Title: Disability Advocate Training in Zambia

Summary:
Special Hope Network (SHN) currently has 5 Community Care Centers (CCC) that work with children with intellectual disabilities and their caregivers in specific compounds (high density neighborhoods) around Lusaka, Zambia. In 2021, our Community Outreach Team began partnering with schools, churches, clinics and other local community members in those compounds that have a CCC, to host Disability Advocacy Trainings.

Challenge
Special Hope Network has plans to open more CCCs this year and in the years to come partnered with our Community Outreach Teams. Each of the families, including the parent or caregiver and the child are isolated and left out of most society involvement until Special Hope Network comes and impacts their life. The challenge is that caregivers in Lusaka do not feel confident and equipped to speak on behalf of their child and incorporate them into regular cultural events such as church, clinic, weddings, funerals, on the bus and in the markets. What if their community were welcoming to them and they are able to feel included with hope and acceptance?

Solution
Our Community Outreach Team works to educate individuals to create a community that cares, accepts and includes children with intellectual disabilities and their families. To date we have trained 68 community leaders and counting. These trainings educate and empower Disability Advocates as they work to create a world where children with intellectual disabilities are welcomed and valued. Now that our Community Outreach Team has seen success and has the process in place for engagement in communities we plan on training close to 720 Disability Advocates around the current 5 Community Care Centers in 2022.
Long-Term Impact

As Special Hope Network looks to establish more Community Care Centers and train more Disability Advocates with our Community Outreach Team we are changing the culture in compounds that will accept families whose kids have intellectual disabilities. Over the next 3 years we are planning to have 11 CCCs in 11 compounds. As our Community Outreach Team trains advocates we will have close to 20 staff training close to 1,800 advocates in those compounds. Imagine the impact of families that go out into a society that has been trained to welcome them, where they feel more inclusivity, hope, and acceptance.