

Celebrating
20 YEARS

**2023
ANNUAL
REPORT**

**Improving children's lives by transforming
harmful beliefs surrounding disability**

Letter from the Co-founder and CEO

Dear Friends,

2023 marks 20 years since Kupenda for the Children became an official 501c(3) non-profit organization. This milestone has caused me to reflect on how much has changed since I first met 15 children with disabilities in Kenya who needed access to education. Back then, I could not have imagined that thousands of children with disabilities would be benefiting from our work in 14 countries! All of this is because of our community of supporters around the world who are working to transform harmful beliefs about disabilities into those that improve children's lives.

Today, Kupenda and our worldwide network of advocates continue to reduce disability stigma and address the most pressing needs for people with disabilities. Our global footprint is increasing through disability inclusion consultations, trainings, and resource sharing with international partner organizations. Last year, 114,998 children in 14 countries became more fully included in their communities while accessing the education and medical interventions they needed. This is significant since people with disabilities are often overlooked, even by organizations focused on the marginalized. Because of this work, thousands of children once told they were cursed are now experiencing the love of community, family, themselves, and God.

While our work reducing stigma around the world has the greatest long-lasting impact for the most people, we continue to provide direct services to families with disabilities that are most in need in Kilifi County, Kenya, where our central offices are located. This allows us to witness the influence of our work on individuals and their families. This impact was particularly evident in 2023, when I had the privilege of reconnecting with one of the first families we worked with 20 years ago.

I met Nassir, a tiny little boy with cerebral palsy, when Kupenda was more of an idea than an actual organization. His family did not believe he could learn, and the community thought his disability was the result of witchcraft. Kupenda responded by counseling the family on the true, medical causes of Nassir's disability and supported him to attend a school where he regularly interacted with students with a variety of disabilities, including children who were deaf.

Today Nassir is over 20 years old and towers above me. It brought tears to my eyes when he told me he wanted to become a professional sign language interpreter to help people like the friends he made at school. It is powerful to see students we've invested in giving back and leading the communities that once rejected them. People like Nassir make our impact truly exponential.

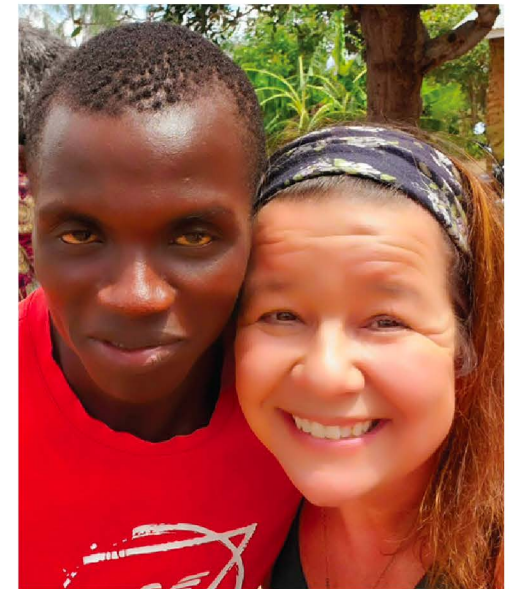
Spending time with Nassir is a reminder that behind every number we report is a person. A person who is transformed. A person who is serving. A person who is loved. A person who would likely be left without loving community or access to the education and resources they needed if not for the work of our talented staff, partners, volunteers, community leaders, families, and supporters.

Thank you for supporting and partnering with us through another successful year!

In love and gratitude,



Cynthia Bauer
Co-founder and CEO



Cynthia and Nassir in 2023

Our Impact

114,998

children's lives improved through our advocacy, education, and medical interventions

30,000

people in **14 countries** benefited from our disability inclusion resources and technical support

4,330

community leaders participated in our disability inclusion workshops and trainings



Our Programs

ADVOCACY

Educating families and communities about the rights of children with disabilities and their need for inclusion in all aspects of society

EDUCATION

Supporting children with disabilities to access appropriate, high-quality education while supporting the staff and infrastructure of their schools

MEDICAL CARE

Connecting children with disabilities to appropriate medical services, including surgeries, medications, and therapy





International Advocacy

53,000

children's lives improved through the trainings and technical support we provided to larger international organizations, including World Relief, World Hope International, Hope Walks, and Cure International

3,000

people learned about disability justice and inclusion through our documentary screenings (on a U.S. tour), podcast, and children's storybook

Kupenda designs, implements, and supports disability training and inclusion programs. Our Innovation Center is in Kenya, but we work with partners and disability advocates in low and middle-income countries around the world.

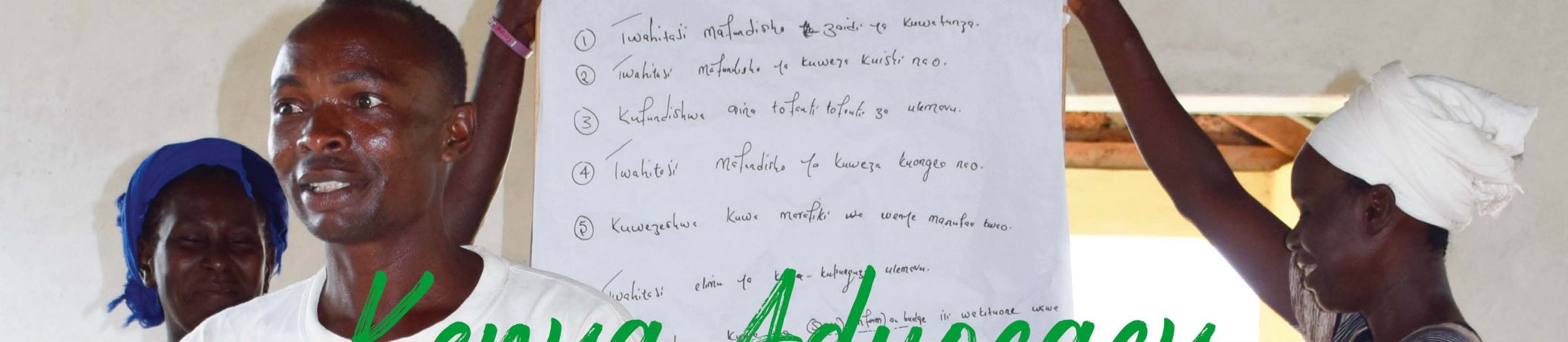
Saving Lives in Sierra Leone

Since 2018, Kupenda has partnered with World Hope International (WHI) in Sierra Leone to train 87 pastors and 24 traditional healers about the medical causes of disability, effective interventions, and how to counsel and refer families for support. These leaders then gave disability awareness talks to thousands. They also helped hundreds of people impacted by disabilities register for government services; referred parents to support groups; and provided food, clothing, transportation, and counseling services throughout their communities.

One pastor participant even reported, “These campaigns have resulted to one native doctor who used to destroy disabled babies to completely stop the practice.”



“These campaigns have resulted in one native doctor who used to destroy disabled babies to completely stop the practice.”



Kenya Advocacy

8,959

children's lives improved through the trainings and support we provided to equip community leaders as disability advocates in Kilifi, Kenya

140,000

people impacted by disabilities supported by Kupenda's leadership in developing the Kilifi County Disability Bill and related policies

2,030

family counseling sessions conducted to support the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of children with disabilities and their families

Sharon's Story

Sharon's community believed her seizures, limited speech, and mental health challenges were caused by witchcraft. Even her own family had difficulty understanding her and would beat her when she did not meet expectations.

Fortunately, a Kupenda-trained disability advocate started providing counseling and care to Sharon and her family and ensured the abuse ceased. The leader also helped her enroll in school and see a doctor who diagnosed her with epilepsy and prescribed medication.

Today Sharon's grandmother says, "I am so much grateful, because it is through Kupenda's counseling sessions which have enabled me to understand Sharon's condition. My negative attitudes have now changed. Through Kupenda, I have been able to attend some trainings on caregiving for children with developmental disorders. I have been implementing the teachings on my grandchild. She no longer undergoes physical abuse. Her siblings and neighbors have understood her and now they love and protect her."



“It is through Kupenda's counseling sessions which have enabled me to understand Sharon's condition. My negative attitudes towards her have now changed.”



Increasing Impact Through an Advocacy-Focused Model

The pages that follow describe the impact of Kupenda's medical and education programs over the past year. This work is conducted on a smaller scale than our advocacy program because, in recent years, Kupenda has evolved to be more than a direct service organization. This change came about when we realized that training influential local leaders about disability justice reduces harmful beliefs about disability and supports long-term inclusion and support for people with disabilities. Over the past 10 years, we expanded this disability advocacy work and, as a result, the leaders we've trained have improved the lives of thousands of children with disabilities throughout sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, we've continued to serve 1,000 Kenyan children with disabilities through our medical and education programs. This sample enables us to provide direct support to the most needy families while tracking the impact of our advocacy work to inform program improvements.



Education Support

608

students received education and career guidance

504

students benefited from 7 Kupenda-funded teachers and support staff at accessible schools

225

students received tuition support to attend special needs boarding schools

Martin's Story

Martin is young boy that contracted tuberculosis and became permanently deaf. His only means of communicating with his family were gestures, which the family did not always understand.

Kupenda came alongside Martin and provided funds for him to attend school, receive three meals a day, and learn to communicate using Kenyan Sign Language. Today, Martin is healthy, doing well in all subjects, and is even considered the class leader.

Martin's mother said, "I feel good now that my child is in school and can now communicate with us at home. [Martin's progress] has given me courage to visit two children with disabilities in our community who were just left at home while others went to school. I talked to the parents on the importance of taking those children to school and referred them. Today one of them joined [school], and the other is enrolled in a special unit near home."



“[Martin's progress] has given me courage to visit two children [with disabilities] in our community who were just left at home while others went to school.”



Medical Care

719

children received health counseling

300

children received assistive devices

325

students benefited from the financial support we provided to retain 7 healthcare staff at schools

260

children with medical challenges received health care services, including physical therapy and wellness checks

Samson's Story

Samson was born with cerebral palsy and hydrocephalus, which caused him to have limited speech, mild cognitive delays, breathing challenges, and a short stature. His parents struggled to meet his needs due to a prolonged drought that affected their finances and caused the family to often go hungry.

Fortunately, Kupenda staff provided Samson's family with a food stipend, referred him to a health facility where he received a lifesaving procedure and medicine, and supported him to attend school.

Today, Samson is doing well in his classes and enjoys playing soccer and singing!



“When Samson was just 5 months old, our Kenyan staff connected him to a health facility where he received a lifesaving procedure.”

Our Global Presence



Burkina Faso



Philippines



Burundi



Rwanda



DRC



Sierra Leone



Ethiopia



Uganda



Kenya



U.S.A



Malawi



Zambia



Niger



Zimbabwe

4,002 people in 14 countries
participated in our disability
advocacy workshops!

These participants then taught more
than **30,000** people about disability
justice and support and improved the
lives of more than **12,000** people
impacted by disability.

Our Key Partnerships



Country: U.S.

Number of people trained: 154

Type of people trained: Nonprofit staff



Country: Kenya

Number of people trained: 15

Type of people trained: Nonprofit staff



Countries: Ethiopia, Zambia, Niger, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Malawi, Philippines

Number of people trained: 1,347

Type of people trained: Pastors



Country: Sierra Leone

Number of people trained: 78

Type of people trained: Pastors and traditional healers



Countries: Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Niger, Rwanda, Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Zambia

Number of people trained: 498

Type of people trained: Church leaders and parents



Countries: Rwanda, Malawi, Burundi

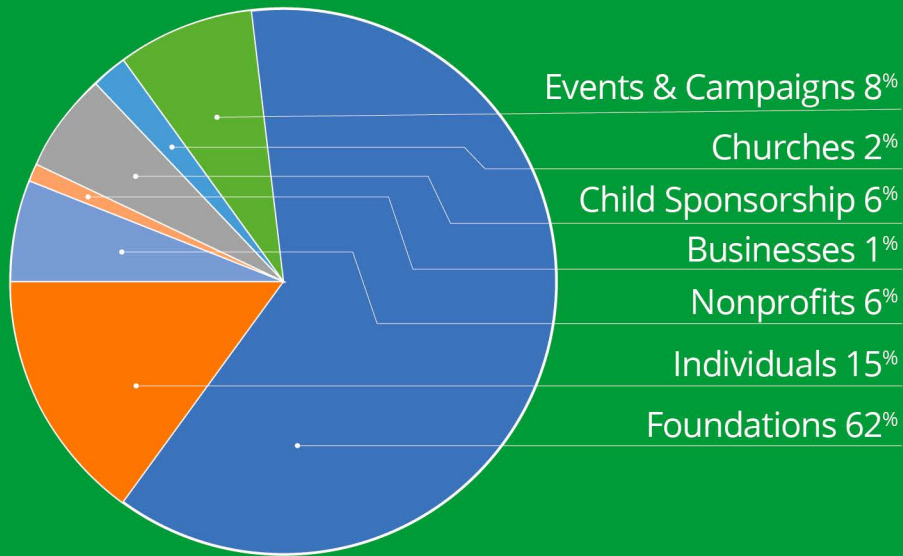
Number of people trained: 1,910

Type of people trained: Nonprofit staff

Financial Summary

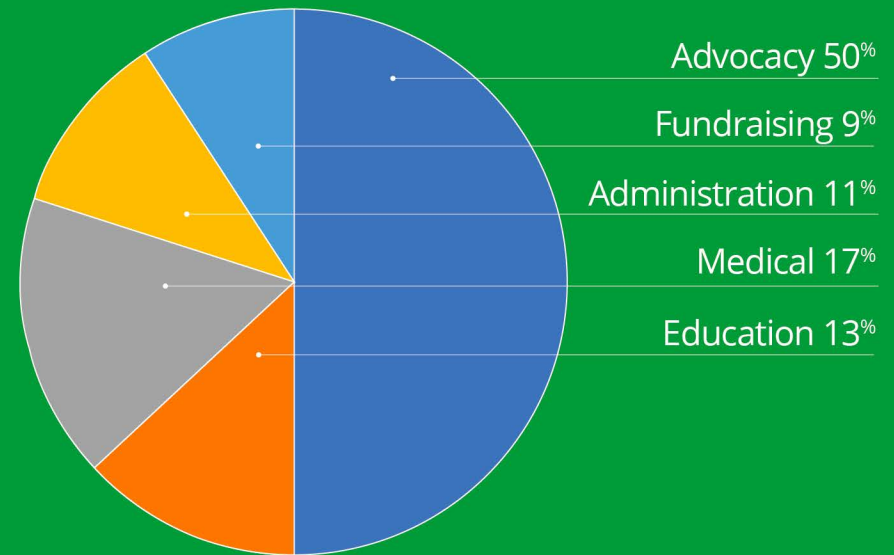
INCOME

\$823,470



EXPENSES

\$1,012,051



KUPENDA IS HIGHLY RATED



*FY2023 expenses were higher than our income because we started with a \$650,720 surplus because of increased funding and decreased expenditures for travel due to the COVID pandemic.

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Improving children's lives by transforming harmful beliefs surrounding disability

