



# The Deaf Bulletin

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## RE-THINKING INCLUSIVITY IN EMERGENCY EDUCATION

By Mirirai Nyabvure

The impact of COVID-19 is worse for people in lower socio-economic groups. Children with disabilities have been left behind in alternative education interventions.

So far, mainstream responses for continued learning during the COVID-19 crisis have focused on online learning and the use of radio lessons. While this might be a workable option for some learners, these tools are not accessible to learners with disabilities or those with complex learning needs.

The lack of accessibility features on computers, tablets or mobile phones exclude children with disabilities from these contingency programs. These tools lack the basic and necessary accessibility features to make them usable for children with disabilities. Thirdly limited internet access hinders learning even further. Majority of learners with disabilities do not have access to household internet or mobile data.

However, this pandemic can serve as an opportunity to re-think how emergency education planning can be inclusive of children with



disabilities. Some of the ways that can be used to move this agenda forward include:

- Providing support to education systems to ensure that distance learning is accessible, teachers are trained and supported to remotely teach children with disabilities and ensuring that caregivers are supported as well.
- Provision of education packs that can be collected and dropped at schools where this is possible on a weekly basis.
- Providing the right mechanisms for inclusive wash, nutrition, mental health, and psychosocial support for children with disabilities and their families.

- Re-allocating and targeting resources towards more inclusive health, social and educational services.

Supporting the collection of disaggregate data by disability for emergency response and/or monitoring to help with tailored interventions, leading to improved support for children with disabilities in their learning environment.

Inclusion is an attitude and a choice unfortunately; it seems as if the alternative education discourse in Zimbabwe has chosen exclusion to inclusion.

# DZT bemoans exclusion of Deaf learners in alternative learning



*By Tinotenda Chikunya*

Deaf Zimbabwe Trust has expressed concern over the exclusion of Deaf learners in alternative learning processes in Zimbabwe during COVID-19.

This follows the launch of radio lessons by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. The lessons will be transmitted through Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC), AB Communications and Zimpapers Radio.

Deaf Zimbabwe Trust Executive Director Barbra Nyangairi said the exclusion of Deaf learners is discriminatory as they cannot access radio classes.

“The radio programs are leaving behind a significant number of

children proving that Deaf children have once again been forgotten”.

She added that the Ministry should have made considerations towards the needs for Deaf learners before the launch.

“The Ministry reported that Deaf children will be provided with TV lessons after nine weeks which means other learners who can hear will be ahead by those nine weeks”

“When the radio lessons were being recorded, the videos could have been recorded and Sign Language interpreters should have been engaged to sign”

Nyangairi highlighted that there is lack of regard for children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing as the country still does not have a Sign Language curriculum for Deaf children.

She called on the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to expedite the provision of alternative learning platforms for Deaf children and not wait for up to 9 weeks as planned.

She also said that all learners should be treated equitably and fairly by ensuring that interventions are inclusive from the onset and their rights should be respected as enshrined in the Zimbabwe Constitution.





By Rumbidzai Muzire

Greatman, a Zimbabwean musician has proven that persons with disabilities may face many trials but they will still come up on top. We zone in on Greatman's journey as a musician, his achievements and the challenges he is facing in the music industry.

Born Tongai Gwaze, Greatman is an afro-jazz musician from Mashonaland West who was born with myopathy, a neurological disorder in which the primary symptom is muscle weakness due to dysfunction of muscle fibre. His talent and passion for music was always a significant part of him from a very young age which prompted him to take his passion further when he recorded his first album in 2010. At the start of his career he struggled a lot to become relevant in the industry as people did not believe that he could sing.

"People looked down upon me, because I have a disability and some were not willing to give me a listening ear, I then managed to raise money to record my songs and that is

when my career kicked off".

After much hard work Greatman now boasts of 2 albums under his name Cheziya and Chikara Chemuno and a number of singles namely heartbroken and

Gegede which have been hits. One of his notable successes was a song featuring Mathias Mhere called 'Kuita Kwavo Mwari. He also engaged in collaborations with Sulumani Chimbetu on the song Pandakazvarwa which many are familiar with. This song put him on the map as it exposed a powerful insight of how parents accept children with disabilities. His songs are a voice of advocacy, as they talk about the plight of persons with disability. Though he has managed to make a name for himself within the music industry, Greatman says the industry is not without challenges.

"I am still facing some challenges as a musician with a disability; I have encountered a lot of stigma from some people within society especially on social media where people send discriminatory comments about my personal life, the only way to cope is to ignore the negative comments and accept the positive ones."

"Most sponsors are also not too keen to working with me because they fear

that society will view them as exploiting a person with a disability and some influential people in the music industry make promises but do not deliver as a way to gain good publicity.

This form of exploitation has affected his music career drastically, as other sponsors are not willing to give him assistance upon the opinion that he would have received help from major players in the music business.

Moreover, the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic has sparked a lot of negative consequences to his music career, as he is not able to have collaborations with artists whom he intended to work with this year and he had to re-schedule or cancel some live shows. Since the beginning of the lockdown, he has not been able to get an income forcing him to tap into savings which were meant for recording future songs.

"I have no way to make a living so I have found an alternative way to earn money through vending, I have made a resolution to be careful and cautious of the people i interact with to avoid being exploited"

Greatman encourages persons with disabilities to pursue their talent stating that everyone is born with a certain talent and it is only a matter of time before that talent is fully matured. He added that persons with disabilities should be hard working and should not lose hope. They ought to disregard the negative comments from people and focus on growing their talent.



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## ABOUT DEAF ZIMBABWE TRUST

Deaf Zimbabwe Trust is a voluntary organization that promotes the rights and interest of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) people in Zimbabwe. It was formed in 2012 by parents of Deaf children and began operations as registered Trust in 2013. Initially the organization was formed to advance the rights of Deaf children. After wide consultation, the leadership of DZT realized that Deaf adults had a lot of challenges and very little was being done to help them achieve their potential. As a result of this realization, Deaf Zimbabwe Trust reconfigured its activities to include all the Deaf in Zimbabwe.

DZT works across three programming areas which are:

- Education
- Sign Language Development
- Disability and Human Rights

**Vision:** An inclusive society which respects diversity where all Deaf and Hard of Hearing people enjoy equal rights & choices, opportunities, dignity and independence

**Mission:** Transformation and empowerment of Deaf and hard of hearing people for independent living through provision of education, changing societal attitudes through awareness raising and advocacy, service provision and sustainable initiatives

## OUR VALUES

- Equality
- Respect and tolerance,
- Accountability
- Teamwork
- Excellence

