

YouthActionNet®

CASE STUDY SERIES

Sani Foundation:

*BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS
FOR A MORE INCLUSIVE
SOCIETY*

A partnership between:



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

School of Foreign Service
Global Human Development Program



Introduction

This is one of a series of case studies produced by students enrolled in the Global Human Development Program at Georgetown University through its partnership with the International Youth Foundation (IYF). Students enrolled in a course exploring the role of social enterprises and social entrepreneurs were paired with young leaders of social ventures identified through the IYF's YouthActionNet® program. The students were given the assignment of analyzing the venture's assets, successful methodologies, and opportunities for investment to increase impact. Through this experiential learning process, the student consultants gained hands-on experience and exposure to the needs of social enterprises. The ventures, too, benefited from student insights into their strengths, areas for growth, and recommendations for enhancing their impact and sustainability. The Georgetown practicum is part of YouthActionNet's larger efforts to partner with institutions of higher learning around the globe to integrate social change into the academic experience and career interests of students.

International Youth Foundation

The International Youth Foundation (IYF) invests in the extraordinary potential of young people. Founded in 1990, IYF builds and maintains a worldwide community of businesses, governments, and civil society organizations committed to empowering youth to be healthy, productive, and engaged citizens. IYF programs are catalysts of change that help young people obtain a quality education, gain employability skills, make healthy choices, and improve their communities.

www.iyfnetwork.org

YouthActionNet®

Since 2001, YouthActionNet, a program of the International Youth Foundation, has provided founders of social ventures, ages 18 to 29, with the training, networking, coaching, funding, and advocacy opportunities they need to strengthen and scale their impact. These young social entrepreneurs have pioneered innovative solutions to critical local and global challenges, resulting in increased civic engagement, improved health, education reform, economic opportunity, environmental protection, and more inclusive societies. Our work is carried out through a network of 23 national and regional youth leadership institutes that collectively support over 1,350 young social entrepreneurs globally.

www.youthactionnet.org

Global Human Development Program at Georgetown University

The Global Human Development Program of Georgetown University is home to one of the world's premier master's degree programs in international development. An innovative, academically rigorous skills-based graduate program, the Master of Global Human Development degree prepares the next generation of development professionals to work with public sector agencies, private businesses, and non-profit organizations that advance development. Through coursework, extracurricular activity, and practical fieldwork experiences, our graduates develop the insights, skills, and experiences necessary to become leaders in development and make a difference in our global community.

<https://ghd.georgetown.edu>

INTRODUCTION

Meet Michelle Chimuka, Founder and Executive Director of Sani Foundation

Born and raised in Zambia, Michelle Chimuka grew up with the same basic abilities and opportunities as many of her peers. She was acutely aware, however, that not all others were afforded those same opportunities. Michelle's brother was born with Down Syndrome and she witnessed firsthand the cruel injustices imposed on those with intellectual disabilities. Through the experiences of her sibling, Michelle understood that the barriers existing in Zambian society for people with intellectual disabilities were not protecting people but rather inhibiting their potential. As she affirms, "disability is not inability."



Michelle founded the Sani Foundation to fully include people with intellectual disabilities into Zambian society. As the Executive Director, Michelle is quiet, intense, and has a clear mission with the confidence to carry it to reality. During the beginning of her career, Michelle worked in both the private sector and development spheres, gaining valuable experience in donor engagement, partnership facilitation, and financial management. Michelle combined these skills with a passion for creating opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities to found the Sani Foundation in 2014, through which she plans to affect large-scale change in Zambia.

Sani Foundation is opening new doors for people with intellectual disabilities in Zambia.



The Problem

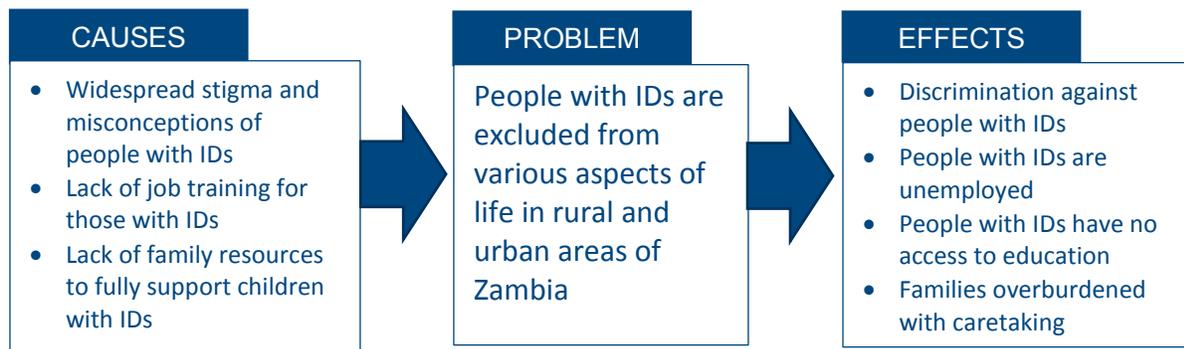
In Zambia today, those born with intellectual disabilities have little to no services available to them at any point in their lives. The global average for the prevalence of disability is 10-15% of the population. Data available in Zambia suggests that the average is 2.5% to 7%, while a different World Bank study cites the prevalence as closer to 10%.¹ According to Michelle, this data for Zambia underestimates the prevalence of disabilities in the country and does not disaggregate the data by type of disability or offer any insight into the prevalence of intellectual disabilities. Although the Zambian government enacted the Persons with Disabilities Act No. 6 in 2012 in an effort to eliminate discrimination and create equal opportunities for citizens with disabilities, the implementation of the law has more than a long way to go.² The continued discrimination and lack of available services for people with intellectual disabilities effects not only the persons with disabilities themselves, but also members of their families, who struggle financially and emotionally to support their loved ones.

¹Mitria, Sophie, Aleksandra Posarac and Brandon Vick, "April 2011 Disability and Poverty in Developing Countries: A Snapshot from the World Health Survey." April 2011. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/501871468326189306/text/625640NWP0110900PUBLIC00BOX361487B.txt>.

² Mung'omba, James. *Comparative Policy Brief: Status of Intellectual Disabilities in the Republic of Zambia*. Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities, Volume 5 Number 2, June 2008, pp 142-144.

One of the biggest challenges faced by people with intellectual disabilities in Zambia is the dearth of employment opportunities. Popular stigma, widespread societal misconceptions, and a lack of adequate training for those with intellectual disabilities makes employers typically unwilling to hire someone with an intellectual disability of any kind. The absence of employment opportunities seeps down into all other aspects of life for people with intellectual disabilities, from interpersonal interaction, empowerment and agency, and hope for the future. As Mr. Quincy Mwiwa, a man living with an intellectual disability from Livingstone, Zambia said, “Without work we are marginalized; we remain perpetual beggars for almost everything we need.”³

Figure 1: Causes and effects of excluding people with intellectual disabilities



The Solution

With Michelle as the driving force, the Sani Foundation knows the full extent of the problems encountered by people with intellectual disabilities and employs a holistic and personalized approach to help beneficiaries become active members of Zambian society across all aspects of life.

Rooted in a thorough understanding of the challenges faced by people with intellectual disabilities in Zambia, the Sani Foundation offers a solution that tackles the main issues on a personalized level. The strategy for large-scale impact is fairly simple: helping individuals with intellectual disabilities to become successful and contributing members of society will, in turn, work to change policy and allow for a more inclusive and empathetic society in Zambia and beyond. The Sani Foundation will continue to test, document, and prove the efficacy of the model the organization offers in order to put that model into place within already existing vocational training programs and schools, as well as existing government programs and services. The model can then extend outside of Lusaka and into all parts of the country, while the foundation works towards a long-term shift in policy and work support for persons with intellectual disabilities.

The Sani Foundation provides solutions to the central effects of the current problem around empowerment of those with intellectual disabilities in four interacting ways. First, the Sunshine Zambia Project provides education and training tailored to the individual ambitions and skills of each individual beneficiary. Modeled after a similar program in Zimbabwe, the project serves as the

³ Parmenter, Trevor R. *Promoting training and employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities: International experience*. Employment Working Paper No. 103, International Labour Organization, 2011, page 4.

foundation of the organization's work and ensures that each beneficiary is engaging and developing on their own terms. In complement to the Sunshine Zambia Project, the Sani Foundation extends educational training into employment preparation by connecting beneficiaries with jobs matching their interests and skills. Thirdly, the Foundation engages the parents and family members of those they serve every step of the way. Finally, on a greater scale, the Sani Foundation is involved with a number of communications initiatives to spread awareness about intellectual disabilities with the goal of breaking down existing stigmas and building up compassion and understanding.



Operational Model

The Sani Foundation is a nonprofit organization registered both as a company limited by guarantee with the Patents and Company Registration Agency (PACRA) as well as with the Zambia Agency of Persons and Disabilities (ZAPD). Currently, the Sani Foundation is in the process of registering as a public benefit organization with the Zambia Revenue Authority. Since 2014, the Foundation

has relied on private donations to fund the services it provides its beneficiaries.

Although the Sani Foundation is small with a current staff of 14 salaried employees, it has already achieved long-lasting impacts in the lives of beneficiaries served since beginning in 2014 and currently serves 24 young people with intellectual disabilities. Six beneficiaries have been transitioned to a job of their choosing, and others are gaining the basic training and skills unavailable to them in other special education schools.

In order to facilitate the critical transition between training and work, the Sani Foundation is building a strategic plan to implement a supported employment program through which beneficiaries will transition to job opportunities in the workplace while maintaining the consistent support of a Sani Foundation staff member. Supported employment programs exist in a number of countries worldwide and are hailed as a strategy that embraces the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (UNCROPD) as well as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This is the first such initiative in Zambia, and as a result, the Sani Foundation is building a thorough strategic plan that aims not only to meet the individual needs of beneficiaries but also affects change at a policy and legislative level through the formation of key partnerships with politicians and lawmakers at local and federal levels.

Key to the foundation's success is an active network of local and international partnerships. Among the Foundation's local partners are the Special Hope Network (SHN), Africa Directions, and the Zambia Association of Parents of Children with Disabilities (ZAPCD). SHN provides the foundation with valuable staff development training and best practice consulting for the foundation's education and employment programming. Africa Directions, a local NGO, has worked traditionally to empower at-risk youth in Zambia through performance art and is now working with the Sani Foundation to include youth with intellectual disabilities into programs. In conjunction with ZAPCD, the Sani

Foundation is able to foster a growing support network for parents of children with intellectual disabilities across the country.

The Sani Foundation also set up a Technical Working Group in late 2016 in order to begin building critical relationships with the Zambian government and other stakeholders on the ground. The Technical Working Group includes representatives from the government, the private sector, disabled persons' organizations, and other relevant civil society actors like already existing training programs. The group was created to be a vehicle through which stakeholders can strategize and implement programs that work towards inclusive skills training and employment initiatives in Zambia.

KEY ASSETS AND SUCCESSFUL METHODOLOGIES

Holistic Approach to Mission on Individual Level

The holistic and intensive approach employed by the Sani Foundation for each beneficiary affects unprecedented progress in overcoming the barriers that prevent those with intellectual disabilities from participating in Zambian society. The Sani Foundation serves individuals between the ages of 18 and 30 with a broad range of intellectual disabilities as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO). As opposed to other similar organizations in Zambia or elsewhere in the world that provide broad modes of support, the Sani Foundation approach is specific, personalized, and comprehensive.



The clearest example of Sani Foundation's holistic methodology is their pilot Sunshine Zambia Project. As part of the Sunshine Zambia Project, each beneficiary undergoes an assessment that includes input from the individual, their family members, and behavioral and education experts. The assessment results are translated by Sani Foundation staff into an Individualized Support Plan (ISP) that sets a timeline of clear goals for each beneficiary ranging across a variety of development areas. These areas include vocational, adaptive, and social abilities as well as more concrete lessons in gardening, cooking, home management, and physical exercise. Today, the Sani Foundation is working intensively with 16 individuals on their ISPs, and each beneficiary has shown significant personal progress as a result of the project.

Other organizations in the same space neglect to focus on the seemingly simple difficulties that create huge obstacles for some individuals with intellectual disabilities. The Sani Foundation fills in these gaps by working with each beneficiary at their own pace to ensure that every individual has the tools necessary to participate more fully in society. For example, in 2015 the Sani Foundation was able to assist one beneficiary to use the bathroom independently and another in using public transportation on his own, both of whom had been unable to learn these basic skills despite attending special education schools. These ostensibly small steps in progress are critical in the process of transitioning individuals with intellectual disabilities towards employment and fuller participation in society.

Long-Term Change Through Employment Preparation

While the Sani Foundation grants individuals with intellectual disabilities the tools to more fully participate in the societies around them, the focus on long-term employment preparation more deeply disrupts the current structures that inhibit those with intellectual disabilities from taking advantage of their full rights as citizens throughout Zambia. The Sani Foundation has worked diligently towards the goal of employment for beneficiaries since its inception. In the first year of operations alone, the Sani Foundation was able to train 7 members, 50% of beneficiaries at the time, to the step of transitioning to employment and exploring specific job opportunities. By focusing on employment as a central objective, the Sani Foundation is able to achieve this mission from a variety of angles. The success of beneficiaries in the workplace acts to increase awareness and exposure around people with intellectual disabilities.

A relationship with the Zambian government is key to achieving employment for beneficiaries. The direct engagement of the Zambian government is essential to the Sani Foundation’s scalability vision, which is to embed the learning and training model into government programs and existing employment infrastructure throughout Zambia.

SaniFoundation SWOT Analysis

	Strengths	Weaknesses
INTERNAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holistic and individualized approach • Strong local and international partnerships • Breaks fown stigma associated with intellectual disabilities • Clearly stated strategies and objectives • Intersecting strategic approaches target individuals and policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High staff turnover • Reliance on volunteers • Unsustainable donor funds • Lack of reliability or internally-generated revenue • Costly required staff training • Limited to work within Lusaka
EXTERNAL	Opportunities	Threats
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer partnerships to facilitate long term employment of beneficiaries • Internal enterprises that offer employment and revenue to be reinvested • International branding and support through increased online presence • Scalability through leverage of existing vocational training centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited fundraising • Dependence on donor funds • Lack of consistent monitoring and evaluation capabilities • Difficulty obtaining employment for beneficiaries • High costs and staff investments per beneficiary

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVESTMENT

As the Sani Foundation begins its fourth year of operation, the organization is approaching a critical period of potential growth. The foundation has consolidated a strategic approach and forged essential partnerships, making it poised to scale up operations both to better serve current beneficiaries and to expand services to a greater number of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Although the opportunities for increasing impact are exciting, the Sani Foundation has struggled to maintain the financial resources required to fully fund the enterprise. In order to continue and scale this innovative work, the Sani Foundation will need to diversify and increase access to funds by strengthening longer-lasting donor partnerships and creating sustainable revenue-producing mechanisms.

Strengthening Longer Term Donor Partnerships

As a young organization, financial sustainability remains central challenge. Currently, donors are the primary source of income and donations have not kept up with growth. While the organization has engaged with online fundraising on websites like You Caring, the results to date have not proven to be significant. A lack of funding has required some costs to be subsidized by the Executive Director and led to subsequent difficulties in staff retention and sufficient staff training. The Sani Foundation is unable to fund salaries for new staff members and relies heavily on volunteers. While the volunteers play an important role in increasing awareness and supporting Sani Foundation services, a reliance on voluntary human resources brings problems with quality control, motivation, and a lack of stability. In addition, financial constraints further preclude the Sani Foundation from pursuing exciting new opportunities and partnerships on both local and international levels. Current funding needs include adequate salaries for staff members, curricular development, data collection, and additional staff members to support the Supported Employment program.

A potential solution to the Sani Foundation's financial needs could include a two-pronged approach to cultivating donor partnerships on both individual and organizational levels. As mentioned above, the Sani Foundation has attracted a group of individuals willing to donate their time to volunteering with the foundation and assisting those with intellectual disabilities. While a reliance on volunteers can contribute to a climate of instability for staff and beneficiaries, the Sani Foundation could specifically direct volunteer work into avenues that more directly benefit the organization, such as the formulation and implementation of an online marketing and crowdfunding campaign connected to providing specific services for Sani Foundation beneficiaries. Although the Sani Foundation has utilized sites like You Caring in the past as a means of crowdfunding for programs and services, a more focused and comprehensive crowdfunding campaign would effectively leverage the Sani Foundation's strengths to build brand awareness both within and outside Zambia and result in higher revenue returns.

The second aspect of a potential donor partnership approach would target private sector partners with proven commitments to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) mandates. CSR in Zambia remains in an early phase, and although more firms are venturing into CSR territory, there is not a culture set up or laws in place to support CSRs consistently and effectively. By targeting private sector partners, however, the Sani Foundation would benefit in two important ways. Firstly, private sector partners can be critical donors either by donating funds put aside for CSR purposes or by incentivizing donations from their employee base. Secondly, private sector support is directly linked to the Sani Foundation's central objective of achieving sustainable employment opportunities for beneficiaries. Even if private sector donors or partners do not have offices in Zambia, the support of private sector companies with widespread brand awareness in Zambia could put pressure on local employers to offer employment opportunities to Sani Foundation beneficiaries.

Creating Sustainable Internally-Generated Revenue

The creation of an internal enterprise that both employed beneficiaries and supplied a steady revenue stream to the organization was central to the early conception of the Sani Foundation. However, such an enterprise was not developed because funds were channeled directly into the training and education services that are the building blocks of the Sani Foundation's work. Although programming for the Sani Foundation's beneficiaries includes craft-making and gardening, the results of which are sold in local flea markets and used for on-site consumption respectively, neither create a significant source of revenue for the Foundation.



As an element of the two-pronged donor partnership cultivation approach described above, the Sani Foundation could create a fundraising campaign dedicated exclusively to acquiring the funds necessary to launch one of the several small enterprise ideas that have been in the Sani Foundation's strategic pipeline over the last year. One of the most developed of these proposed enterprise is the DICE Juice Bar, which would be run by Sani Foundation staff and staffed by Sani Foundation beneficiaries. Although the Sani Foundation has not delved into projected potential revenue of the enterprise, preliminary research suggests that the juice bar concept is a viable option to pursue. A juice bar is a simple and easily replicable enterprise that could be piloted at or near the existing Sani Foundation center and scaled to nearby neighborhoods. In addition, the juice bar could be an extension of the gardening that the Sani Foundation's beneficiaries currently do as a part of their training and education curriculums. Finally, the juice bar fits a growing market demand in Lusaka for healthier diets and lifestyles, and could be branded to dovetail with the Sani Foundation's vision of an inclusive, active Zambian society.

An additional method to create more sustainable revenue streams could be leveraging Sani Foundation's existing craft production by establishing a craft collective like Small Projects Istanbul, a small nonprofit organization in Turkey. This model offers Syrian refugee women income through the

production and selling of goods using low-cost and high-quality materials, simple step-by-step assembly, and uniform outputs sold in higher end retail outlets like boutique jewelry shops. This model has provided Small Projects Istanbul with a steady revenue stream to invest back into additional services for the Syrian refugee community while simultaneously increasing brand awareness. By streamlining the production process and selling the crafts at high end retail outlets, at which customers are willing to pay for the social value as well as the craft itself, the Sani Foundation could achieve high profit margins on the production of crafts made by beneficiaries that could be re-invested into the organization's other programs. A deepened commitment to creating enterprises that can sustainably employ Sani Foundation beneficiaries will allow the Sani Foundation to more effectively and efficiently achieve the mission of including those with intellectual disabilities in all aspects of society across rural and urban regions of Zambia.

CONCLUSION

The Sani Foundation is currently at a critical juncture in which improved methods of obtaining funding and revenue could allow for rapid growth. Michelle's passion and commitment continue to lead the Sani Foundation forward while remaining deeply rooted in the founding mission of including people with IDs into Zambian society as contributing citizens with dignity and purpose.

FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT SANI FOUNDATION

- Sani Foundation Website: <http://sanifoundation.org/>
- Sani Foundation Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/SunshineZambiaProject/>
- Zambia Daily Mail article on SANI Foundation Beneficiary: <https://www.daily-mail.co.zm/?p=57207>
- You Caring Crowdfunding Profile: <https://www.youcaring.com/sani-foundation-589931>
- Michelle Chimuka's YouthActionNet Profile: <http://www.youthactionnet.org/fellows/1400/>

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This case study series was made possible thanks to support from:



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