

HISTORY OF THE DISABILITY MOVEMENT IN ZAMBIA

The first organization dealing with persons with disabilities was formed in Zambia in 1952¹ known as Northern Rhodesia Society for the Blind by a group of able-bodied volunteers who were concerned about the social plight of the blind people.

In 1961, blind persons decided to form their own organization known as Northern Rhodesia Blind People's League. In the same year, Government enacted the Blind Persons Ordinance of 1961 under which the Northern Rhodesia Council for the Blind was established.

In 1964, the Northern Rhodesia Council for the Physically Handicapped, as an NGO, was formed in Lusaka also by able-bodied persons, among whom, was the late lawyer Mr. Shamwana.

In 1965, Government repealed the "Blind Persons Ordinance of 1961" and fused the two Councils for the Blind and the Physically Handicapped and created one quasi-government entity known as Zambia Council for the Blind and Handicapped under the "Blind Persons Ordinance of 1965".

In 1968, the "Blind Persons Ordinance of 1965" was repealed and replaced by the "Handicapped Persons Act CAP 551" of the Laws of Zambia which ushered in the Zambia Council for the Handicapped to provide services to all persons with disabilities.

In 1981, during the International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP), the League of the Blind, which was the only NGO for persons with disabilities at that time, disintegrated into several organisations of persons with disabilities according to disability categories and aspirations, some of the notable ones being ZANFOB, ZNAPH, ZNADWO, ZNAHI, ZNAD, ZNAPS, ZACALD and MHAZ.

A year later, organisations of persons with disabilities in Finland and other Nordic countries started to enter into support agreements with Zambian DPOs. With the presence of Finnish support in Zambia, a need arose for an umbrella DPO that would work hand in hand with the Finnish Disabled People's International Development Association (FIDIDA) in coordinating the activities aimed at improving the welfare of persons with disabilities in the country.

Hence, in June 1985, seven organizations namely Zambia National Association of the Physically Handicapped (ZNAPH), Zambia National Association of Disabled Women (ZNADWO), Zambia National Association of the Hearing Impaired (ZNAHI), Zambia National Association of the Deaf (ZNAD), Zambia National Association of the Partially Sighted (ZNAPS), Zambia Association of Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities (ZACALD) and Mental Health Association of Zambia (MHAZ) came together and formed Zambia Federation of the Disabled (ZAFOD). In the early nineties, MHAZ was disaffiliated from ZAFOD leaving only six members.

In 2007, five more members were enlisted to ZAFOD namely: New Foundation of the Blind in Zambia (NEFOBZA), Zambia Association of Parents for Children with Disabilities (ZAPCD), Parents Partnership Association of Children with Special Needs (PPACSN), Zambia Association on Employment for Persons with Disabilities (ZAEPD) and Zambia National Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ZNASLI). This brought the current membership of ZAFOD to eleven (11).

In August 2008, ZAFOD undertook a constitutional review and also changed its name from Zambia Federation of the Disabled (ZAFOD) to Zambia Federation of Disability Organizations (ZAFOD).

1) ORGANIZATION AND ESTABLISHMENT

ZAFOD was officially registered under CAP 551 of the Laws of Zambia in 1990 with financial, material and moral support from the Finnish Disabled Peoples International Development Association (FIDIDA).

ZAFOD ACHIEVEMENTS

ZAFOD has since its inception in 1990, scored several achievements some of which include the following:

- ◆ It has been established and recognized as a functional umbrella and representative body of persons with disabilities in Zambia;

- ◆ It has played an instrumental role in policy and legal framework formulation on disability issues e.g. PWDS Act No. 33 of 1996, PWDs Act, No. 6 of 2012, National Disability Policy and Plan, 5th to 7th National Development Plans, Education Act 2011;
- ◆ It has increasingly taken centre stage in issues of self-representation by persons with disabilities e.g. Constitutional Review process;
- ◆ It has increased public awareness on disability issues through workshops, seminars, meetings as well as the media;
- ◆ It has provided loans to persons with disabilities which have enabled some of them to earn an income and live an independent lifestyle;
- ◆ Gender sensitivity has improved & the number of women with disabilities participating in developmental activities has increased.
- ◆ Engaged in child protection activities in ensuring maintenance of children with disabilities and affiliation to their parents through social casework and outreach/legal clinics.
- ◆ Increased awareness on the rights to employment for persons with disabilities through legal clinics and publicity of litigation matters on employment complaints.
- ◆ Created awareness and improvement of the rights of persons with disabilities to access the electoral process through litigation and a positive public interest judgement in the High Court of Lusaka.
- ◆ Improved physical access for persons with disabilities to public buildings and services, including ATM machines through litigation and publicity.

- ◆ Increased the number of children with disabilities getting into schools through the education project in community schools and ensured the protection of such children through parent/teacher/community training and awareness.
- ◆ Secured the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) through leading a petition to the Republican President.
- ◆ Established the first Independent Monitoring Unit on the Implementation of the UNCRDP in Africa.
- ◆ Replicated its litigation project to Malawi and Mozambique disabled persons' organisations.
- ◆ Conducted a number of research work to provide evidence for advocacy work.