

2026 ANNUAL REPORT



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



1,438,789

Community Members
Reached



309,208

Children's Lives
Improved



102,260

Program Participants

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Letter from Our Co-Founder and CEO

Dear Friends,

Some of the moments that stay with me most are the ones when you can actually see someone's thinking change. A pastor begins advocating for children he once misunderstood, a traditional healer becomes a disability advocate, a teacher welcomes a student who had been excluded, or a mother realizes she does not have to walk this journey alone.

Those moments are why Kupenda exists. And they are possible because of you.

In 2026, I was encouraged to see this kind of transformation multiplying. Across Kenya and through our growing partnerships around the world, local leaders are challenging harmful beliefs about disability, connecting families to critical services, and helping communities recognize the God-given value of every child.

I think of Ezekiel, whose family had been told his disability was caused by demons. Today, because a Kupenda-trained community health promoter took the time to visit, listen, educate, and advocate, Ezekiel is receiving consistent therapy and experiencing greater acceptance from his family and community.

Stories like his remind me that our work is not simply about providing services. It is about changing the beliefs that determine whether children are hidden or welcomed, neglected or cared for, excluded or given opportunities to thrive.

As we look ahead, we want to equip even more local leaders and organizations to create this kind of change in their own communities. The need is enormous, but I continue to be amazed by what God can do through people who are willing to step forward.

Thank you for being some of those people. Your prayers, generosity, encouragement, and partnership allow us to keep showing children and families what Kupenda, love, can look like in action.

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 into those that improve children's lives. Many people in low-income countries hold misconceptions that disabilities are caused by curses, witchcraft, or punishment from God and may seek interventions such as healing rituals and exorcisms. These beliefs and practices can lead to children with disabilities being denied care, abused, or even killed. To change this situation, we collaborate with families and influential community leaders, including the very leaders who once promoted harmful beliefs and practices, to reduce disability stigma and ensure these children can access the education, medical intervention, and inclusive love everyone deserves. Hence, we call ourselves "Kupenda," Swahili for love.



Impact

309,208

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

1,075

community leaders participated in our trainings and were mobilized to improve the lives of children with disabilities and sensitize their communities about disability justice.

30

countries have been reached through partners using our disability inclusion approaches and tools to improve the lives of people with disabilities, including **two new countries this year**.



From Root Causes to Systems Change: The Ripple Effect of Our Work

Kupenda addresses disability stigma at its roots by equipping the very people and institutions that often shape and reinforce harmful beliefs to become catalysts for change. Parents, faith leaders, traditional healers, health workers, nonprofits, governments, and funders challenge stigma in their own spheres of influence, inspire others, and build more inclusive systems that sustain over time.



INDIVIDUALS & FAMILIES WITH DISABILITIES

Individuals and families become changemakers, access services, and experience inclusion.



COMMUNITY LEADERS

Our trained leaders bring children out of hiding and then counsel and refer them to care while educating their communities.



COMMUNITIES & SYSTEMS

Schools, churches, and health and government systems become more inclusive.



NONPROFITS & PARTNERS

Organizations integrate disability into programs, policies, and measurements.



FOUNDATIONS & FUNDERS

Funders integrate disability into strategy, grantmaking, learning, and accountability.



International Stigma Reduction and Advocacy

We design and implement disability training and inclusion programs. We also support partners who replicate these programs in their catchment areas. Our main offices are 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:

515

nonprofit and foundation leaders representing 14 international organizations were trained by us as disability advocates.

1,673

community leaders were trained by our partners as disability advocates.

7,068*

people with disabilities had their lives improved through support provided by our staff and trained advocates.

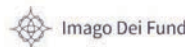
14,925

community members were sensitized by our trainees to reduce disability stigma and promote justice and inclusion for people with disabilities.

This year, Kupenda partnered with the following global organizations.



CHILDREN
OF THE NATIONS



**Estimates based on our program evaluation data and population size*

Global Presence

This year, our global reach expanded to **30 countries**, as partners introduced our disability inclusion approaches and tools in **two additional countries**.

Countries Where We Have Worked



Kenya



Tanzania



Zambia



Malawi



Uganda



Sierra Leone



U.S.A

Countries Where We Have Supported Partners' Inclusion Activities



Benin



Ghana



Niger



Burkina Faso



Guatemala



Peru



Burundi



Haiti



The Gambia



Dominican Republic



Honduras



The Philippines



DRC



Liberia



Rwanda



Ecuador



Mexico



Sudan



El Salvador



Mozambique



Zimbabwe



Ethiopia



Nicaragua

A Church Transformed: Christopher's Story of Belonging

*Today, Christopher's church celebrates and includes him.
But, not long ago, a pastor told families to keep their children away from him.*

Christopher, who has quadriplegic cerebral palsy, loved attending a church near his home. But during a deliverance service, the pastor publicly declared that Christopher was “not ordinary” and warned that he might “initiate” other children. Neighbors began avoiding Christopher and his mother, and the isolation eventually became so severe that they moved to another community.

Fortunately, in 2025, Enable the Children, a program of World Hope International, trained 35 local pastors using Kupenda's disability stigma reduction program for Christian leaders. The training helped leaders change harmful beliefs and practices about people with disabilities and recognize the dignity and potential of children like Christopher.

The change is now visible. When Christopher recently celebrated his birthday, the congregation came together to celebrate him, offer prayers, and give gifts to support him and his mother. His mother also reports receiving greater encouragement from her community.

Over the past eight years, Enable the Children has used Kupenda's model to train more than 1,000 faith leaders across Sierra Leone and Liberia, helping create more inclusive, loving communities for children with disabilities and their families.



1,000

FAITH LEADERS
Trained across
Sierra Leone and Liberia

Kenya Stigma Reduction and Advocacy

81,925

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

17,076

community leaders, parents, caregivers, and youth were directly trained or sensitized by our staff about justice and inclusion for people with disabilities.

1,359

family counseling sessions were conducted by our staff and trained community leader disability advocates to address the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of children with disabilities and their families and refer them to appropriate services.



What's New in Advocacy?

Resources in additional languages

In FY26, we began working with professional translators to make our disability training materials available in Swahili and Spanish. Separately, an Ethiopian partner translated our parent guide into Amharic. Together, these efforts are expanding access to our resources across more countries and communities.

Training for partner organizations

We trained more than **20 foundation and nonprofit organizations** to strengthen disability inclusion within their programs and communities.

Global disability working groups

We launched and led three global disability working groups, bringing together representatives from **114 organizations** to share knowledge, strengthen collaboration, and advance disability inclusion across sectors.

Training of Trainers expansion

We began scaling our Training of Trainers program to equip more disability advocates to facilitate workshops for their peers and share our approach in their own communities.

Disability History Museum and Memorial

We secured the land and drafted a proposal for a Disability History Museum and Memorial that will create a lasting space for education, remembrance, and advocacy.

All along, I did not see children with disabilities as valuable and deserving of the rights other children have. The training has opened my eyes, and I now know that children with disabilities have rights too and are valuable.

- John, a Kupenda-trained pastor



Ezekiel's Story

Stigma once stood between Ezekiel and the care he needed.

Although doctors recommended therapy, his mother, Sanita, was told his disability was caused by demons and encouraged to pursue fasting and prayer. Due to stigma, relatives also distanced themselves, leaving the family without support.

One of our trained community health promoters, Daniel, visited Ezekiel's home, brought the family together, challenged harmful beliefs, and explained Ezekiel's rights and the benefits of therapy. He connected Ezekiel with services, accompanied him to appointments, and continued making home visits.

Today, Ezekiel receives consistent therapy, while relatives help with transportation, appointments, and daily care. Community members have also become more accepting, and Sanita feels less alone knowing she has someone to contact.

Through our investment in a trusted local advocate, Ezekiel now receives the care, acceptance, and support every child deserves.



“Stigma is not only for the children with disabilities, but even the mother faces a lot of discrimination, isolation, and rejection. Through regular visits from [Daniel], I feel I’m not alone in this journey of raising my child who has a disability.”

- Sanita, Ezekiel's mother

Increasing Impact Through an Advocacy-Focused Model

The following pages highlight the impact of our medical, education, and livelihoods programs in Kilifi, Kenya, where we directly support approximately 1,000 children and families with the greatest needs.

We remain primarily a disability stigma-reduction organization, focused on training local leaders to change harmful beliefs and practices. Our direct service programs strengthen that work in three important ways: they allow us to serve children with the most urgent needs, track whether trained community leaders are helping to produce real improvements in children's lives, and use what we learn to strengthen our training approaches and tools.

Most of the children we track are referred by community leaders we have trained as disability advocates. This creates a direct link between our advocacy work and measurable changes in children's care, access to services, and inclusion.



Education Access

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

949

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

403

children with disabilities received tuition support from us, which enabled them to participate in educational and vocational programs suited to their individual needs and goals.

426

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



Project Spotlight

We Run We Rise awarded us a grant to lead its disability inclusion work across 1,252 running clubs in 16 countries. This is the third year of the partnership. Last year, we helped make We Run We Rise's curriculum inclusive of students with disabilities. This year, we are helping them put those changes into practice across its network, with the potential to reach more than 50,000 children annually. As part of this work, we trained the organization's leadership staff on inclusion best practices, policies, and measurement. We also developed a Running Clubs Training of Trainers Guide that we will pilot in FY27 before supporting We Run We Rise in scaling the model globally.



The impact of this inclusive approach is best understood through the words of one girl participating in a running club, who shared how the experience changed the way she sees herself:

“

I was born with my hand not complete. In the community, other children would laugh at me, and so I have been hiding my hand. I cover it so that people do not look or laugh at me.

This made me to question why I was born that way. I thought God did not love me, because why would he create other children with full hands while mine was not? I did not interact with others because I was different.

When I joined the [running] club, the environment was different. My fellow children accepted me; they did not laugh at me.

During one of our lessons, we were taught that ‘we are all created in God’s image and God loves us all the way we are.’ This made me to start seeing myself as normal like any other child.

I enjoy the exercises that I do in the clubs, and there is nothing that I cannot do, because all the activities that those with both hands do, I can also do them.

Today, when I walk in the community, I no longer hide my hand. When other children start laughing and questioning me, I usually tell them I’m fearfully and wonderfully made.

At school, I do not play alone again; I have even made new friends.

- Christine, age 10

”

What's New in Education?

Model inclusive education programs

In partnership with Kenya's Ministry of Education, we established a model autism classroom in Gede and model inclusive education schools in Timboni and Ramada. These demonstration sites are helping educators, government officials, and schools learn best practices that can be replicated across Kilifi County.

Accessible school infrastructure

We improved teaching and learning environments in 73 classrooms serving more than 1,000 children, including by providing accessible infrastructure and learning spaces at three schools and learning materials for 11 special units and primary schools. These improvements were made possible in part by training teachers to apply for and secure government funding for accessible infrastructure and educational materials.

Training for educators and caregivers

We trained more than 80 teachers, caregivers, and community leaders to advance inclusive education through autism support, individualized education program development, disability advocacy, and access to national funding.

Youth workshops

We brought together dozens of students with and without disabilities for workshops that promoted disability awareness, peer support, and more inclusive school communities.



BEFORE

You are God-sent. I would always cry when I would see my child at home because I could not afford the school fees. Thank you for coming in for my child's education. You have brought new hope in her as she is now happy attending school.

- Serah's mother



AFTER

Furaha's Story

Through counseling and advocacy, we strengthened Furaha's self-advocacy skills and encouraged her mother to enroll her in a mainstream school.

Furaha attended boarding schools for children with disabilities but withdrew for a semester after becoming discouraged by her secondary school's inaccessibility and limited support.

Through counseling and advocacy, we strengthened Furaha's self-advocacy skills and encouraged her mother to enroll her in a mainstream school. Our staff worked with school leaders, teachers, and students to improve accessibility, participation, and acceptance. Within two terms, Furaha was thriving academically and socially, building friendships, and becoming a role model for inclusion.

Her enrollment transformed the school. Ramps were constructed for classrooms and laboratories, and the school began welcoming other students with disabilities. Her classmates learned to recognize the abilities of students with disabilities rather than respond with fear or pity. Today, Furaha advocates for inclusive education and encourages other families to enroll their children with disabilities in mainstream schools.



[Furaha] has changed the disability landscape in this school. Through her, we have constructed ramps in all classes and labs, our environment is now friendly, and she can access all the buildings in the school. We also came to learn that mainstreaming is something that should be practiced, compared to taking them to special schools. After school, these children go back to the community, which is made of both people with and without disability. When they learn in special schools, they come back to the community and are still 'new' ... they continue to face the stigma because the community people are not used to them still. As a school, we are open for other children with disabilities to join here because we believe it will lead to more changes in our communities.

- Furaha's teacher

Medical Care

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

1,060

children received healthcare services, including physical therapy, wellness checks, and lifesaving surgeries.

885

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

673

students benefited from 9 healthcare staff whose positions we funded and who provided medication, health monitoring, and essential care.

305

children were supported to access assistive devices, including children whose parents and caregivers were trained by us to make assistive devices from local materials.



What's New in Medical Care?

Community health promoter (CHP) training

In partnership with Kilifi County's Ministry of Health, we equipped eight community health promoter focal persons to train 48 additional government-affiliated health workers. These 56 health workers can now counsel families, make referrals, challenge harmful beliefs and practices, and promote disability inclusion while the focal persons continue training others as the program expands across Kilifi County.

Expanded access to assistive devices

Through partnerships with Hope Haven West, Charity Motivation, and APDK, we supported 305 children with assistive devices. We also trained 17 caregivers to construct low-cost assistive devices.

Mobile therapy clinic expansion

We expanded our mobile therapy clinic into a new sub-county, providing 126 families with therapy, counseling, nutrition support, and caregiver training. By bringing these services closer to home, the clinic reached families living in remote communities who had previously been unable to access care because of long travel distances and unaffordable transportation costs.

Stronger epilepsy care systems

We provided anti-seizure medication to 166 children, including 100 newly supported children who had lost access following the foreign aid freeze and closure of local epilepsy clinics. We also provided monthly monitoring, trained 26 parents and caregivers, and facilitated five epilepsy education and stigma-reduction sessions.

New occupational therapy block

We constructed a new occupational therapy block, which is scheduled to open in fall 2026. The facility will enable our Advocacy Center to serve approximately three times as many children while expanding clinical training opportunities.

University research partnership

Through our partnership with the University of Virginia, we developed context-specific research tools and strengthened our capacity to measure changes in disability stigma, which is often deeply rooted and difficult to quantify. The findings help us understand which methods are effective, identify where harmful beliefs persist, and continually improve our programs.

[Kupenda] became my family after I was left by my family. All the hospital bills and the medications that you've supported my child with have given her another chance to be in this world. Were it not for you, my child would not have been alive today.

- Racheal's mother



Victor's Story

Today, Victor can go weeks without experiencing a seizure. He requires fewer hospital visits, enjoys greater stability, and has a better quality of life.

Victor is a nine-year-old boy with sickle cell anemia, cerebral palsy affecting his right leg and hand, and epilepsy. At age seven, Victor experienced a stroke and began having seizures.

When key epilepsy services in Kilifi County closed, his family lost access to specialized care and reliable antiseizure medication. Victor began having multiple seizures each day and required frequent hospital visits, while his father, David, struggled to afford private treatment and continue working to support his family. In August 2025, David sought our help. Staff counseled the family, facilitated neurological testing and evaluation, and provided Victor with appropriate medication.

Today, Victor can go weeks without experiencing a seizure. He requires fewer hospital visits, enjoys greater stability, and has a better quality of life. His father has also been able to work more consistently. Many parents of children with disabilities experience fear, exhaustion, and emotional distress while navigating their children's care. Our counseling and parent support groups help families reduce this isolation, strengthen their ability to cope, and experience greater hope and stability together.



COUNSELING and PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS help families reduce isolation, strengthen their ability to cope, and experience greater hope and stability together.

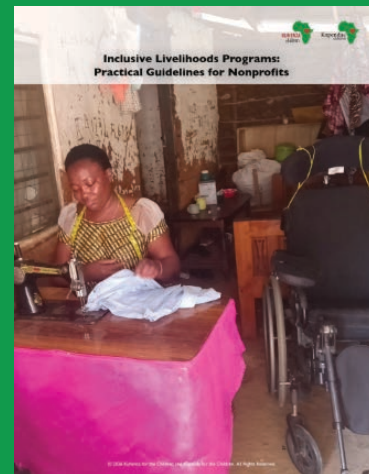
Livelihoods and Economic Empowerment

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

- We provide older youth with disabilities and caregivers with business and sustainable agriculture training, mentorship, and microloans. We then track business performance, loan repayment, profitability, and changes in household income. With support from the Vista Hermosa Foundation, we also developed inclusive livelihoods guidelines that are now being used by other nonprofits.
- Last year, 74% of our livelihoods program participants increased their income within two months of launching their businesses.



What's New in Livelihoods?



We published ***Inclusive Livelihoods Programs: Practical Guidelines for Nonprofits***, based on lessons from a two-year pilot with 71 caregivers and youth with disabilities.

The guide was shared through nine regional and global working groups representing more than 400 nonprofit organizations.

Kahunda's Story

Today, Kahunda operates her salon and earns a reliable income to feed her family, keep her daughters in school, and cover healthcare needs.

Kahunda, a 33-year-old woman who is hard of hearing, lives with her elderly mother and two young daughters. In a community where disability was often misunderstood, she faced stigma, low expectations, and barriers to education and employment. Her family relied on rain-fed farming and experienced food shortages during periods of drought.

We supported Kahunda to complete secondary school and pursue vocational training in salon and beauty therapy with sign language interpretation. She later received entrepreneurship training, salon equipment, a start-up loan, and ongoing mentorship.

Today, Kahunda operates her salon and earns a reliable income to feed her family, keep her daughters in school, and cover healthcare needs. Her community now recognizes her skill and professionalism rather than focusing on her disability. She hopes to expand the salon, employ another woman, ideally someone with a disability, and build a permanent family home.



I can now comfortably feed, clothe, and educate my children. Thank you, and long live Kupenda.

- Kahunda

Fundraising & Administration

Building the partnerships, resources, and organizational systems needed to sustain and expand our disability inclusion programs

Growth in foundation funding

Foundation support increased by 19% compared to 2025.

Expanded scholarship funding and capacity

Funding for the child scholarship program increased by 19% compared to 2025.

Growth in workplace and corporate giving

Funding through employee matching contributions and company giving programs increased by 52%, strengthening an important source of support for our programs.

Increased individual support

Contributions from individual donors increased by 15%. As we redesign our website and update our messaging, we are also preparing to introduce a monthly giving program to encourage more consistent, long-term support.

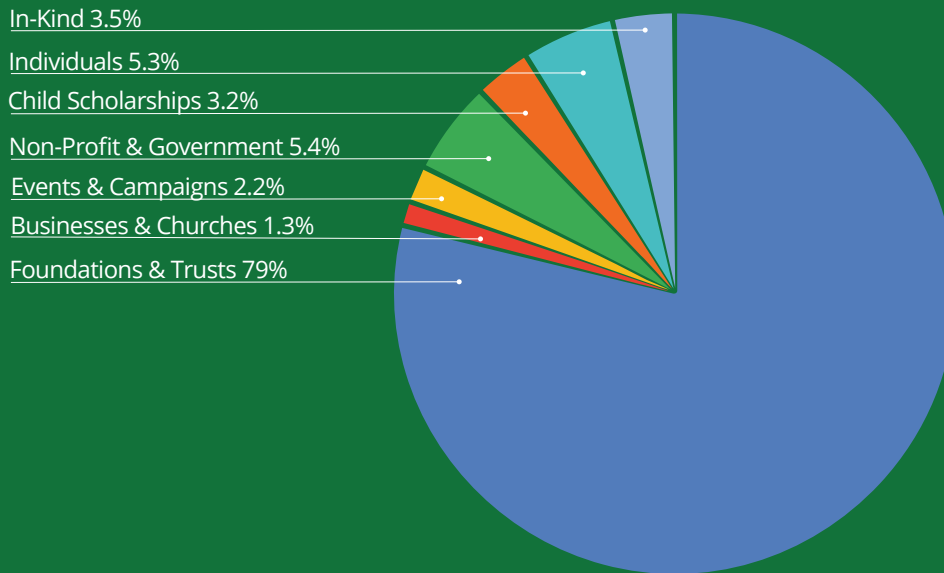
Stronger fundraising and advocacy communications

Two foundations funded our partnership with a nonprofit communications and storytelling professional to redesign our website and develop clearer, more consolidated messaging, updated photography, and new video content.

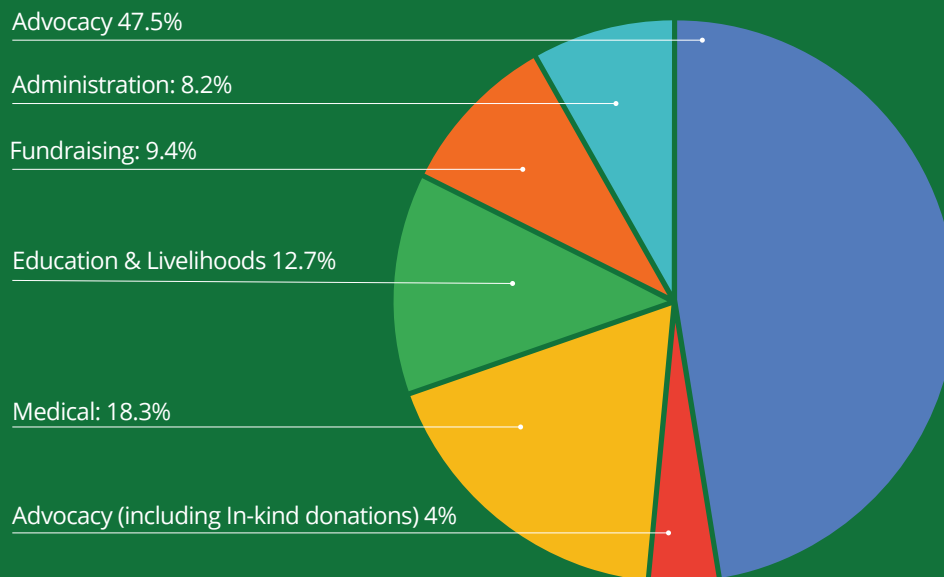


Financial Summary

INCOME \$1,532,619



EXPENSES \$1,362,185



**Note: This only includes funds that were raised by Kupenda and does not include the \$93,687.68 that Kupenda's Kenyan staff raised and spent on their own outside of Kupenda's funding.*

KUPENDA IS HIGHLY RATED



Support Children in Need



TRANSFORM COMMUNITIES THROUGH GIVING

Make a one-time or recurring gift online, contribute through a donor-advised fund, request an employer match, or mail a check to
P.O. Box 473
Hampton, NH 03843



FUND A CHILD'S SCHOLARSHIP

Provide life-changing educational support for \$35 per month.



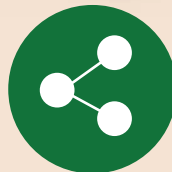
HOST A GATHERING

Introduce friends, family, or colleagues to our work by hosting a house party or fundraiser.



INVITE CINDY TO SPEAK

Bring our mission to your church, school, workplace, or community group.



SPREAD THE WORD

Share our resources, stories, and social media posts with your network.



Connect with Us



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kupenda@kupenda.org



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

