

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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



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Letter From Our Co-Founder and CEO

Dear Friends,

Every year, I am in awe of how God multiplies the work of Kupenda through you—our friends, advocates, and partners around the world. What began in one coastal Kenyan community has now grown into a movement reaching across Africa and beyond. Together, we are replacing fear with truth, stigma with love, and despair with hope.

This year was historic. In partnership with local leaders and the Kilifi County Government, we helped rename a river once tied to the killing of children with disabilities. It was called “Place of the Crippled.” It is now called *Visikale Kaheri*—“Never Again.” Over the next few years, this site will become Kenya’s first memorial and museum honoring children with disabilities who were lost to harmful practices. What was once a place of secrecy and grief is being transformed into a place of remembrance and healing—a reminder that children with disabilities must never again be cast aside.

At the same time, Kupenda’s reach around the globe is expanding. Our innovation center in Kenya continues to serve as a model for change, and this year our disability training tools and consultation were used by partners in more than 20 countries across Africa, the Caribbean, Asia, and the United States. From Sierra Leone to Haiti, and Rwanda to Zambia, churches, nonprofits, and governments are now adapting Kupenda’s approaches to fit their own cultures—spreading love and justice for children with disabilities far beyond what we could have imagined.

In this report, you will read the story of Moses and you will see the power of knowledge and advocacy in helping a father reject superstition and embrace his son’s future.

You will see Esther thriving at school and dancing in worship, and you will glimpse the joy that comes when stigma gives way to inclusion.

You will meet Christine, a mother who rebuilt her livelihood and found renewed dignity, and you’ll witness the hope that grows when communities are mobilized in love.

The stories you will read in this report are not just Kupenda’s accomplishments, they are acts of divine restoration, carried out through you.

Thank you for standing with us in this work to ensure that children once hidden, harmed, or silenced will instead be celebrated, included, and loved for generations to come.

With much love and gratitude,



Cynthia Bauer
Co-Founder and CEO



About Us

Kupenda for the Children is a Christian 501 (c)(3) organization that transforms harmful beliefs and practices surrounding disability to those that improve children's lives. Many in low-income countries hold superstitious beliefs about the causes and interventions for children with disabilities, leading to their abuse and murder. To change this situation, we collaborate with influential community leaders and families to reduce the stigma associated with disability and ensure these children can access the education, medical intervention, and inclusive love everyone deserves. Hence, we call ourselves "Kupenda," Swahili for love.



Impact

125,127

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

849

community leaders participated in our trainings and were mobilized as disability advocates.

21

countries utilized our disability inclusion approaches and tools to improve the lives of people with disabilities.



The Ripple Effect of Our Work

It is our experience that the most sustainable and transformative outcomes for families affected by disabilities are achieved by empowering key community members who educate and support others regarding the rights of individuals with disabilities. Consequently, many children benefit indirectly through local leaders and the communities they inform, rather than through direct services provided by Kupenda. Our projected impact numbers vary depending on the influence of the leader or organization and the type of event.

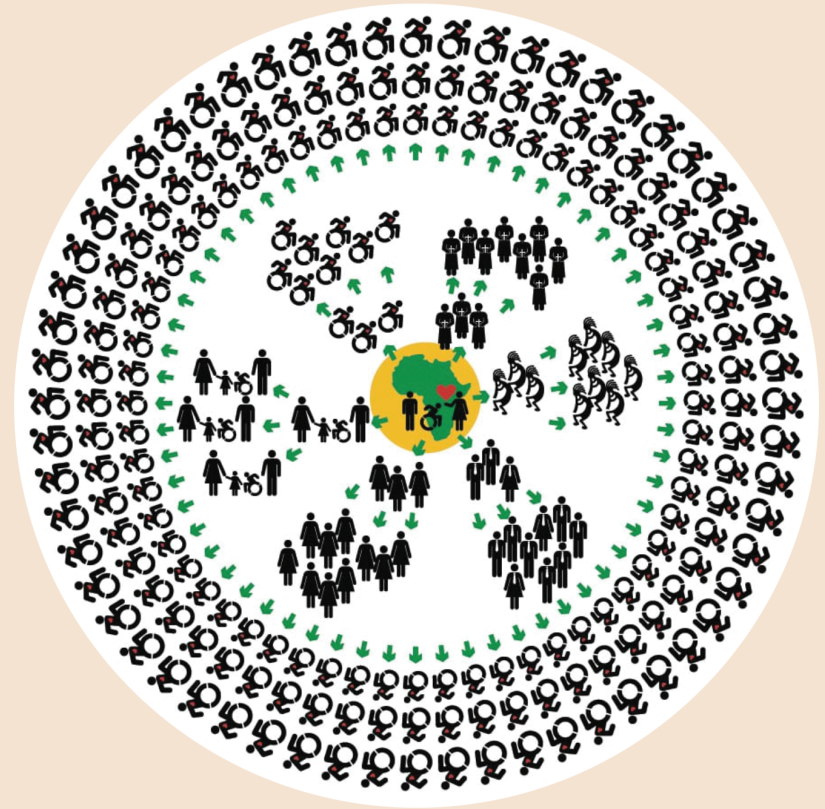
The examples below demonstrate conservative estimates of the exponential impact of our initiatives on children with disabilities:

An **African traditional religious leader** who is a Kupenda-trained disability advocate shares about the rights of children with disabilities on his weekly radio program with 200,000 listeners tuned in weekly. We estimate at least 4,000 children with disabilities' lives were improved.

A **community health promoter** shared what she learned about the value of children with disabilities at a burial with 500 attendees. We estimate 18 children with disabilities' lives were improved.

A **pastor** shared the message of God's love for people with disabilities to 300 young people attending a youth rally. We estimate 15 children with disabilities' lives were improved.

After consultations and visits to our work, **World Hope International** trained 550 church leaders in Liberia. We estimate that 14,333 children with disabilities' lives were improved.



**Kupenda equips other community leader groups who are not depicted in this graphic, including other religious leaders, youth, and women's groups.*

International Stigma Reduction and Advocacy

Kupenda designs and implements disability training and inclusion programs. We also support partners who replicate these programs in their catchment areas. Our innovation center is in Kenya, but we work with partners and disability advocates in low- and middle-income countries around the world. This year, our international partnerships resulted in the following:

60

nonprofit leaders representing 14 international organizations trained by Kupenda as disability advocates.

2,117

community leaders were trained by Kupenda's partners as disability advocates.

16,523

peoples' lives were improved and 65,265 people sensitized about disability justice by our trainees (estimates based on our program evaluation and population size).



This shirt reads: *A child with disability is not subhuman; they should not be killed.*

This year, Kupenda partnered with the following global organizations.



Global Presence



2,117 people across 18 countries participated in workshops where they were equipped as effective disability advocates!

Based on our program evaluations and population size, we estimate that these participants sensitized **74,095** people about disability justice and improved the lives of **55,170** people impacted by disability in the first year after their trainings.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

In 2022, **Hope Walks** hired Kupenda to develop a disability training specific to clubfoot. Since then, they have used our materials to train thousands of church leaders in more than 10 African countries! Last year, 925 church leaders were trained from Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Niger, and Rwanda, and 307 churches throughout Africa are now actively participating in a network to support families affected by disabilities, including clubfoot.

Alexis's Story

Thanks to Kupenda's partnership with Hope Walks, Alexis, a young boy in Rumonge Province, Burundi, who was born with clubfoot, received the support he needed to thrive.

A local church leader, Manirambona, attended a disability inclusion and family support training facilitated by Hope Walks that used materials developed with Kupenda. Equipped with practical tools and biblical guidance on how communities can embrace and support families affected by disability, Manirambona visited and counseled Alexis's family. He also provided the family with food and financial support to ensure Alexis could travel to a health facility for care.

Today, Alexis is steadily progressing toward walking on his own and taking charge of his future.



“When the church leader provided the support, I felt deeply encouraged. His support reminded me that I am not alone in caring for my child. The help we received for food and transport made it easier to continue Alexis's treatment. I now believe that my son will walk well and live a happy life.”

- Alexis's mother

Kenya Stigma Reduction and Advocacy

110,222

children with disabilities' lives were improved through the trainings and support we provided to equip community leaders as disability advocates.

17,847

community leaders, parents, and youth were trained or sensitized about justice and inclusion for people with disabilities.

1,336

family counseling sessions were conducted by our staff and trained disability advocates to support the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of children with disabilities and their families.



"Initially, I was struggling to accept my child's condition and was blaming myself for having a child with a disability. But with your counseling, medication, and education support, my attitude changed. I have seen a lot of potential in my child that I hadn't imagined before. Nowadays, I am happy, love my child, and love myself."

- Mother of a child with brittle bone disease

What's New in Advocacy?

Training Community Health Promoters

Kupenda partnered with the local government to train health workers in disability awareness and inclusion, strengthening the care network for families in need.

Revitalized Resource Library

Check out our library, a comprehensive, user-friendly collection of training materials, guidebooks, fact sheets, and tools designed to equip community leaders, build local capacity, and advance disability inclusion.



A Memorial for Kenya's Lost Children

In Kilifi, Kenya, a site once marked by tragedy is being transformed into a place of healing and hope. For generations, children born with disabilities were viewed as cursed, and some families were pressured to drown them in a nearby river—grimly known as “the place of the crippled.” These children were never named; their stories erased.

On December 3, 2024 (UN World Disability Day), Kupenda, the Kilifi County Government, and local leaders gathered at this site for a landmark event. In a powerful act of repentance and renewal, the community renamed the river Visikale Kaheri—Swahili for “Never Again.”

Kupenda is now working in partnership with government and community leaders to establish Kenya's first disability memorial and museum here, honoring children once silenced and promoting inclusion. Located on a major road, it will serve as a place of remembrance, advocacy, and education. This transformation reflects years of local sensitization and advocacy, declaring that every life has value and dignity.



Moses' Story

Pastor Juda once believed disabilities were caused by curses and struggled to accept people with them. After attending a Kupenda disability advocacy workshop, he learned about the medical causes of disability and the rights of people with disabilities.

Years later, when his son Moses was born with dwarfism and spinal curvature, Juda remembered Kupenda's *Disability Guidebook*. The guidebook provides explanations of common disabilities, their medical causes, and possible interventions. Because of this knowledge, Juda rejected harmful community beliefs that his son's condition was caused by infidelity or family planning and instead took Moses to the hospital. There, therapy, assistive devices, and regular checkups greatly improved Moses' quality of life. Today, Juda and his wife participate in a Kupenda parent support group and an income-generating project.



“The knowledge I got from reading the Disability Guidebook has helped me better care for my child and advocate for his rights.”

- Pastor Juda

Increasing Impact Through an Advocacy-Focused Model

The following pages highlight the impact of Kupenda's medical and education programs over the past year. Though smaller in scale than our advocacy work, these programs remain essential because they demonstrate what is possible for people with disabilities. In recent years, Kupenda has shifted its primary focus from direct service to training local leaders in disability justice—a strategy that reduces harmful beliefs and fosters lasting inclusion. Over the past decade, these leaders have improved the lives of thousands of children with disabilities across sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, we continue supporting 1,000 Kenyan children through medical and education services, helping those most in need and assessing our advocacy's impact.



Education Access

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

827

students received education, counseling, and career guidance from our staff and trained disability advocates.

484

impoverished children received tuition support to attend special needs boarding schools.

930

students benefited from 10 Kupenda-funded teachers and support staff at accessible schools.





What's New in Education?

Youth Running Clubs

Kupenda partnered with Micah 6:8 to adapt and pilot an inclusive Youth Running Clubs (YRC) curriculum, which is now being scaled across 16 East African countries to reduce stigma and promote inclusion for more than 50,000 children.

Youth Advocacy Workshop

Kupenda designed and pilot tested a new program that equipped 50 students with and without disabilities to combat bullying and serve as disability advocates in their schools and communities.

New Timboni Dorm

Kupenda partnered with the National Fund for the Disabled of Kenya and local school administrators to construct a new dormitory at Timboni Special School, enabling 20 more children with disabilities to access care, education, and nutrition.

Esther's Story

Esther developed jaundice at birth, which eventually led to cerebral palsy. Her community and extended family rejected her, believing that disability was a curse. Her father also divorced her mother and abandoned them both.

Fortunately, one of Esther's neighbors referred them to Kupenda staff, who assisted her with food support, applying for benefits, and enrolling in a school that could support her needs. As a result, Esther not only began to receive an education, but she learned sign language to communicate and experienced the joy of being in relationship with others. Her abilities also began to shine as she danced to gospel songs, joined a Kupenda-supported running club, and competed in athletics at the national level.

Over time, her father's perspective began to change. Today, he not only helps pay her education fees, but he regularly interacts with her—now referring to her as his “best friend.” Esther is now thriving in school, growing in confidence, and boldly dreaming of her future.



“Esther is now able to express herself, help other children, and is independent in daily life skills. She has shown a good example to other children and the community that disability is not inability.”

- Esther's mother

Medical Care

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

1,183

children with medical challenges received healthcare services, including physical therapy, wellness checks, and life-saving surgeries.

858

children received health counseling and referrals for medical care from our staff and trained disability advocates.

508

students benefited from 10 school healthcare staff, funded by our support, who provided medication, health monitoring, and essential care.

220

children were supported to access assistive devices.



What's New in Medical Care?

Mobile Therapy Clinic Launched

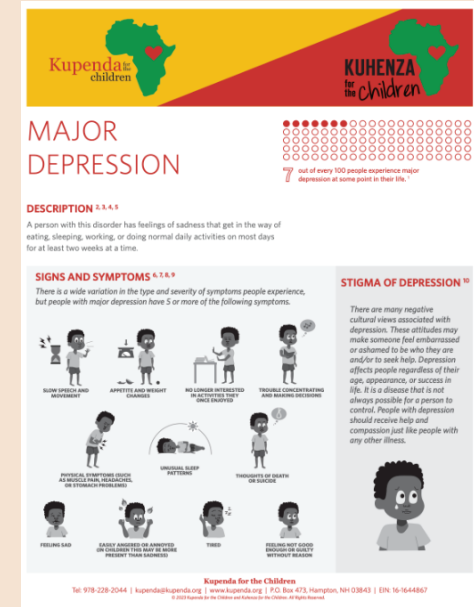
Through a grant from the American Academy of Pediatrics, we launched a pilot mobile therapy clinic that provided physiotherapy and nutrition counseling to 51 families in remote areas. By also training caregivers to deliver therapy at home and create simple assistive devices, the project improved child mobility, reduced travel barriers, and increased caregiver involvement—laying the groundwork for replication in other communities.

Expanded Mental Health Resources

We added seven new sections to Kupenda's *Disability Guidebook* focused on mental health conditions, providing families and communities with practical guidance to understand, support, and include children facing these challenges.

Baseline Disability Survey in Kilifi

In partnership with Kuhenza for the Children and the University of Virginia, we surveyed 221 community health promoters and 150 nurses to assess knowledge gaps and stigma around disability. Results revealed limited identification skills, persistent stigma, and misconceptions, guiding targeted training and community sensitization to advance inclusive health care for children with disabilities.



Edwin's Story

Edwin was born with limb differences that made walking challenging. Due to stigma surrounding disability, his family was misunderstood and isolated. As a result, Edwin was teased, lonely, and often avoided school.

Fortunately, a Kupenda-trained community health promoter (CHP) named Constance learned of Edwin's situation. She began to regularly meet with the family to counsel them. She also referred them to a local hospital. Through this regular care, Edwin's parents eventually learned how to best support their son's needs.

Today, through physical therapy, Edwin is making significant improvements and no longer feels the need to hide from others. In fact, his greatest hope is to help others with disabilities like himself.



“I no longer carry him on my back, but he walks by himself with a little support. ... He also has friends now, and this has greatly improved his self-esteem. ... He is a happy boy, working hard in school with dreams of becoming a doctor. ... I'm so grateful for the counseling from the CHP and Kupenda staff. You caused emotional, psychological, and physical healing to my family.”
- Edwin's mother

Livelihoods and Economic Empowerment

Supporting youth with disabilities and parents and caregivers of children with disabilities to access trainings, coaching, and microloans that enable them to earn sustainable incomes

48

microloans were disbursed to caregivers and youth with disabilities to support their business start-up efforts.

94%

of the businesses launched are operational and progressing as planned.

74%

of individual microloan recipients saw business income increases within just two months, enhancing household resilience, independence, and overall family well-being.

50

youth with disabilities and caregivers of children with disabilities were provided with entrepreneurship, business, and microloan training and follow-up support, equipping them to effectively establish, manage, and operate sustainable businesses in Kilifi, Kenya.

35

caregivers of children with disabilities received agricultural, livestock, and climate change adaptation training and follow-up support, equipping them to effectively manage and scale their farm operations in Kilifi, Kenya.



What's New in Livelihoods?

Livelihoods Program Launch

Kupenda began providing entrepreneurship training, business coaching, and microloans to youth with disabilities and caregivers—empowering them to build sustainable incomes.

Upcoming Program Expansion

Kupenda secured funding for the coming year to expand the program and create a resource to equip other nonprofit organizations to make their livelihoods programming more inclusive of people with disabilities.



Christine's Story

Christine is a 40-year-old single mother of five children and one grandchild who operated a tailor shop in the local market. Her ability to support her family changed, however, when her daughter, Esther, became paralyzed while giving birth to a son. Christine soon faced negative stigma surrounding disability, added healthcare expenses, and limited job opportunities. Although she tried to relocate her business to be closer to her family, she lost most of her customer base since her services were not as visible. She was forced to shut down her shop and care for her daughter at home.

Kupenda responded with counseling, supplemental food and supplies, and physical therapy for Esther. In addition, Christine was invited to join one of Kupenda's business and entrepreneurship skills trainings for caregivers, where she learned how to effectively establish, manage, and operate a sustainable business.



Today, Kupenda continues to support Christine with regular mentorship, and her business is thriving. In the near future, she plans to hire more employees and venture into additional income-generating activities—breaking the cycle of exclusion and stigma and increasing her independence.

Looking Ahead

We are grateful for all that was accomplished in 2025—children gaining access to education and health care, families being empowered, and communities embracing inclusion. Yet there is still much to do. Too many children with disabilities continue to face stigma and misunderstanding that limit their opportunities.

In the coming year, we will continue to strengthen programs that reduce stigma, expand access to education, and improve health outcomes for children with disabilities and their families.

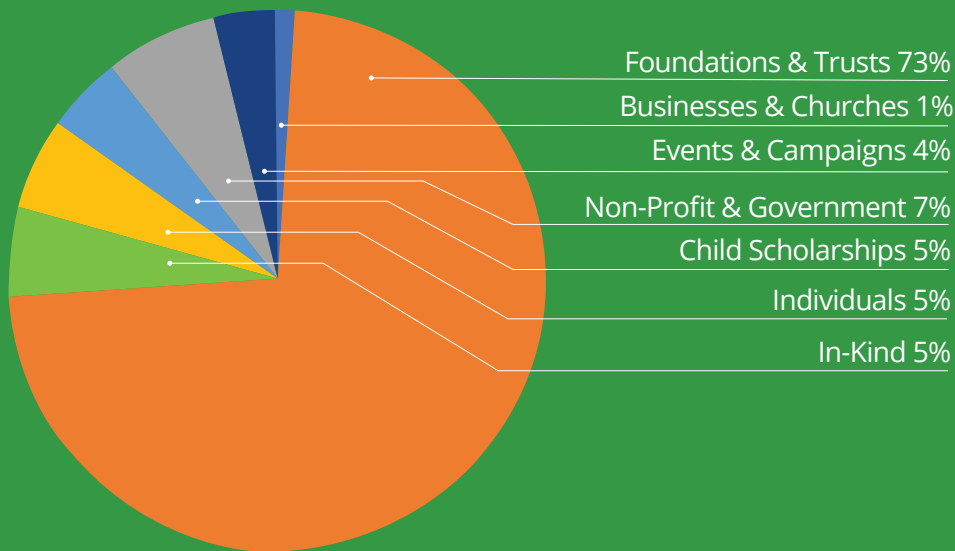
Several of our newest initiatives—including the mobile therapy clinic and livelihoods program—are being piloted with the goal of refining and replicating them in other communities. These efforts are already showing promise in improving mobility, reducing barriers to care, and empowering caregivers with new skills.

Looking ahead, we will also deepen partnerships with schools, churches, and community leaders to ensure that children with disabilities are not only included but celebrated in their communities. With your continued support, we are building momentum toward a future where every child is safe, valued, and able to thrive.

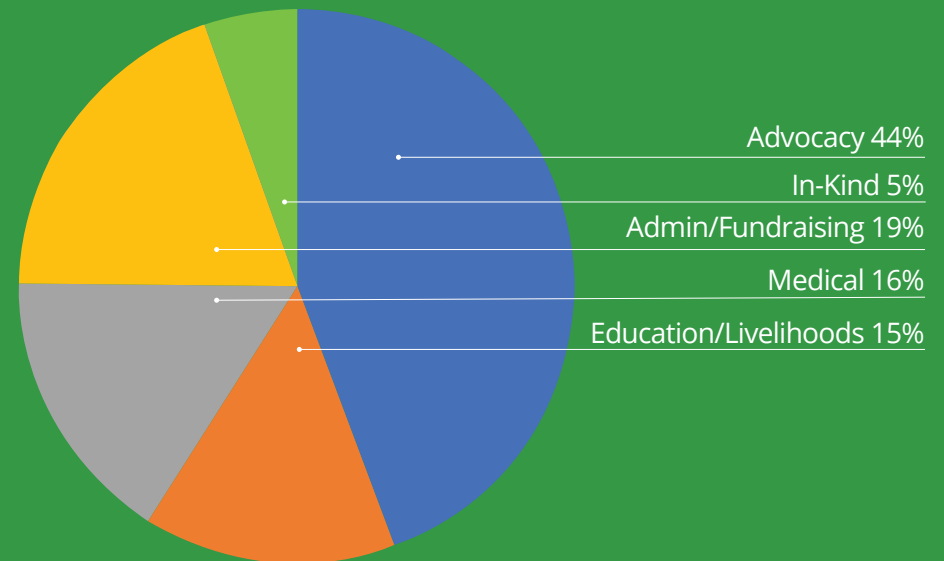


Financial Summary

INCOME
\$1,233,550



EXPENSES
\$1,234,281



KUPENDA IS HIGHLY RATED



**Note: This only includes funds that were raised by Kupenda and does not include the \$72,895 that Kupenda's Kenyan staff raised and spent on their own outside of Kupenda's funding.*

**FY2025 Ending Net Assets: \$563,701*

Support Children in Need

ONLINE

Make a one-time or recurring donation securely and conveniently online



CHILD SCHOLARSHIP

Provide life-changing support to children in need for just \$35/month!



NON-CASH GIFTS

Give donor-advised funds, Bitcoin, and stock



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Hampton, NH 03843



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