

# Executive summary



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**Project name:** 'Tusambilile Chapamo' (Let's Learn Together)

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**Evaluation type:** End of Term Evaluation

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**Evaluator:** One South LLC

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**Country:** Zambia

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**Thematic area:** Inclusive education

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## Purpose of evaluation

The End of Term Evaluation (ETE) of the Tusambilile Chapamo – Let's Learn Together project assesses the project's impact and performance on improving access, quality, equity, and inclusive education (IE) from early childhood to secondary and vocational education in Chinsali, Muchinga Province. The project, funded by the European Commission (EC) and implemented by Sightsavers in partnership with the Zambian Federation of Disability Organisations (ZAFOD), aimed to develop a scalable, cost-effective IE model that addresses systemic barriers faced by children and youth with special educational needs and disabilities (LSEND), improving their access and participation in quality education and future employment opportunities. In this context, a low-cost model refers to an approach that achieves meaningful outcomes with minimal financial investment by leveraging existing resources, community involvement, and strategic partnerships. It focuses on affordable, practical solutions that are feasible for widespread adoption, especially in resource-limited settings.

The project focused on four key outcomes: promoting social behavioural change toward disability inclusion, building the capacity of education service providers, improving school infrastructure and inclusive environments for LSEND, and creating a platform to strengthen the voice and agency of parents, and civil society for inclusive education (IE). Using a participatory mixed methods approach - including interviews, focus groups, and lesson observations – the evaluation assesses six OECD DAC criteria: relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, scalability, inclusion and equity. The findings will inform the design of a follow-up project in 2025 and support policy advocacy to strengthen IE in Zambia, highlighting successes and challenges for broader replication.

## Main findings

Prior to the project, stigma and misconceptions excluded many children with disabilities from school, causing social isolation and shame for their families. The project design was highly **relevant** in addressing these issues through a “whole-school approach” focused on social behavioural change activities within the community closest to the child, increasing enrolment of children with disabilities in mainstream schools.

The project demonstrated **effectiveness** across four outcome areas: community engagement, capacity building for education service providers, infrastructure improvements, and advancing IE advocacy. By August 2024, 79% of a tracked cohort of 111 children and youth with disabilities (48% male, 52% female) had transitioned to the next academic year in Chinsali and Kapwepwe zones, showing steady progress despite falling short of the 91% target. Further improvement is expected before project completion. Updated transition data will be collected in January 2025 and included in the final donor report.

The project’s **community engagement** played a key role in changing attitudes, with parents, local leaders and traditional healers supporting IE. Community Welfare Assistant Committee (CWAC) volunteers helped families access social cash transfer programmes and the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), easing disability-related costs and enabling more children with disabilities to attend school. By August 2024, 900 children with disabilities (48% male, 52% female) were enrolled in demonstration learning centres, exceeding the target by 7%.

Building the capacity of **education service providers** – including government personnel, head teachers, and teachers – was another area of success. 24 learning centres were supported, and 460 education service providers (37% male, 63% female) trained, surpassing the target by 15%. Training covered identification, assessment, disability rights, inclusive pedagogy, safeguarding and managing large class sizes. Qualitative evidence indicated that teachers showed greater confidence and used more learner-centred approaches, though IE implementation varied, and teacher transfers posed challenges. School inclusion teams strengthened whole-school support, and project-developed screening tools were approved for national use.

**Infrastructure improvements**, such as ramps, upgraded washrooms, and the provision of assistive devices enhanced the overall school experience for LSEND. The community contributed burnt bricks, building sand, gravel and stones for improvements. The project provided assistive devices to LSEND and identified ways to access them, such as registering with Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities (ZAPD). Challenges including adapting already existing washroom facilities, maintaining equipment, or ensuring adequate water supply, which is under the control of local authorities, persist.

**Advocacy efforts** strengthened through the formation of the Chinsali Advocacy Network, uniting 24 organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) (up from three). Achievements included the purchase of a disability registration machine in Chinsali, the issuing of a government circular mandating accessibility in public buildings, and gaining representation on key committees, all reflecting a shift toward prioritising LSEND’s educational needs. ZAFOD is also pushing for a national IE policy, IE directorate and budgetary allocations, with a proposal now under consideration by President Hichilema. Targeted support is needed to strengthen ZAFOD’s technical expertise and advocacy impact.

Guided by a strategic plan, advocacy efforts are driving lasting **impact**. OPDs linked parent support groups (PSGs) to CDFs, improving access to essential services. Partnerships with the Zambian Institute for Special Education (ZAMISE), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) enhanced the network's visibility and credibility, positioning Chinsali as a hub for disability advocacy and IE reform. Public awareness campaigns, radio programmes, and learning and sharing workshops further elevated IE's profile. Continued efforts are needed to empower children with disabilities and enhance their involvement in decision-making.

The groundwork for **sustainable IE** has been laid through community ownership, teacher capacity building, and government collaboration. Progress is evident in shifting community attitudes, improved teacher preparedness, and the Ministry of Education's (MoE) adoption of teacher training materials alongside its interest in scaling the model. The project's grassroots approach, implemented through established zonal systems in 24 schools and youth centres, offers a viable framework for national replication. Continuous challenges, such as teacher turnover and the need for sustainable funding, require stronger government commitment. The MoE's 2022–2026 Education Sector Plan allocated ZMW 6,599,000 (USD 234,506) for LSEND teacher deployment, centres of excellence and assessment tools, alongside ZMW 75,000,000 (USD 2,665,245) for infrastructure adjustments. To support planning, Sightsavers is conducting a financial costing study on the low-cost model's budgetary impact.

The project demonstrated that IE can be achieved and **scaled** with modest investments by leveraging community-based organisations, empowering OPDs, and collaborating with local government agencies. The low-cost model empowered stakeholders, maximised existing resources, and built partnerships between government and civil society, making it feasible and affordable. The concept of "low-cost" is critical not only for attracting political support but also for ensuring a model's realistic chance of adoption. While inclusion requires dedicated budget allocations, the project's approach demonstrated viability before expecting full government financial commitment.

The project also advanced **equity and inclusion** by improving the identification and enrolment of children with disabilities, particularly girls, children from low-income households, and those facing high stigma. Girls with disabilities received support through dignity kits and accessible WASH facilities. Teacher training, peer-led initiatives, and infrastructure improvements created more inclusive school environments. Community engagement successfully reduced stigma, with parents and caregivers becoming advocates for IE.

## Conclusions

This evaluation highlights significant progress in IE within Chinsali and Kapwepwe zones, evidenced by increased enrolment and transition rates for LSEND, positive community shifts, enhanced educator capacity, infrastructure improvements, and strengthened advocacy. The project established a feasible, low-cost model by leveraging resources and community partnerships, with potential for scale-up. Aligned with the donor's focus on supporting civil society, the establishment of the Chinsali Advocacy Network and engagement with OPDs have been pivotal in promoting human rights and IE. These networks have amplified advocacy efforts and bolstered civil society's capacity to drive systemic change.

For long-term sustainability, strategic government investment is essential, including national budget allocations and decentralised funding like CDF. The project guided OPDs on accessing CDF funding and the MoE adopted teacher training materials. Continued support for assistive devices (e.g. through insurance systems), infrastructure maintenance (e.g. through CDF or the recommended allocation of 10% of school funds to IE), and teacher training (e.g. integrating IE into pre-service education) will further embed inclusive education into Zambia's education system.

## Lessons learnt

These lessons highlight the project approach taken, why it worked (or didn't), and how each contributed to the project outcomes:

**Focusing on one district increases impact:** ZAFOD and Sightsavers concentrated efforts on Chinsali and Kapwepwe Zones. This approach allowed for deeper engagement, better resource utilisation, and avoided spreading efforts too thin. It demonstrated that the model works effectively at a local level, laying a foundation for scaling IE across various education levels.

**Building on existing systems enhances effectiveness:** the model leveraged the MoE's zonal system, collaborated with the District Education Board, empowered local teachers and OPDs, and partnered with trusted national NGOs like ZAFOD. Utilising established systems and funding sources such as the CDF ensured sustainability and enhanced the capacity of education providers to deliver quality learning for LSEND.

**OPDs play a crucial role:** collaborating with local OPDs for community engagement, representation on committees, and policy advocacy was key. Their local knowledge, credibility, and lived experience made them effective advocates, improving community support for children with disabilities, and amplified advocacy efforts for IE policies.

**Community engagement and early stakeholder involvement are essential:** the depth of community engagement in this project was notable and uncommon compared to similar initiatives. Involving parents, traditional leaders and healers, CWACs, police, and grassroots organisations fostered ownership and created a supportive environment for LSEND, especially girls, to access and remain in IE.

**Supporting PSG's economic activities strengthens IE outcomes:** helping PSGs engage in income-generating activities, registering them with the ZAPD and linking them to funds like the CDF and Citizens Economic Empowerment Commission (CEEC) enabled families to cover educational costs. Providing training, loan support, and assistance with group constitutions strengthened PSGs' viability. Financial support ensured LSEND, particularly girls, could stay in school.

**Gender considerations are crucial:** providing dignity kits, accessible WASH facilities, and raising awareness about re-entry policies addressed challenges faced by girls with disabilities. This improved school attendance and retention, promoting gender equity and enabling girls to access and thrive in IE environments.

**Training local trainers supports sustainability and reduces costs:** training master trainers in IE methods and enabling them to train others built local capacity and reduced reliance on external trainers. This ensured sustained delivery of quality learning for LSEND.

Short, focused training sessions are considered more effective, and an abridged version of the training is being developed with the MoE for future use.

**Regular learning and sharing meetings support adoption:** meetings with stakeholders at provincial and national levels facilitated reflection, sharing of best practices, and dissemination of resources like accessibility audit tools. These meetings consolidated advocacy efforts and supported the replication of successful IE interventions.

## Recommendations

### Recommendations to improve the ongoing intervention:

- 1. Strengthen knowledge transfer for teacher turnover:** Develop practical tools such as manuals, checklists, and short videos of IE best practices. Facilitate peer mentoring and knowledge exchange meetings to ensure continuity and minimise disruptions caused by teacher turnover in the final project phase. (Responsibility: Sightsavers, Local Education Authorities)
- 2. Offer certificates of completion for trainings:** Distribute certificates to teachers, parents, and other participants who complete trainings before the project ends. This recognises their efforts, provides a record and motivates continued engagement. (Responsibility: ZAFOD, Sightsavers)
- 3. Strengthen Sightsavers' disaggregated monitoring data collection** by validating data on disability types, school transition levels, or the proportion of teachers trained per school. Consider conducting pre- and post-training assessments and gathering feedback to refine the training manual before project completion. (Responsibility: ZAFOD and Sightsavers)
- 4. Continue targeted stigma reduction efforts:** Maintain community-specific campaigns using local leaders, role models, and OPDs. Empower LSEND to self-advocate and understand their rights. (Responsibility: ZAFOD and Sightsavers)

### Recommendations for the design of the next project cycle:

- 1. Early engagement of consortium partners:** Hold workshops before the next project phase to agree on activities, sequencing, roles, and budget allocations. This fosters clear expectations, joint ownership, and reduces the need for corrective actions later. (Responsibility: Sightsavers, Consortium Partners)
- 2. Leverage CDF, dedicated school funds and teachers' CPD training for scale-up:** Encourage new zones to tap into the CDF for assistive devices and school infrastructure modifications. Ensure headteachers allocate 10% of school funds for IE support. Integrate IE practices into CPD training for teachers and use local media in local language to raise awareness and community support for IE. (Responsibility: Local Authorities, Headteachers, Sightsavers, ZAFOD)
- 3. Pilot transition pathways:** Collaborate with local artisans, businesses and community centres, to pilot small-scale apprenticeships for youth with disabilities. This reduces the need to travel to distant vocational training centres and provides practical employment skills. (Responsibility: Sightsavers, Local Artisans, Businesses, MoE)

4. **Introduce non-monetary incentives for IE:** Implement incentives such as local awards, recognition events, or leadership opportunities to motivate teachers and headteachers to adopt and sustain inclusive practices (Responsibility: MoE, Sightsavers)
5. **Continue regular learning and sharing workshops:** Continue these workshops to share best practices, contextualise the low-cost model and provide hands-on demonstrations. Consider aligning these workshops with key policy events to maximise impact. (Responsibility: Sightsavers, MoE)
6. **Advocate for an IE budget tracking system:** Advocate for a system to track IE budget planning, allocations, and expenditures to identify gaps and inform future budget decisions. ZAFOD's capacity for national policy discussion could be strengthened by including experts or enabling delegation of representatives with relevant expertise. (Responsibility: ZAFOD, MoE, Sightsavers)