for health care and limited resources relegate PWD to the point of not accessing meaningful healthcare.

One can however note the inclusion of sign language as an official language in Zimbabwe and the translation offered during News and official programs on the state broadcaster ZBC as a positive step which now needs to be supported by other efforts.

### **Unemployment**

While Zimbabwe already has concerning levels of unemployment, the situation is even worse for PWD as shown by the World Bank.<sup>1</sup> This is due to factors such as stigmatization which remains high years after efforts of investment in changing social attitudes.<sup>2</sup> Those who find work, often part-time jobs, are paid less and are less likely to be promoted. This inability to find and maintain gainful employment then perpetuates a vicious cycle of poverty and increasing the vulnerability of PWDs. Following, there is a need for government to make deliberate efforts to provide high-quality education to children with disabilities and encouraging human capital investment.

### **Gender and Disability**

Disability also has a gendered face. Women who're also PWD face even worse scenarios than men. Unequal levels of protections and rights contribute to a higher occurrence of disabilities among women as due to Patriarchy, poorer families are likely to invest in male children's education. As a result, the disability is accompanied with little to no education and no opportunities to earn and fend for oneself.

1. <https://reliefweb.int/report/gabon/challenges-facing-persons-disabilities-sub-saharan-africa-5-charts>

2. <https://reliefweb.int/report/gabon/challenges-facing-persons-disabilities-sub-saharan-africa-5-charts>

### **Communication Barriers**

During the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence, it's also important to note that PWD face even worse outcomes. In a study conducted by Deaf Women Included, they found that PWD survivors of GBV face challenges in accessing assistance due to a communication barrier. The study notes,

*“Persons with disabilities in our district are not happy, because there are no Sign Language interpreters in most of the GBV and SRH centers, most buildings are not accessible and staff is not disability friendly....”<sup>3</sup>*

As a result, many assaults go unreported and general satisfaction with assistance given for those who report remains low.

### **Recommendations**

- Government, through the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare should commit adequate funds in the budget to primary, secondary and vocational education of PWD to ensure that their employment outcomes are improved.
- Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare should follow through on their stated commitment to, “work progressively towards the advancement of the rights of persons with disabilities (PWDs), with a special focus on women and girls.” This includes protecting women victims of GBV and ensuring social workers and counsellors working with victims have the capacity to communicate with them.
- Dedication of bathrooms, widening of doors and construction of ramps especially in public offices such as government buildings will set an example for the private sector on the need for improving accessibility. Furthermore, the Ministry of Transport can ensure that public transport facilities such as the ZUPCO buses have ramps and give priority boarding to PWD.