

Special Hope Network Overview

Special Hope Network (SHN) is a faith-based organization working in Zambia, Africa to train families, educators, and community leaders on how to provide quality care and inclusion to children with intellectual disabilities. SHN provides sustainable solutions to address and support the specific needs of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Special Hope Network reaches the Lusaka community through 5 **Community Care Centers** located in low income compounds, through the **Resource Center** which operates similarly to a school and reaches middle income families, through the **Therapy Center** which offers Speech Language and Behavior Therapy sessions, and through **Community Outreach** which provides disability advocacy training to government schools, clinics, churches, and other local entities.

Specific GlobalGiving Project

SPECIAL HOPE NETWORK RESOURCE CENTER - Student Scholarships

Resource Center Background:

The Special Hope Network Resource Center (RC) is an education center for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The RC opened in July 2013 in direct response to families in the community requesting individualized programming to challenge and support their children with disabilities - a service that didn't otherwise exist.

The RC currently offers discounted training and educational services for students whose families are able to invest in specialized education plans. Special Hope Network staff create individual plans based on the unique abilities of each student. Individualized plans are communicated to the student's caregivers and paired with progress updates throughout the year. There are four primary programs/classrooms that exist to meet the needs of students:

- Autism classroom focusing on communication, independence, and academic readiness
- Functional skills classroom for children over 8 years old focusing on self-care, daily living, and practical academic skills
- Academic groups classroom providing extra attention and support to children as they practice reading, writing, and mathematics.
- Essential skills classroom for children with physical disabilities (in addition to intellectual disabilities), focusing on mobility, basic concepts, and communication.

The RC allows Special Hope Network to employ highly-skilled and compassionate Zambian staff, and it doubles as Special Hope Network's headquarters where the leadership team has their office, where all SHN staff gather for meetings and trainings, and where parent trainings are hosted.

The Problem:

Upon opening in 2013, and during the first few years, Resource Center families were able to pay a small fee for individualized services which was used to cover the initial low operational costs of the RC. Over the years, the RC programming has strengthened and new teaching staff have been hired and trained to provide students with improved individualized education, but unfortunately, the economy in Zambia has declined. This means that many parents have struggled to afford the high quality RC programming their children deserve. In order for the Resource Center to reach 20 students per term, families are currently charged \$1,517.70 per year per student. Many families have shared their inability to pay this amount and have repeatedly only been able to pay a portion of the tuition or have needed to remove their child from the programming entirely. This has impacted SHN's ability to hire, train, and retain quality educational staff, and has strained the RC's ability to

reach new families each year. SHN knows they need to reach students with the excellent educational opportunities they deserve, but the RC financial structure that relies heavily on an inconsistent local economy, makes it difficult to consistently reach this network of students with intellectual disabilities. SHN has seen the positive impact that the high functioning RC has had in the Lusaka community and believes families reached by the RC are positioned well to help cultivate a more inclusive Zambia. RC families continue to impact their various communities and are key stakeholders in reshaping the community narrative around disability and advocating for the unique needs of ALL children. Unfortunately, without proper funding, the RC will shut down and the community will continue to experience the impact of a little to no resources for students with intellectual disabilities.

The Solution:

SHN would like to provide 15 families with annual scholarships that discount annual schooling from \$505.90 to \$321.94 per term, to relieve the financial burden associated with high quality education for children with intellectual disabilities in Zambia. In order to do this, Special Hope Network needs to raise \$551.90 per year, per student.

Cost

15 students on a RC Scholarship = \$8,278.50

1 Year - 1 Student RC Scholarship = \$551.90

1 Term - 1 Student RC Scholarship = \$183.97

Global Giving Summary

In Zambia, students with intellectual disabilities are not offered individualized education to challenge their unique needs or promote their value in society. Because of this educational void, communities are overlooking the value of high quality education for ALL children, and children with intellectual disabilities are remaining incredibly vulnerable.

How Will This Project Solve the Problem?

The Special Hope Network Resource Center (RC) opened to address this void. The RC offers individualized educational programming to students with intellectual disabilities and additional training for their parents so family units can play a key role in reshaping the disability narrative in Zambia. RC partnership scholarships will allow experienced Zambian Education Specialists to continue providing quality education to students with intellectual disabilities in the midst of economic instability.

Potential Long-Term Impact

Over the past 8 years, SHN has seen the RC's positive impact in Lusaka and believes families reached by the RC are positioned well to help cultivate a more inclusive Zambia. RC families continue to impact their various communities and are key stakeholders in reshaping the community narrative around disability and advocating for the unique needs of ALL children. Without the RC, Zambia will lose a resource that promotes the value of students with disabilities and the importance of inclusion!