

Upili Pilot Impact Report

Challenge: Youth with Disabilities are 10 times more likely to suffer from depression, especially in East Africa where stigmatization, marginalization and discrimination is still widespread. The lack of essential psychosocial support creates barriers that keep Youth with Disabilities from succeeding academically or securing meaningful employment upon graduation.

Solution: Next Step Foundation's Upili Program addresses this pervasive mental health challenge by providing Counselors with Disabilities to support secondary school Students with Disabilities, their families and communities and instills self-confidence, improves academic performance and provides the tools to successfully navigate future discrimination so they can succeed academically and achieve economic independence.

Pilot: Upili's Counselor with a Disability led group therapy sessions for two subsets of Form III and IV students at Joytown Secondary School for the Physically Disabled over the course of the first trimester of 2024.

Our Impact at a Glance:

Students with Disabilities who participated in the Upili pilot project reported the following results:



82%

Reduction in levels of daily and weekly levels of Anxiety



78%

Reduction in levels of daily and weekly levels of Depression

How Students with Disabilities will also benefit from Upili:

★ **Increase Self-Confidence and Competence:**

Through group therapy sessions, they explore strengths and share challenges, fostering a sense of capability.

★ **Build Social and Communication Skills:**

Therapy sessions provide a supportive environment to improve interpersonal communication and relationship-building.

★ **Address Mental Health Challenges:**

Upili equips participants with coping strategies to navigate workplace stress and maintain emotional resilience.

WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING ABOUT UPILI

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At Treeside we say our world is a silent world. Deafness, as we see it, is an invisible and silent disability. The students grow frustrated when they are unable to communicate and to a non-deaf person this frustration can convey as anger. Group counseling would tremendously help with this anger and frustration. Our students would benefit from Upili instilling confidence and helping them learn to self-advocate in the outside world. Helping them to realize I am equal, I am capable, I have the same strength as non-deaf people do.

Kasarani Treeside School for the Deaf

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Before Upili, I wasn't confident about myself and contemplated self-harm. Through the sessions I have learned to recognize my self-worth, increase myself-confidence, and appreciate the life I have. Thanks to Upili I have the tools to feel better about myself every day.

Student, SA Joytown Secondary School

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Group therapy can be a powerful setting for students with disabilities, offering a space where they can connect with others facing similar challenges. Healing is a journey best traveled with companions and group therapy offers a compass to navigate the complex terrain of past trauma and present adversities. In the heart of the group, Students with Disabilities discover that their voices, often silenced by discrimination, can resonate with power and purpose.

**Rayhab Karuri, Counseling Psychologist,
Kenya Institute of Business and Counseling Studies**

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