



**Deaf Zimbabwe Trust**

**Psychosocial Support Workshop Report 2**

**8 March 2014**

**Queen Elizabeth Girls High School  
Harare**

## **Introduction**

Deaf Zimbabwe Trust conducted its second Psychosocial Support workshop and Sign Language session on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2014 at Queen Elizabeth Girls' High School. The workshop was well attended by 77 participants including the Deaf, parents, teachers, friends and relatives of children who are deaf and hard of hearing and 20 children. Prior to the appointment of Senators representing disability in 2013, people living with disability did not have representation in the house of assembly. Recognizing that people living with disability needed representation in the House of Assembly, Honorable Nyamayaro Mashavakure and Honorable Anna Shiri were appointed as Senators to represent people with disabilities in Zimbabwe. DZT invited Senator Mashavakure to present to participants the opportunities and challenges he sees for people living with disability in general and the deaf in particular.

## **Objectives of the workshop**

The workshop sought to discuss the following issues with Senator Mashavakure

- What are the roles senators in the senate and how do they feed into the lower house of assembly
- What are their plans in as far as the legislative agenda for people living with disabilities in Zimbabwe
- How are they working with organizations promoting the rights of people living with disabilities
- How can DZT assist in policy reform or formulation of policies that ensure the achievement of equal opportunities for PWDs
- Where are the gaps in the disability sector and what do they think needs to be done as a matter of urgency
- What can be done by DZT and other like-minded organisations to help senators to be more effective in the implementation of their mandate

## **Opening and welcome remarks**

Mr L.T Nkomo gave welcome remarks and acknowledged the International Women's day by appreciating all women in the house. He noted that women play a pivotal role in everyone's life as they are the backbone of the society. He encouraged the society not to abuse women and that they need to be given the same opportunities to lead in high positions as well as empower them. One of the participants gave opening prayer and Barbra Nyangairi introduced Senator Mashavakure to participants.

## **Presentation by Honorable Mashavakure**

Honorable Mashavakure began by providing a background where he highlighted that he is a professional teacher and had taught since 1985. After a brief history about himself he outlined the structure of the parliament. He stated that Parliament is comprised of two houses the Upper house and the lower House.

All the houses can initiate legislation; however, the lower house is more powerful of the two houses. The difference that separated the senate and the House of Assembly was that the House of Assembly could approve legislation that has not been approved by the Senate and they can pass that legislation even without the consent of the Senate.

Senator Mashavakure stated that, there are 2 senators who represent people living with disabilities in the Parliament that includes him and Senator Annah Shiri out of 80 Senators who are in the senate. However, their mere presence is significant although there is need for more representation in the disability sector. He also indicated that the need for disability representatives in the lower house who will be able to raise motions on disability.

### **Roles of Senators in the Parliament**

The speaker stated that the senators' main duties are to represent people living with disabilities in the Parliament. The Senators articulate on all issues to do with disability thus educate and raise awareness to the government system to regard PWDs as equals in the country. The Senators influence legislation to address disability issues and mainstreaming of disability in the making of laws in the country either past or current.

The Senators can initiate debates or motions in Parliament that address disability issues. He gave an instance where a debate was initiated in the upper house (senate) on the need for Special Needs Education Act the law intended to protect children with special needs in providing guidance on how disability issues should be handled in schools. Since the lower house (National Assembly) is more powerful when it comes to policy formulation, they simply discard suggestions that come from the senate house which disadvantages the motions raised in the lower house. If only there would be some representation on disability in the Lower House, the lower house would have been more considerate on issues to do with disability. Thus the speaker suggested more representation on disability in the House of Assembly so that policy formulation on Disability can be initiated in favor of the PWDs.

### **Advancing Disability legislation in Parliament**

The Senator highlighted that there is also need for representation on the basis of special interest. He noted that everybody and all forms of disability must be properly represented by people who actually know about the interests of the group they represent. If it meant that if women have any issues that need to be raised they are best represented by a fellow woman. The same applies to other forms of disability also need to be represented by someone who has firsthand experience on the disability rather than letting him represent all forms of disability. He also urged the participants that representation should not come on political party ticket. He noted that having one form of disability does not mean that one knows about all forms of disability.

The speaker emphasized legislation as the most crucial way to advance disability sector for example Disabled Persons Act. However, people living with disability have not benefited much from this Act as this is narrow. He assured the participants that for the past five years the Government has been working on a National Disability policy that intends to look at all aspects of disability that includes employment, recruitment, gender, youth, business and many other aspects affecting disability. He expressed the need for Zimbabwe incorporate the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) into our local laws.

## The Disability Persons Board

He speaker advised the participant that currently there is no director for the board. The position is being handled by Director of Social Welfare which is not the correct interpretation of the Act. As the Act requires a representative from all sectors of disability and that it is necessary to have a Director of Disabled Person this would in turn help PWDs. He noted that not much progress has been made as the board has not been meeting frequently. He reported that the National Disability Board has not been meeting as much as they should thereby leading to stagnation of policies. In 2012 they only met once and in 2013 they met in July and since then they have not met. It has shown that the board was not able to commemorate the International Disability Day and have not addressed any issues to do with Hearing impairment. There is a gap in the education sector for the Deaf which the government has to look at. He urged Deaf Zimbabwe Trust and other organizations to lobby with government to introduce sign Language as a subject, for the deaf to be assessed in sign language now that sign language has been made official.

The speaker encouraged the DPOs not to grow weary in advocacy, he stated that the DPOs should continue to make noise on disability issues, talk about the issues and raise more awareness on disability. He also encouraged DPOs to make use of the media as an awareness tool and advocate more on the media. As DPOs make noises about reforms, this would give the Senators momentum. The other way in which DPOs could help was to fundraise and to donate funds needed by the Senators to consult lawyers to help them draft alternative legislation and to introduce Private Member Bills. The senators need funds to do their work as they do not have money for transport to go to rural areas or visit areas that need attention.

## Plenary

Question	Response
<p><b>Q. The Disability Act is very limited nothing has been done to make it broad and effective. Ministries are not responsive to complaints as they are not bound by any law, what can be done?</b></p> <p><b>How is the domestication of the CRPD being carried out?</b></p> <p><b>How can we help to make the Senators so that amendments can be made on the Act?</b></p>	<p>Honorable Mashavakure noted that finances are the main hindering issue for the disability board to meet. If the board had funds to come together probably some of the issues issued raised about the Disability Act would have been addressed by now.</p> <p>The speaker deliberated on the issue of becoming PVOs and stated that whether an organization is a trust or not they still need to get extra licensing as PVOs. History has shown that various trust that have emerged may have not been transparent in the past as they will be like private companies which the government has no regulation over. However, the control measure that the government implemented was that the DPOs had to become a PVO such that it will be easy to supervise, as the organization will be under the Ministry of Public Services labor and social welfare. Unlike when an organization is a trust the government may not have control over the organization and it may be difficult to monitor the</p>

	funds of the organization as a result the organization end up misusing funds diverting them from the people who are supposed to benefit.
<b>Q. is there a channel within your offices where the public can visit to address issues on with disabilities?</b>	There is currently no desk on disability in the parliament offices due to lack of funds and a lot of outstanding debts. If all is in order they may be offices in Harare and other provinces. The current arrangement was to contact the senators on their mobile phones and he gave out his contact details to the public. However, there is an advisor Brigadier Felix Muchemwa who advises the President on issues of disability. This is a case which still needs to be looked at as there is need for participation and involvement at grass root level so that when the advisor report to the president he will be giving accurate information which is really on the ground.
<b>Q. The disability Act focusses mainly on physically impaired disability and visual impairments which is not inclusive of various disabilities what is being done?</b>	The speaker pointed out that it was wrong for the Act to focus on other forms of disability; there are moves currently to review the law to make it more broad and inclusive.
<b>Q. Why is that a lot has been done for the Visually Impaired and nothing has been done for the Deaf?</b>	Hon. Mashavakure noted that some of the Disability sectors have benefited from History. Fortunately, for the Visually Impaired their disability allows them to hear what is being said around them and they are able to inquire more information and they can then go to the right places and make noise about their grievance. Unlike the Deaf they have been disadvantaged in various sectors due to lack of access to Information and low educational levels as a result they are left out.
<b>Q. Why is that the government is failing to secure employment for the deaf even on jobs that do not require one to Hear like clerical jobs or general work?</b>	The speaker emphasized that there is need to be more aggressive in that aspect and continue to fight for the rights of the Deaf from the Deaf themselves as well as DPOs. There is need to put pressure on the government and continue to press on until they have been heard. He referred back to the fight which was put up by the visually impaired. They made so much noise that resulted in breakthroughs in the education and employment of the visually impaired. He urged the HI to do the same or even ask help from other forms of disability but however to have the Deaf upfront.
<b>Q. Unlike people with visual impairments who</b>	Hon. Mashavakure begged to differ that the Deaf are

<p><b>have voices that can be heard when making noise, what can be done for the Deaf to amplify their voice as they are voiceless.</b></p>	<p>have no voice, and he argued that they do have a voice which has not only been exercised. He encouraged maximum participation of the deaf in the fight to be heard and that they would not get what they want whilst seated but to get up and fight the war up to the end. He encouraged them to take out the challenge and to revisit the status quo in the education sector and find out why it has remained poor. He advised them to go into the government offices and if it meant that they get an interpreter they should do just that up until some changes have been made. The deaf themselves should take the leading role in their fight whilst DPOs chip in in the advocacy.</p>
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### **Sign language session: Mr Gomo**

The sign language session with Mr Gomo was a recap on words learnt previously and participants were taught a few other new words. The participants were put into groups and were given an assignment to sign sentences that Mr Gomo had prepared. Below are some of the sentences participants signed.

- In the name of Jesus amen
- How are you
- How do you feel
- The boy was punished for rape
- Science
- English
- Accounts
- Geography

### **Evaluation and closing remarks**

Participants were given evaluation forms at the end of the workshop to rate whether the workshop was educative or not and also to give suggestions about the workshop. Below are some of the comments and suggestions noted in the evaluation forms.

- I now know that disabled people have representatives in the Parliament
- I have learnt some signs which will accelerate my communication skills with my child.
- I gained knowledge and love to stay with the Deaf
- Now I'm able to help my child with his homework

- I now know a lot of words
- Thank you very much for teaching us sign language
- This programme is very good it keeps me in touch with new words

### **Senator Mashavakure's Contact Details**

Below are the contact details for senator Mashavakure for any disability issues that one may need to raise. Do not hesitate to contact him and one can also write a letter and leave it at the parliament or bring issues through organizations such as DZT, ZDMT, NASHCOH, Zimbabwe League of the Blind

[nymash@gmail.com](mailto:nymash@gmail.com)

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