EMPOWERING CARERS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

A PARTICIPATORY GROUP APPROACH

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FACTS ABOUT ZAMBIA

- Population 13.1 million
- Disability distribution is estimated at 2%
- Unemployment rate 7.53%  
  (Central Statistical Office 2010)

- Poverty 60% below poverty line  
  42% extremely poor  
  (Central Statistical Office 2015)
- Malnutrition
- Communicable and non communicable diseases
Parents with children with disabilities face a double burden

Stigma and negative attitude

Inadequate rehabilitative services

Lack of adaptive equipment
Working as an occupational therapist in Zambia requires one to use a lot of initiative:

- Resource mobilization
- Complimenting governments efforts of addressing issues of disability at all levels
Participatory group project

- Staff involved: one OT, two OT assistants, two Norwegian OT students
- 5 carers meeting twice per week for five weeks
- All the children required adaptive equipment
- The project received financial support from a local NGO
Support children's’ development and participation in family life and play

Provide an arena for sharing experience between carers and professionals

Empower carers in supporting their children's’ development

Produce equipment that would promote childrens’ participation in ADL
Education and supervision about different conditions, disabilities, stigma and benefit of therapy

Making APT corner seats for each child in the group.

Sharing of experience between the careers

Sharing a meal after the days work
Results

- Enhanced understanding of disability and therapeutic approaches
- Knowledge and skills on how to produce low cost devices
- Arena for strong bond among carers and their children.
- Close contact between carers and professionals
- Cultural experience sharing between Norway and Zambia
- An arena of story telling and laughter different from an arena of therapy
Results continued

- Each child had an adaptive equipment that would promote participation in self care, play and learning activities.

- Carers have more time and opportunities to engage in other productive activities.

- The knowledge and skills gained will be used to produce equipment for other children.

- Carers have formed a parent support group.

- Policy makers working on expanding the project to other areas in the province.
Conclusion

- Group approach leads to empowerment
- Peer approach promotes individual strength and ability to change
- Occupational therapists can provide opportunities for carers to realize their rights and those of their children
- Carers developed self confidence to address challenges within their communities
»...This has changed my life. I thought there was nothing I could do. But now I know, there is something I can do for my child. Now I have hope.»
References

• Census of Population and Housing, Central Statistical Office, Lusaka, Zambia, 2010


THANK YOU
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