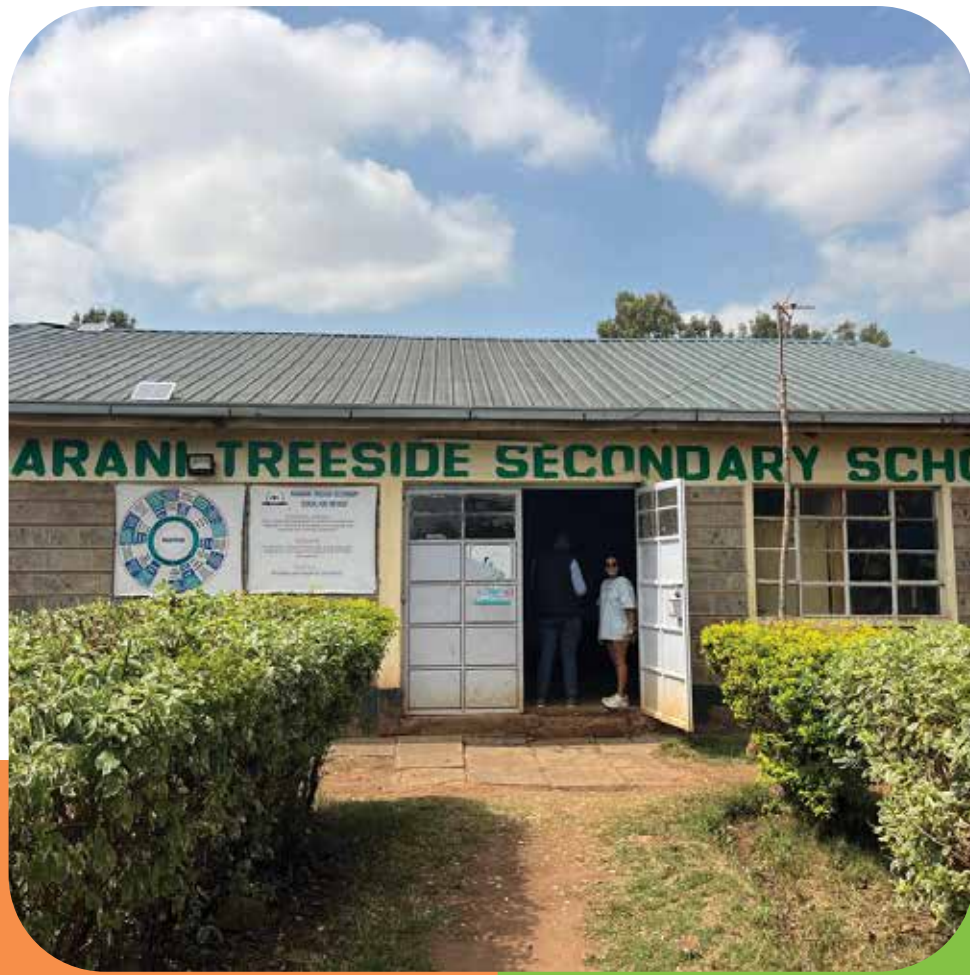


NEXT STEP FOUNDATION'S UPILI PROGRAM



UPILI

Powered By **Next Step Foundation**



Vision & Mission

Next Step Foundation believes meaningful employment is the most cost-effective way to reduce poverty among Persons with Disabilities, their families, and their communities.

Upili, an initiative by Next Step Foundation, empowers Kenyan youth with disabilities through group therapy sessions led by counselors with disabilities. The program addresses mental health challenges, boosts self-confidence, enhances academic performance, and equips participants with self-advocacy skills. By fostering workplace success and economic independence, Upili promotes a more inclusive society and unlocks the potential of youth with disabilities.

Upili Program

Youth with Disabilities in Kenya face severe barriers: limited psychosocial support, inadequate sexual health education, and low self-esteem due to deep-rooted stigma. These challenges restrict their ability to succeed academically and economically, leaving them unable to achieve financial independence. Upili addresses these critical gaps by providing targeted mental health support, empowering them to unlock their full potential and build brighter futures.

Our Pillars of Action


01



Student Support

Providing emotional support for Students with Disabilities through group counseling and our mental health chatbot.

02



Peer Support

Training select group of students to provide peer support, active listening and mentoring.

03



Staff Support

Educating teachers/staff to serve as Psychological First Responders in support of group therapy sessions.

04



Caregiver Support

Coaching and educating caregivers around disability acceptance and support at home.

Our 4 Key Outcomes

Better Mental and Emotional health



Upili's targeted support helps Students with Disabilities improve mental well-being, reduce anxiety, and build resilience, fostering confidence and independence for a brighter future.

Improved Performance



Upili's weekly group counseling sessions provide essential psychosocial support, enabling students to focus on academics, build resilience, and succeed in the workplace.

Strengthened Interpersonal Skills



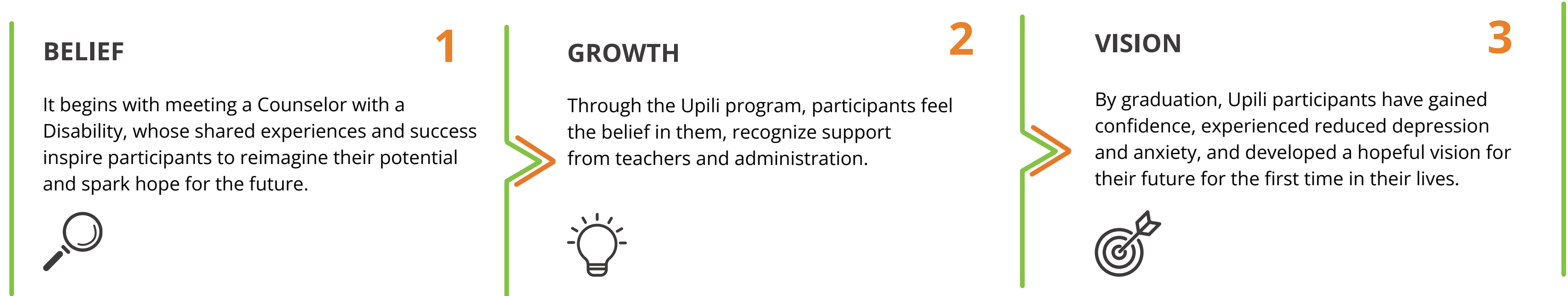
Upili's group counseling sessions, built on acceptance and positive regard, help participants gain confidence and practice their newly developed interpersonal skills.

Better Sexual and Reproductive health



Upili builds self-confidence and self-love in participants, empowering them with self-trust and reducing their vulnerability to exploitation.

As Participants move through the Upili program the following transformation takes place:



Upili To Date

Challenge: Youth with Disabilities are 10 times more likely to suffer from depression. There is a crisis in Education among Youth with Disabilities in Africa. This crisis is a direct result of the isolation, exclusion, discrimination, and social stigma to which Youths with Disabilities are subjected.

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.

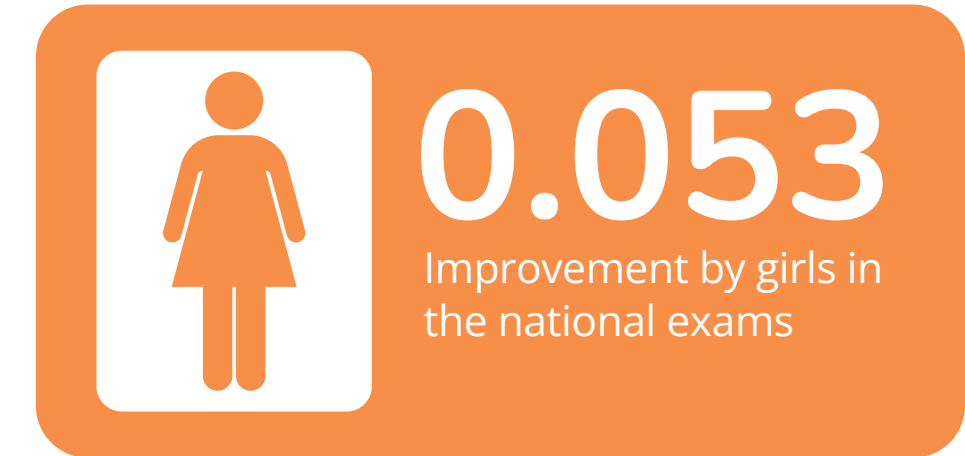
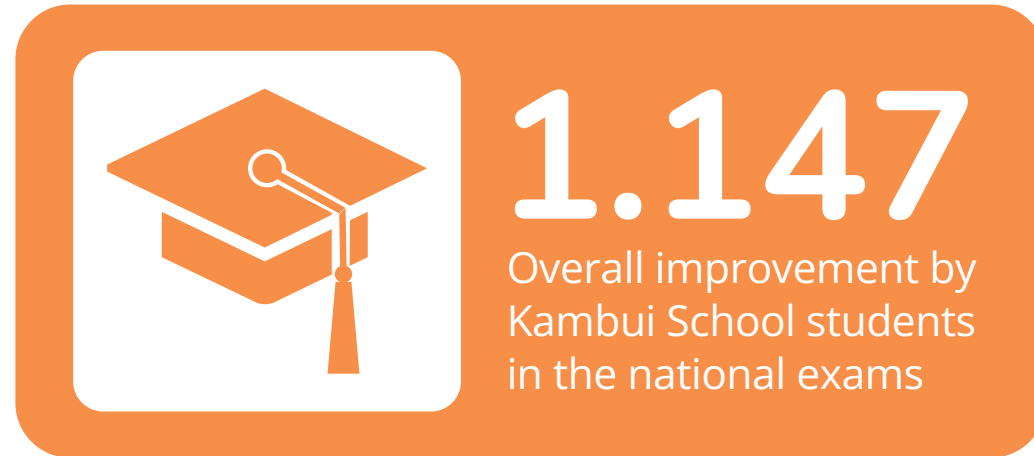


Double Disadvantage

As a result of their “double disadvantage,” Girls with Disabilities are among the world’s most marginalized youth, both because of societal attitudes towards women and stigmas around Persons with Disabilities.

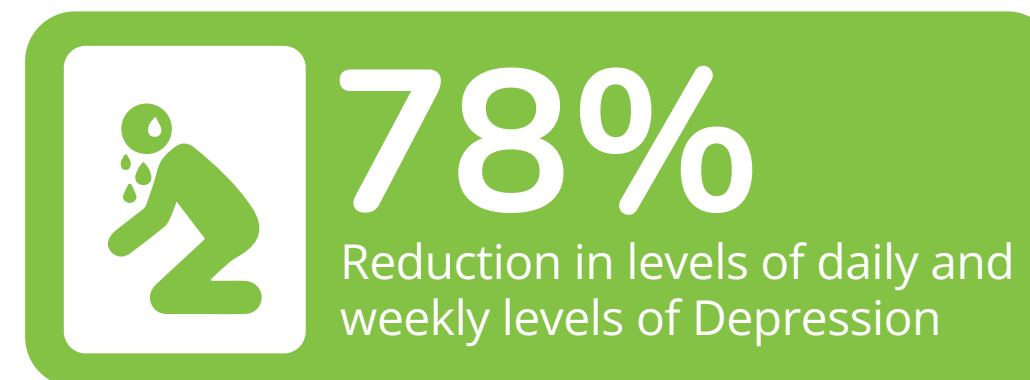
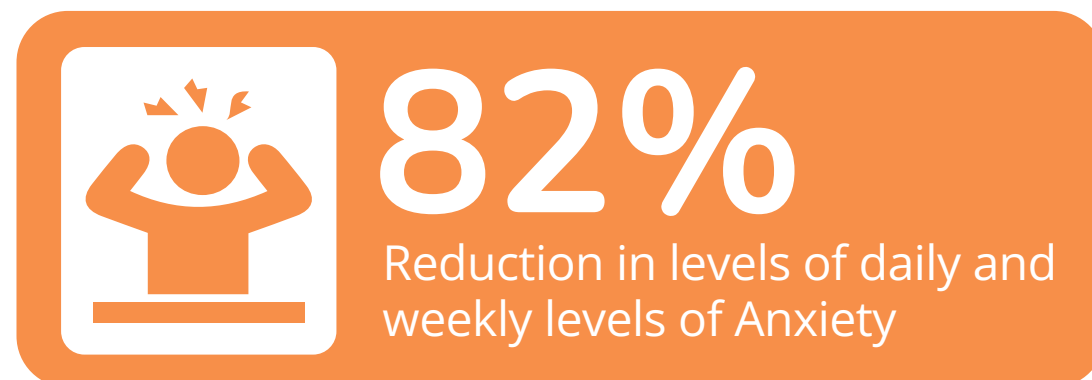
Our Impact Numbers

A Turning Point for Academic Excellence



At Kambui School, the Upili program is driving real academic progress. In the latest national exams, students improved by 1.147 points overall, with the school crediting Upili for this upward trend. By fostering resilience, focus, and self-confidence, Upili empowers students to excel academically and beyond, proving that mental well-being fuels success.

Results



Upili Counsellors



“

I became a counselor to help others and make a difference, offering support, guidance, and strategies for life challenges. It gives me purpose and drives my career.

~ Faith Mukonyo



“

I became a counselor to help others and shift my perspective as a person with a disability. My goal is to improve lives in my local community, where support like this is often lacking.

~ Joseph Mbugua



“

I became a counselor to help people navigate daily challenges and address mental health issues in Kenya, finding fulfillment in understanding the mind.

~ Jackie Ngure



“

I became a counselor because of impact it has on people's lives, especially within the Deaf and disabled communities. Knowing that I can help someone feel heard, understood, and empowered to take control of their health and well-being is incredibly fulfilling.

~ Joseph Etyang

“The economic case for investment in mental health is strong: for every \$1 invested in scaled-up treatment for depression and anxiety, there is a \$4 return in better health and productivity.”

WHO Special Initiative on Mental Health

“The consequences of failing to address adolescent mental health conditions extend to adulthood, impairing both physical and mental health and limiting opportunities to lead fulfilling lives as adults. “

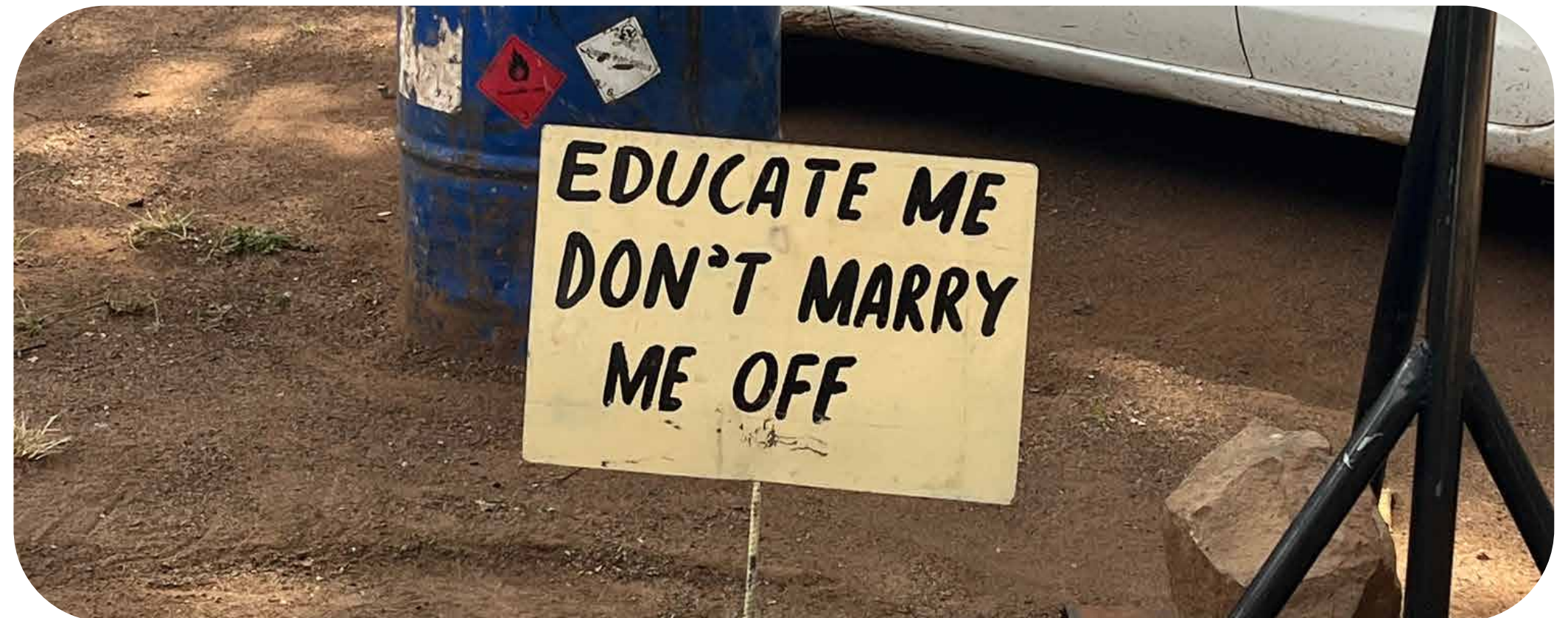
WHO Report Mental Health of Adolescents

“Studies estimate that on average an individual suffering from depression loses 4-15 days a year due to absenteeism. As for anxiety time lost per person per year is 18-24 days.”

Scaling-up treatment of depression and anxiety: a global return on investment analysis Dan Chisholm, Kim Sweeny, Peter Sheehan, Bruce Rasmussen, Filip Smit, Pim Cuijpers, Shekhar Saxena



What schools are
saying about Upili





Joytown provides a safe haven where hidden children become proud community members, but counseling is crucial to help them transition confidently into the outside world.

*~ SA Joytown
Secondary School*



Hearing-impaired students face stigma and trauma, making counseling—especially from a KSL-fluent professional—essential for their emotional well-being and protection.

*~ Kambui School for
the Deaf*



At Treeside, deaf students struggle with communication, often leading to frustration mistaken for anger, but group counseling can build confidence and self-advocacy.

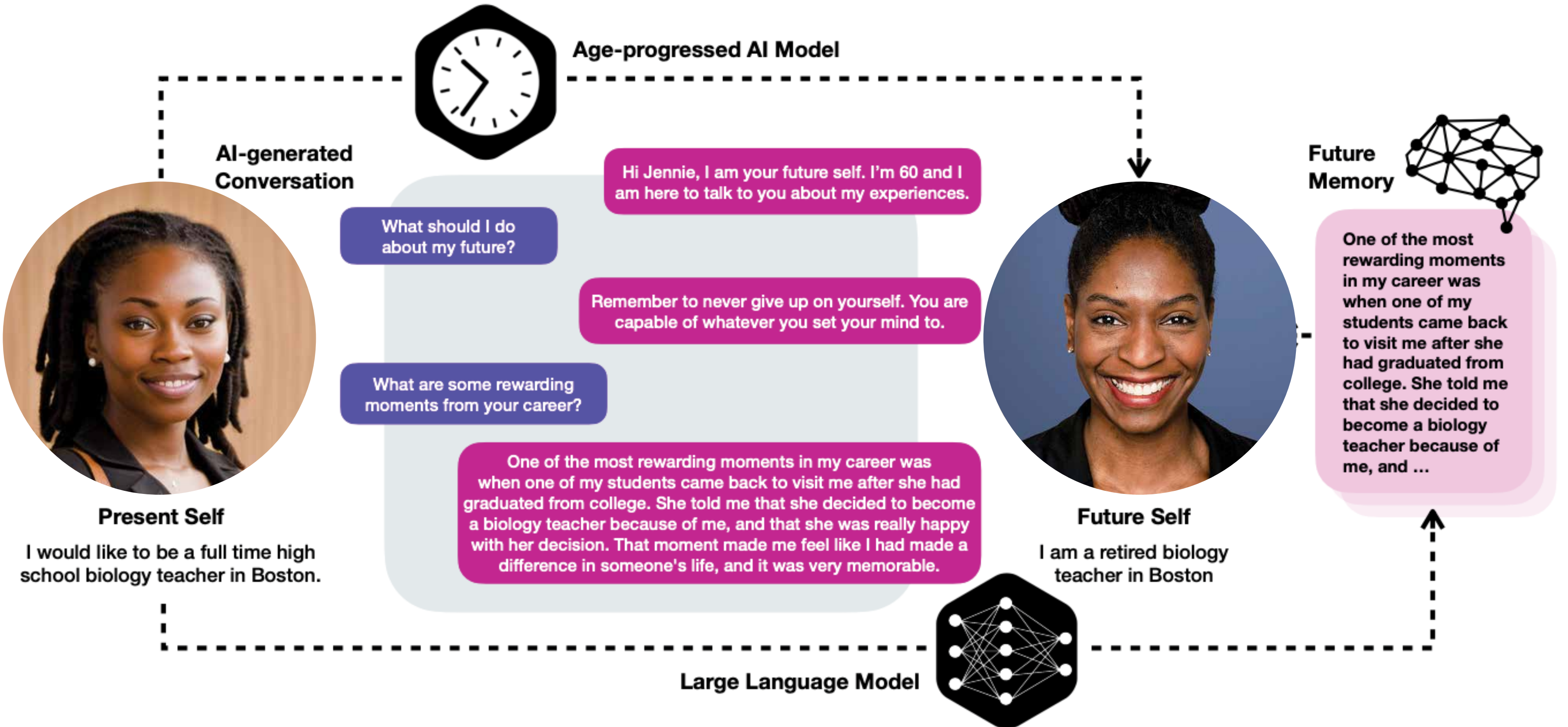
*~ Kasarani Treeside
Secondary School
for the Deaf*

Future Of Upili

There are **1.4 mental health workers per 100,000 people in Africa**, which is significantly below global average of 9 per 100,000 people

AI chatbots are providing **24/7 accessible mental health support** particularly valuable in regions with limited access to mental health professionals.

- 🌟 Woebot, developed by Stanford psychologists, delivers cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) through AI-driven conversations
- 🌟 Wylsa offers emotional support through AI-guided mindfulness exercises.
- 🌟 In India, organizations are using multilingual AI chatbots to provide mental health support in local languages, reaching previously underserved populations.
- 🌟 Friendship Bench uses integrated AI-enhanced screening tools to help local health workers conduct more accurate assessments in local languages. AI adapts clinical questions to local cultural contexts and expressions of mental distress.





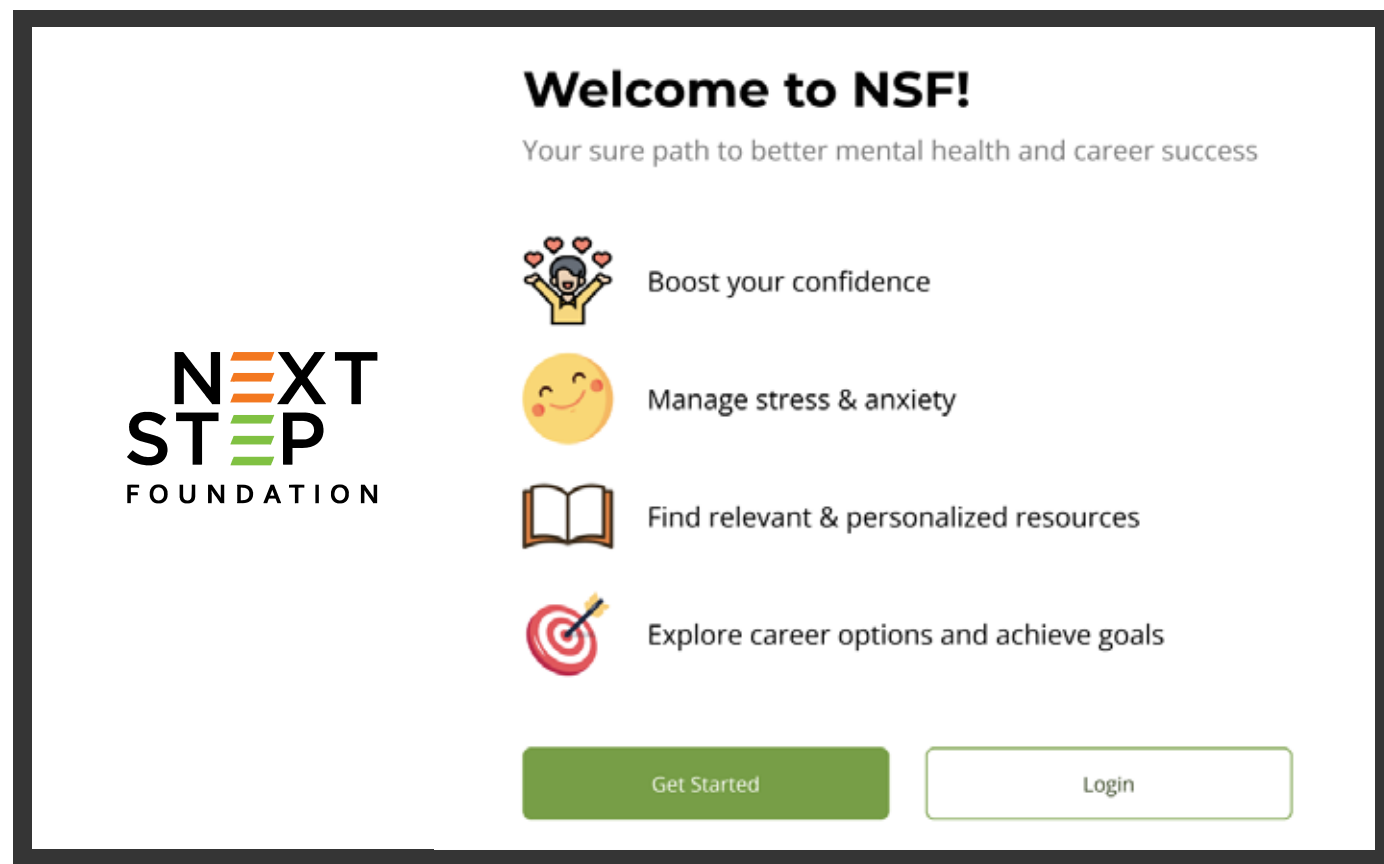
We are struggling to make the students responsible and accountable around sexual health. They often have sex from a place of ignorance, looking for love or because they are a vulnerable population because they are Deaf.

-Deputy principal, Kambui Secondary School



We have had Participants who were sexually abused outside of the school and it has led to self-isolation when they return to school. We work on that during counseling sessions.

-Mental Health Counselor



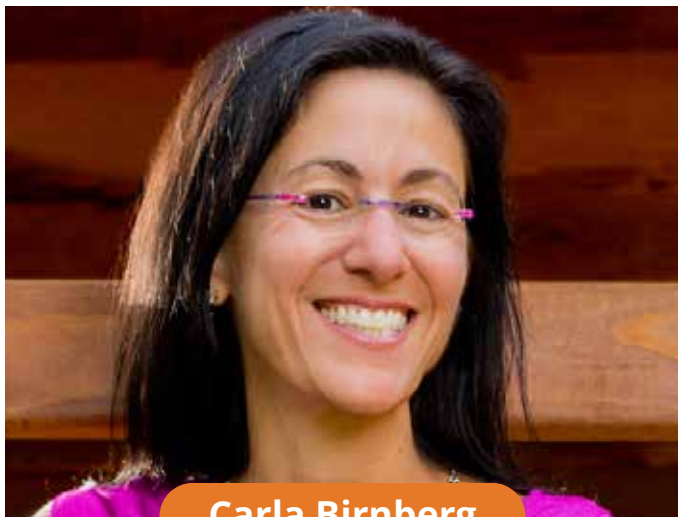
The Future Self Chat Bot is an AI platform for Students with Disabilities in Kenyan special schools, offering personalized career guidance by allowing users to engage with their envisioned future selves, fostering hope, resilience, and confidence while exploring realistic career opportunities and setting achievable goals.

Upili Team



Mariam Ndegwa

Joytown Secondary, a special school for Persons with Disabilities, was my first experience in a specialized setting—an eye-opening journey that shaped me. Today, I give back by helping students so they, too, can uplift others. I believe that when a Person with a Disability graduates from a specialized school, they can advocate for inclusion, accommodation, and equity in Kenya. Volunteering is also a core part of me—it once helped me heal from depression through the smiles of children. Join me in empowering young Kenyans with Disabilities through the Upili Project.



Carla Birnberg

I first visited Kenya in 1998, drawn to experiencing rather than just touring. In Kijabe, I visited Cure International's first hospital and fell in love with the people. When I returned 22 years later for work, the welcome felt like coming home. Guided by Tikkun Olam—repairing the world—I see the Upili Project as a continuation of my mission. By connecting Kenya with U.S.-based donors, we provide the gift of equity to help promising students reach their full potential.

Our Board Members



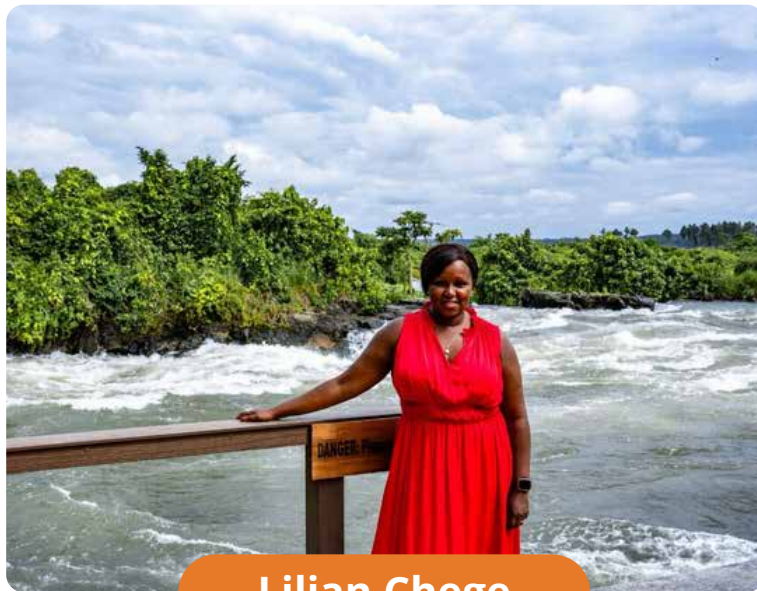
Chris Harrison



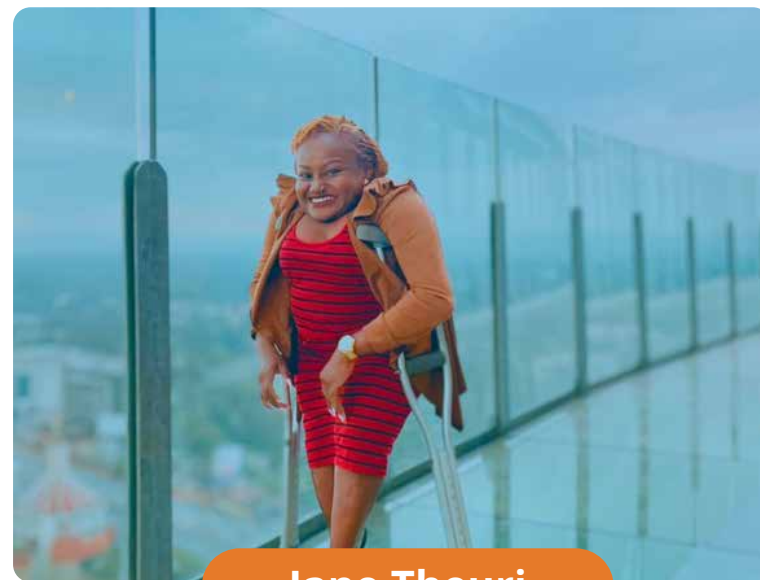
Peres Were



Sally Harrison



Lilian Chege



Jane Theuri



Asiya Mohamed



The Next Step of Cure International



The Next Step Foundation is a continuation of the philanthropic efforts of Sally and Scott Harrison, the founders of Cure International

Since opening of its first pediatric orthopedics hospital in Kijabe, Kenya in 1998, Cure operates eight hospitals around the world (including seven in Africa), has grown to more than \$100 million in assets and performed more than 300,000 surgical procedures.

Several of the Next Step Foundations employees are former patients of Cure



About Next Step Foundation

In the United States, Next Step Foundation is a registered 501(c)(3) with offices in Austin, Texas

Board Members

- Sally Harrison
- Chris Harrison
- Peres Were
- Jane Theuri

Addresses

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Waiyaki Way Westlands
Nairobi Kenya

In Kenya, the ALH Next Step Foundation is a registered Limited by Guarantee Company (i.e., non-profit) with offices in Nairobi

Board Members

- Sally Harrison
- Chris Harrison
- Peres Were
- Jane Theuri
- Lillian Chege
- Asiya Mohamed

