**Transcription**

**Reflections on systemic change and expansion**

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I have been DEBS since 2012 and there has been a lot of interaction from that time on in many of our education provision programs.

Today I would like to talk about the inclusive education we are implementing in partnership with CBR, which is Community Based Rehabilitation team based in Livingstone. A lot has been done in the district on inclusive education and this has come about as a pilot in two of our zonal schools.

As a district we have 18 zones and we have 147 schools; in these 147 schools we have 56 Community Schools, 79 Primary Schools, 8 Secondary Schools and 4 Private Schools. In order for us to provide quality education we have zoned them; we have 18 zones and 2 schools which are piloting inclusive education. These 2 schools are also Zonal schools and they are Riverview, where this office is, and the school which is piloting inclusive education is also Riverview. We have another zone which is Katapazi Zone and the Zonal School, which is Katapazi, is also piloting inclusive education.

Since the inception of inclusive education, we have seen a good number of things happening in our district. Being what it is, Kazungula is remote and rural, we have schools that are difficult to reach like Katapazi is one of those schools that are away from this office and during rainy season we have challenges in reaching them. Out of so many schools we thought we could start with those 2 schools. From what is happening in those 2 schools we have intentions of rolling over this program to many other schools in this district because of the good habits of developments that we have noticed in these 2 piloting schools. For example, in Katapazi and Riverview where we are piloting this program, we have seen a lot of developments. Before the program we had some of the learners who were not coming to school because parents and the communities looked down upon them thinking that because of the situation in which they are they should not attend education or they were being hidden, but the coming of inclusive education due to the many programs we have gone through some trainings, workshops, we have come up to realise that our communities needed also orientation. That orientation was conducted through so many wonderful programs like drama where CBR contacted some groups and we went around these communities around Riverview and Kazapazi to sensitise the people. The drama groups did their work marvellously in such a way that communities now are aware, they are no longer hiding these children with educational needs because they have been brought on board. There have been also committees that have been formed in the communities for home-based education for learners who are not able to come to schools. These are learning and our learners, the numbers have also increased in our schools because of this sensitisation many children have been brought on board. Even our own teachers; before teachers thought only those that had gone for special training could handle children with SEN. Now through the training of trainers workshops these trainers have also trained other teachers. They have now been brought onboard and even the teaching methodologies have changed because we are including all the learners. Even those mild disabilities should be excluded but they are being included in the same class by the same teachers and this has brought improvement in those areas. Looking at what has happened we would like to roll this out to many of our schools in the district.

The other thing that has come up through the introduction of inclusive education is that some renovations have been done to our buildings in these schools to accommodate learners in all walks of life. Before, this was not done, but now like we have renovated, put up ramps to enable learners in wheelchairs to have access to the toilets, classrooms and even other rooms within the school. At one time we thought it was something that would be very expensive but with the coming of CBR and how they helped us we didn’t need a lot of money to do constructions all over again; there were just certain areas where we renovated with minimum expenses. This has proven that this can be done elsewhere without spending much money as long as the will is there, I think all things are proven to be possible.

We have also learnt that this should not only happen in our schools but even in the communities where these children come from. In our own homes we don’t know what will come tomorrow, we may be what we are today but we don’t know how we will be tomorrow. This should be done in such a way that even where learners are coming from, even ourselves where we are in communities, we need to see how we can have renovations even to buildings that are already done. Those that are to be done, let’s include the changes in our plans so that what we construct will cater for everyone – as inclusive as it may be.

The other thing we have learnt through this is that special education and inclusive education there is a conflict. special education is just catering for those cases whereas inclusive education has brought everyone on board. Mathematically I can simply say that special education is a sub-set, or is a set with another set that is inclusive education. There can be no conflict per se. Even teachers before thought inclusive education could not be handled by any other apart from those that are specially trained, but it has proven that it can be done by all even those who didn’t go for special education training. Through ToT workshops, all the teachers in the school are brought on board, even learners are brought on board so they are able to see how they are able to help their fellow learners. Even teachers can see how they can help all other learners in their classroom.

In the provision of inclusive education, together with CBR we have also learnt one thing in our community. By bringing the community on board, not only by sensitisation, but also in the community participation. in the putting up of ramps in schools for instance, communities have been very handy, they have brought up front materials for us to undertake these constructions. By so doing, even the costs have been cut down because the community is participating, is actively involved by bringing up front materials. Also, the communities have been involved in the identification of learners that have such needs that they are not left out. Even our Government has mission of leaving no one behind and this is what is being practiced by CBR by leaving no one behind. So, when the community is involved, we are able to do a lot because up front materials are coming from the community and also their committees which are known as SIT’s that are working hand-in-hand with us and CBR to see to it that these goals are achieved. Also, as a district we are bringing onboard mentorship; those that are role-models where learners are able to see that those that have been in that condition have gone ahead in education. They have gone for training in other institutions and they have come back to their communities and they are working. As a district we have some teachers who went through this program of se. We have teachers who have disabilities but they are working, they are able to provide. So, in so doing, it is clear indication that disability is not inability and they are able to do exceedingly more that those so-called people without disability are able to do. We have learnt a lot in this area and I would like to encourage my fellow DEB’s in other districts because this is only done now in 3 districts but I would like to encourage those that as we are the pilot district they can still learn from us when we are rolling out so that even others can roll it out. Not even just within the province but even in other provinces and even worldwide. This system is working for us and since it is working here it can work elsewhere. The only thing we need to do is to work together and see what we can do even with the communities, leaving no one behind.