

3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Summit on

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## **A child find pilot project- empowering vulnerable disabled children from townships with nutrition and special early child education: Psychological and health well-being of families and children in Misisi and Kuku township in Lusaka District-Zambia**

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Children with disabilities are the most discriminated group globally, particularly those from lower and middle-income countries. 15% of the Zambian populations are persons with disabilities. 23.9% of children with disabilities under the age of five have no access to education. In Zambia, since early colonial times, early childhood education has been in private hands and preserved for the rich. Government only introduced early childhood education in public schools in 2011. Little has been done to address special early childhood education (SECE). The aim of piloting a Child -Find Project was to empower vulnerable families and their children with mild and severe intellectual disabled from townships with nutrition and quality special early child education. 24 families of children with mild and severe intellectual disabilities whose children were not in centers were identified in Misisi and Kuku townships of Lusaka district. 14 children were less than ten years and were enrolled at Zambia Institute of Special Education Demonstration Centre. 10 were 16 years and above and were sent for a three-year agriculture skill training. One parent volunteered to be a assistance care giver teacher at Zambia Institute of Special Education Demonstration Centre. Ongoing results indicate that direct caregiver-child attachment at the center in collaboration with special teachers, revealed observable children's love for schooling, good health looking and attendance rate increased. Families demonstrated observable reduced stress and happy with the quality of special education, free transport, feeding programs, respite care and the play park. Awareness rate on special early childhood education has increased in townships. This was evident when parents formed a Parents- Teachers Association committee (PTA) and supported other families of children aged 16 and above to send their siblings for skill training in agriculture. Sustainability of such a project needs to be considered. A national-wide survey in early childhood centers and communities is needed on the prevalence rate of children aged 3-6 years with mild and severe intellectual disabilities. More modern special education centres need to be built in communities.

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