

ZAMBIA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE
HEARING IMPAIRED ZNAHI

REPORT ON

THE OPEN EARS TO LEART PROJECT
IMPLEMENTED IN WESTERN PROVINCE

Funded by ABILIS

1.0 Introduction

The Zambia National Association of The Hearing Impaired ZNAHI applied for funding of Euro 7,827.00 from ABILIS FOUNDATION of Finland to implement the Open Ears To Learn Project in Mongu , Senaga and Kaoma districts of Western Province in November 2009. Z.NAHI set 300 as a target number of children to be screened but more than 700 children were screened during the exercise.

The goal of the project was to include hearing impaired children in mainstream schools by increasing their learning participation after identifying such children through screening them for hearing loss and subsequent provision of hearing aids and making of appropriate referrals to special schools where necessary. ZNAHI received the funding in March 2010 and implemented the project as explained under the following subheadings:

2. 0 Preliminary Arrangements

ZNAHI received the first installment Of Euro 3,914 from ABILIS Foundation on 15 March 2010 and fixed the dates for screening of children for hearing loss in Western Province from 16 to 26 May 2010. Mobilization of pupils, teachers and district education officials in readiness for the exercise was done by contacting the Senior Education Standard Officer for Special Education, Mr. Muhau

Muhau who was ZNAHI's agent in the province.

However, Kaoma District was later replaced by Sefula Mission as it was decided to screen children who are already known to be blind for an additional disability of hearing impairment. Thus the project also involved identifying children with deafblindness.

The other logistical preparations namely procurement of publicity and training materials as well as the servicing of the motor vehicle for fieldwork, purchasing of hearing aids accessories and production of training manuals for teachers were completed by 15 April. However, due to delayed transfer of the second installment of Euro 3 314 into ZNAHI bank account by ABILIS, the actual screening exercise was postponed to June 13 to 24 when funds were later made available in early June.

3.1 Screening Team

The screening team comprised the following officials:

3.1.1 Mr. Simate Simate- Team Leader

3.1.2 Mr. George Mubita –Audiologist/Clinical Officer

3.1.3 Mr. Muhau Muhau- Senior Education Standard Officer/Special Education

3.1.4 Mr. Vincent Bwalya –Audio Technician

3.1.5 Miss Molly Namfukwe- Assistant Audio Technician

3.2 Groundwork Screening Exercise

The above officials except Mr Muhau left Lusaka on 13 June for Mongu. They made a courtesy call at the Provincial Education Office the following morning accompanied by Mr Muhau. The team was officially and cordially received by the Principal Education Standards Officer Mr. Zimba, who mentioned that the provincial education office valued the purpose of their visit and assured the team of all the necessary support from his office.

The team was then led to the District Education Office and was equally cordially received by the District Education Standards Officer- DESO, Mr. Sendoi who also echoed the remarks of his counterpart at the provincial education office. The DESO accompanied the team to the screening centers in his district starting with Limulunga Basic School screening centre which is about 20km north of Mongu urban centre to introduce the team and make official opening remarks to the teachers and pupils about the program.

After the official opening remarks by both accompanying education officers, a 2 hour

briefing of the importance of screening for hearing loss and its implication to learning and the remedy teachers need to make, was made to teachers by Mr. Simate . Mr. Simate further emphasized the need for Inclusive Education as stated in Article 24 of The UN Convention On The Rights of Disabled Persons. He explained this using a teacher s' manual.

The screening exercise at Limulunga lasted from 14 to 15 June where 113 children from 9 schools represented by 12 teachers were screened and 6 pupils benefited from allocation of hearing aids

The following morning, the exercise moved to Kanyonyo Basic School in Mongu Urban. The team was accompanied by the same education officials to conduct the exercise.

At Kanyonyo 372 pupils from 20 schools were screened and 24 teachers attended the workshop. 14 hearing aids were allocated to children found to have a hearing loss. The exercise at Kanyonyo lasted from 16 to 18 June.

On the second day of the exercise, the Director of Lewanika General Hospital, the largest health centre in the province, invited

Mr. Simate and Mr. Muhau to his office to discuss the possibility of the hospital collaborating with ZNAHI to establish an ENT Unit at the hospital in order to provide primary ear care services to the public in the province. The meeting agreed on principle that an ENT unit should be established at Lewanika General Hospital and the director was tasked to set a special date for a meeting that would specifically discuss and pass a resolution over this important idea.

After three days of screening of children for hearing loss at Kanyonyo Basic School, the team left on June 16 for Sefula Mission School which is about 40 km south-west of Mongu to screen blind children at Sefula Basic School for the Blind, with the view of identifying blind children with hearing loss. Other pupils from 9 schools in the vicinity of the mission station also came for screening. The team was accompanied by the same education officials from the provincial and district offices.

During the screening exercise, the Director of Teacher Education, Mrs. Mubanga who was on her official tour of the province from Lusaka, took advantage of her presence to attend the exercise and commended the team for the valuable service it was rendering to children and the public.

At Sefula screening centre 133 children were screened for hearing loss and 6 were provided with hearing aids.

However, the team could not screen blind children as the school had closed for winter holiday since the sense of feeling among blind children was reported to be affected by extreme cold weather. This exercise was overtaken by the postponement of the initial planned program from May to June. However, teachers from the same school attended the workshop with the others from 8 other schools

The screening exercise then moved the following day to Senanga District which is further north-west of Mongu and lasted from 21 to 23 June. The team paid a courtesy call at the District Education Office and was cordially received by the District Education Board Secretary, Mr. Walubiita who handed the team over to the District Education Standards Officer Mr. Kawanga. The team was then lead to the District Resource Center based at Senanga Basic School for the screening exercise,

After the official opening and briefing of teachers like all the other centers, the screening exercise went on smoothly and 164 children drawn from 10 schools represented by 12 teachers were screened. 6 children were provided with hearing aids.

The table below gives summary a Of the entire screening exercise.

SCREENING CENTER	DATE SCREENED	NUMBER OF SHOOOLS SCREENED	NUMBER OF PUPILS SCREENED	NUMB ER OF HEARI NG AIDS GIVEN OUT	NUMB ER OF TEACHI RS SE NSTIZE D
Limulunga	14-15	9	113	6	12
Kanyonyo	16-18	20	372	14	24
Sefula	19-20	9	133	6	11
Senanga	21-23	10	164	6	12

4. 0 General Observations

During the screening period, it was generally observed that there is a relative high prevalence of hearing impairment in the province caused by a number of factors that take the form of wax accumulation, disease infection and heredity. The most common cause of hearing impairment according to clinical findings was otitis media an infection which affected over 60% of the children screened. It was further observed that there is actually a much larger number of children with hearing impairments attending mainstream schools but without any special attention from both parents and teachers even when such children are identified. This was largely attributed to a general high level of unawareness about the existence of ENT services in the country. This also entails that there is a large number of children who have attained school age but have not enrolled into school on account of their hearing loss especially in remote areas of the province. The team further established that, there was a tendency by both parents and teachers to associate failure to give appropriate responses by hearing impaired pupils to instructions, with either rudeness or mental retardation among hearing impaired children until they were diagnosed during screening. There were also a number of teachers whose performance is affected by hearing impairment as was case with Limulunga Basic,

Mongu Basic, Lukwalanya High School, Sefula High School where one teacher from each of these schools was allocated with a hearing aid and confessed avoiding staff meetings and other gatherings due to poor hearing. The above situation explained the significance of the hearing loss screening exercise was highly appreciated by both the public and the education authority in the province. It was actually reported that the attendance of children and members of the public would have been much higher than the number screened if the initial communicated schedule was not postponed.

5.0 Challenges Encountered

The Open Ears to Learn Project was successfully implemented as planned despite a few challenges. The biggest notable challenge was the postponement of the initial screening schedule due to delayed transfer of the second installment of money by ABILIS into ZNAHI bank account. This led erosion of confidence among the beneficiaries and stakeholders some of whom did not attend the final program. Despite this situation the number of children who finally turned out for screening were too numerous. This made the screening team work exceedingly longer hours in order to attend to all. There were also more teachers who attended the briefing than were officially invited. This compelled the team leader to buy more food stuffs for their tea break and also

for those children who spent longer hours waiting to be screened as they could not go back to their respective homes for lunch.

There were also numerous pleas for children who were screened as late as 20:00 hours to be transported back home as they lived too far to go back by themselves which the team leader had to accept. This meant additional expenditure on fuel than was initially budgeted.

6.0 Achievement Indicators

By implementing the Open Ears to Learn project, ZNAHI made the following achievements

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1. 782 children against the 300 targeted children in western province were screened for hearing loss and 32 of these were provided with hearing aids to enable them continue learning in mainstream schools thereby implementing the inclusive education policy in Zambia.
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2 Awareness about the existence of the Convention on The Rights of Disabled People, especially the Article on Education, was raised among mainstream and special education teachers in the province.

3 Public awareness about ENT service existence and hearing impairment in Zambia were raised especially among children who were screened and their parents and teachers.

4 Profound deaf children who could not attend mainstream schools and who were not yet enrolled into school were referred to Senanga School for the Deaf since the responsible officer was available to authorize those referrals.

5 One child with low vision at Kanyonyo who was found with a severe hearing loss was classified deafblind and later referred to Sefula School for the Blind. This was the first case of this nature to come to the attention of the education officials in the province.

6 Prevention of more cases of hearing loss as a result of various ear infections especially otitis media was done through diagnosing those infections and referring such cases for early treatment to local health centers.

7 The need to establish an ENT unit to provide primary ear care services at the highest medical institution in the province was created.

8 ZNAHI established contact persons for its membership development program in Limulunga, Mongu and Senanga.

7.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

The Open Ears to Learn project made great impact on the lives of children and members of the public in the areas where it was implemented. Its implementation will enhance the participation of hearing impaired children in the learning process and improve service delivery to such children by teachers. It is therefore highly recommended that an extension of the project to other areas and districts within and outside western province is done in 2 years time.
