



# 20 24

IMPACT  
REPORT

**N**EXT  
**S**T**E**P  
FOUNDATION

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER

As we reflect on 2024, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the strides we have made in our mission to economically empower Persons with Disabilities in East Africa. This year, we significantly increased the number of participants who received industry-aligned tech skills and secured meaningful employment. Our training programs in the AI value chain and AWS Cloud Computing have unlocked new opportunities, bridging the gap between talent and demand in the digital economy.

One of our core objectives is to drive systemic change by mainstreaming disability inclusion in the workplace. Over the past year, our inclusive employment programs have reached over ten thousand employees across various organizations, fostering greater awareness and action toward inclusive hiring and workplace practices.

However, our journey has also unveiled a critical challenge that has long hindered the success of Persons with Disabilities in the workforce: the lack of psychosocial support to navigate the trauma of discrimination and stigmatization. This deeply ingrained barrier often limits learners from realizing their full potential, despite their technical capabilities.

To address this, we completed our first two cohorts of the Upili Program, a groundbreaking initiative providing psychosocial support through Counsellors with Disabilities. By offering group therapy, not only to our learners but also to their families and communities, Upili is fostering self-confidence, enhancing academic performance, and equipping individuals with the resilience to thrive despite systemic barriers. This initiative is already proving to be a transformative force in ensuring our learners are not just skilled but also emotionally and mentally prepared to excel in their careers and achieve economic independence.

Additionally, in 2024, we launched our Centre for AI for Sustainable Development Goals, an ambitious initiative leveraging AI to tackle some of Africa's most pressing challenges, in assistive devices for use in Africa, healthcare, and education, among-



others. By harnessing AI's potential, we aim to drive impactful solutions that create lasting change for Persons with Disabilities and beyond.

Our work is far from done, but the progress we have made is a testament to the power of collective action. We extend our deepest appreciation to our partners, donors, and advocates who continue to champion this cause. Together, we are breaking down barriers, reshaping mindsets, and paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable future.

*Peres Were*

## IMPACT AT A GLANCE

**98%**

Training completion rate

**100%**

job retention rate

**80%**

of participants placed are women

**20%**

of placements are  
Persons with Disabilities

**148**

Beneficiaries in  
Special Schools' Mental Health support

**15**

Corporates engaged in  
Disability Inclusion Training



## WHO WE ARE

The Next Step Foundation is a 501(c)(3) foundation that accepts and deploys charitable donations to implement projects that combine the power of technology with talented but underserved individuals to advance their economic inclusion.

We leverage the power of technology to train and upskill people from marginalized communities – with a particular focus on people living with disabilities, and young women, to equip and empower them to fully participate in the new digital economy.

We prepare an inclusive talent pipeline and create sustainable employment for a technology-driven world. Our work delivers on solutions for the UN Sustainable Development Goals: 4, 8, 10, and 11 by

- Supporting the growth and development of Artificial Intelligence / Machine Learning to solve Africa’s difficult challenges and create global solutions.
- Creating jobs and career opportunities for those who most often lack opportunities, especially women, young people, and Persons with Disabilities.
- Training and upskilling people from marginalized / disadvantaged communities in digital and tech skills necessary to compete in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.
- Providing our corporate partners with support in defining their reasonable accommodation mechanisms, policies, disability audits, and assessment of their facilities.



### Our Mission

We transform lives by leveraging the power of technology to upskill Persons with Disabilities, women and youth from marginalized and underserved communities to be empowered to participate in the digital economy.



### Our Vision

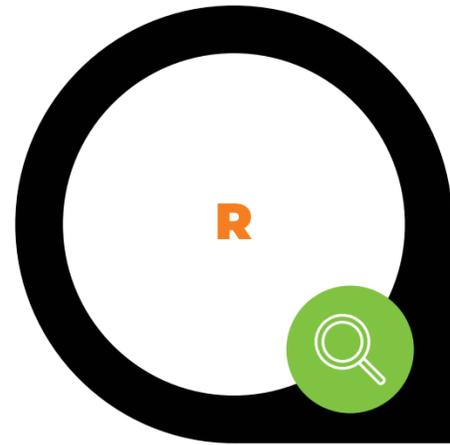
An inclusive and empowered world.

## Disability Inclusion at Next Step Foundation

Since 2021, Next Step Foundation has grown from 3 to 20 staff members in 2025. We are committed to promoting disability inclusion and diversity, ensuring an inclusive workplace where everyone feels valued and empowered.

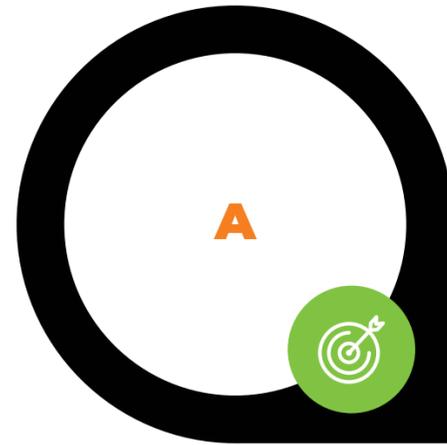
PWD	Male	Female	Total
6 (30%) of total staff count	11 (55%)	9 (45%)	<b>20</b>

## OUR THEORY OF CHANGE (R.A.A.T.T METHOD)



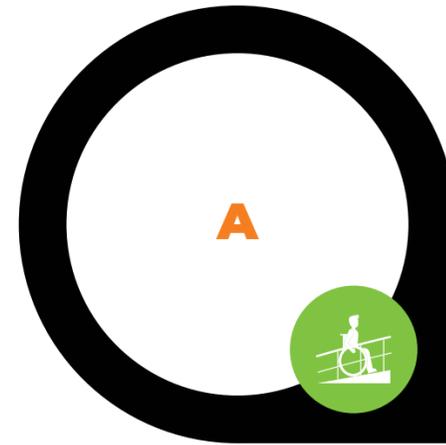
### Recruiting

Young Persons with Disabilities in Africa face invisibility due to social stigma, familial shame, and prioritization of resources, leading to segregation in education. We have a network of schools, universities and Disabled People's Organizations who help us identify and recruit young Persons with Disabilities to participate in our training programs.



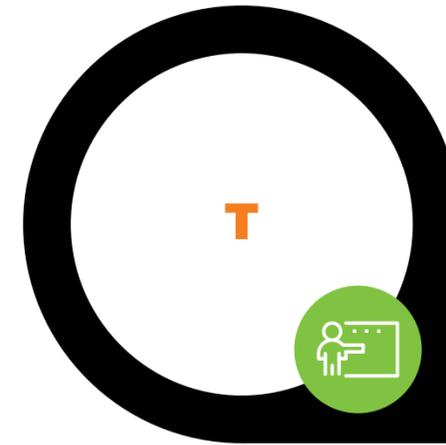
### Assessment

Diversity among Persons with Disabilities, ranging from mobility challenges to hidden disabilities compounded by intersecting personal attributes, poses unique and multifaceted barriers to inclusion and support. The assessments are program-specific and are designed to match candidates with the right training. They also identify what tools / resources are needed to address any disabilities.



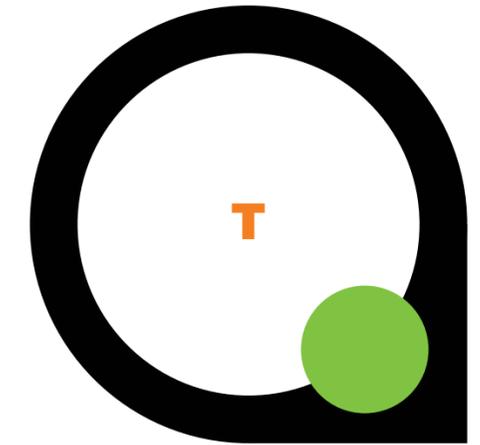
### Accommodation

The diverse needs of Persons with Disabilities necessitate tailored accommodations, ranging from screen-readers and sign language interpreters to specialized equipment and learning environments, posing challenges for inclusivity. We use the results of our assessment process to identify the accommodations each candidate will require to successfully complete the training program and obtain employment



### Training

Digital skills training programs often lack comprehensive instruction, failing to equip graduates, particularly Persons with Disabilities, with the necessary technical and soft skills demanded by employers. We offer only skills-based training that imparts practical knowledge that is aligned with existing and future labor market demands.



### Transition

Limited focus exists on addressing the 'last mile' challenge of transitioning Persons with Disabilities into employment, as they encounter their first job with associated hurdles. We provide mentors for our graduates that help them transition into employment and help identify ways in which corporations can establish and grow disability inclusion programs.

**AT A  
GLANCE:  
SKILLING  
FOR FUTURE  
OF WORK**



1



## Advancing Digital Inclusion

In our partnership with Chancen International, the first cohort of our Digital Upskilling Program saw 53% female participation, with 37% of the learners being Persons with Disabilities. Through the program, participants gained essential digital economy skills, sharing inspiring stories of personal growth and career readiness.

So far, over 33% of the cohort has successfully secured jobs, while others are actively attending interviews. We remain committed to supporting all participants as they continue their journey toward transitioning into the workforce.



## Empowering Entrepreneurs: A Partnership with Somo Africa

We launched an entrepreneurship program in Kilifi County, Kenya in partnership with Somo Africa. The program focused on empowering Persons with Disabilities through business management techniques, and market-relevant soft skills enabling them to thrive in Kenya's growing entrepreneurial ecosystem.

We successfully graduated 27 participants who have also developed essential life skills, breaking stereotypes about their entrepreneurial potential.



2



3



## Documenting Milestones: Celebrating Our Advanced Data Annotation Graduates

With 80% female participation and 13% Persons with Disabilities, all participants in our second cohort under the Chancen International partnership successfully graduated from the Advanced Data Annotation Program last month, gaining valuable digital skills.

Job placements are currently ongoing, with at least 23% of the participants already placed, as we continue working toward integrating the rest into the professional world.



## Expanding Opportunities: Our AWS Cloud Computing Program

As part of our Cloud Skills Development Initiative, we are offering the Amazon Web Services Cloud Computing training program, equipping participants—34% female and 28% PWDs—with in-depth knowledge and skills in cloud computing.

The program prepares the learners for high-demand roles in the digital economy, enabling them to thrive in the growing cloud technology sector.



4



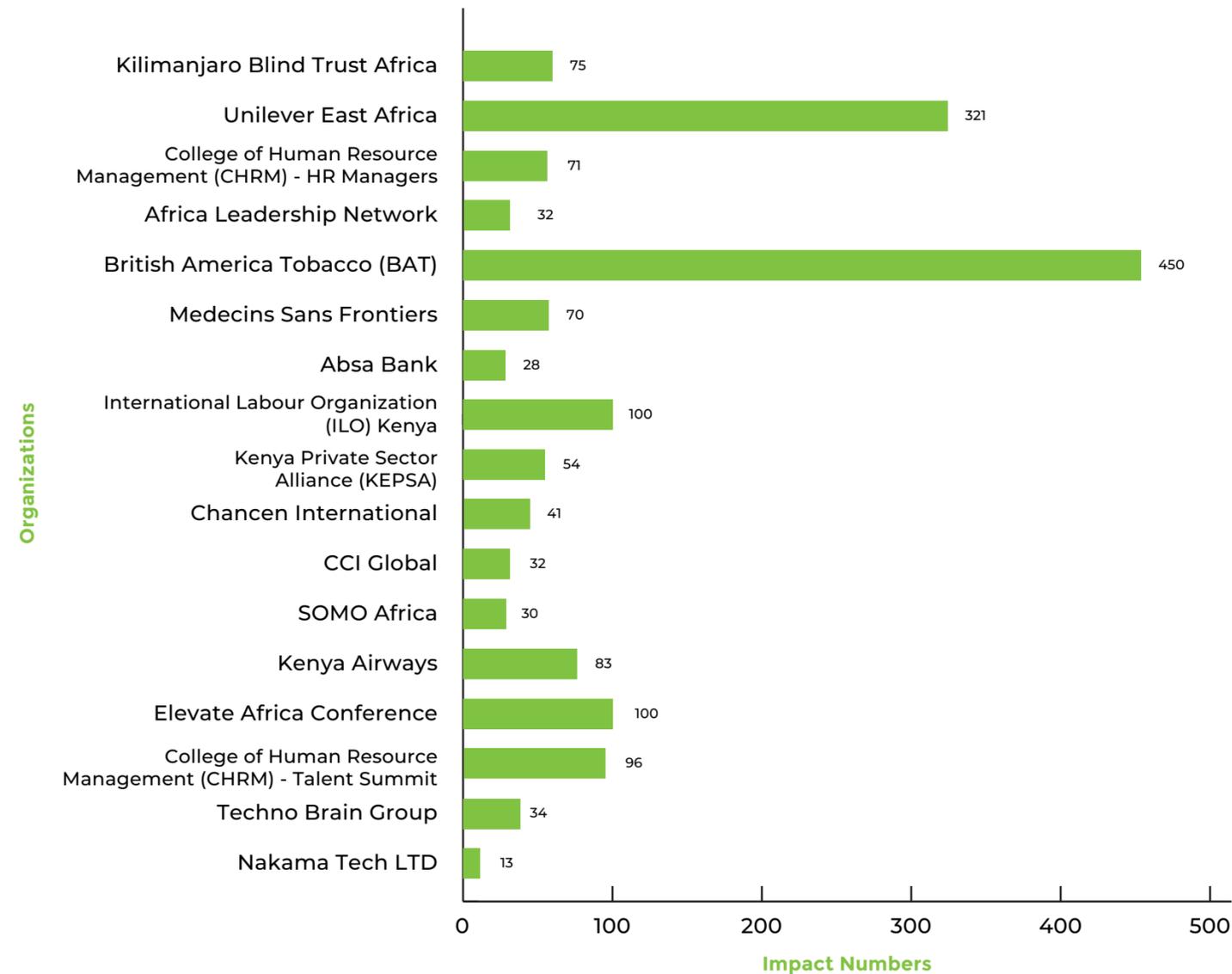
# DISABILITY INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE:



# Disability Inclusion Training Program

Our Workplace Disability Inclusion Advisory Unit has significantly advanced awareness and inclusive employment practices across various sectors. Notable partners like Kenya Airways, Médecins Sans Frontières, Unilever, British American Tobacco (BAT), the International Labour Organization (ILO) Kenya, and CCI Global have been leading in employing and retaining diverse teams.

Our collaboration with the ILO and focus on peer-to-peer learning have been key. We've seen success in integrating universal designs and communication strategies to normalize disability inclusion discussions, enhancing employee engagement and workplace inclusivity. A major challenge was the lack of legal awareness among corporate clients, which we addressed through training, mentorship, and strategic partnerships.



## Empowering Change

In the pursuit of fostering inclusivity and empowering Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), we have remained steadfast in our commitment to driving tangible change. As we reflect on the achievements of 2024, we are proud to share the significant strides we have made in reshaping perceptions and creating opportunities for PWDs.

In 2024, our Disability Inclusion (DI) training and awareness initiatives resonated deeply with 75% of the corporates we collaborated with, prompting them to take concrete actions or initiate conversations regarding Persons with Disabilities inclusion within their offices.

This remarkable response highlights the growing recognition among businesses of the importance of fostering diverse and inclusive workplaces.

# 20%

In 2023, we were thrilled to witness the impact of our skills training programs, as **20% of the Persons with Disabilities** trained by us were successfully placed in jobs. For perspective, the average national percentage of PWDs employed in most organisations is **9.8%**.

This achievement represents more than just numbers; it symbolizes the realization of dreams and the breaking down of barriers.

# 30%

With inclusivity at the heart of our ethos, we are delighted to report that **30% of our dedicated staff members are Persons with Disabilities themselves.**

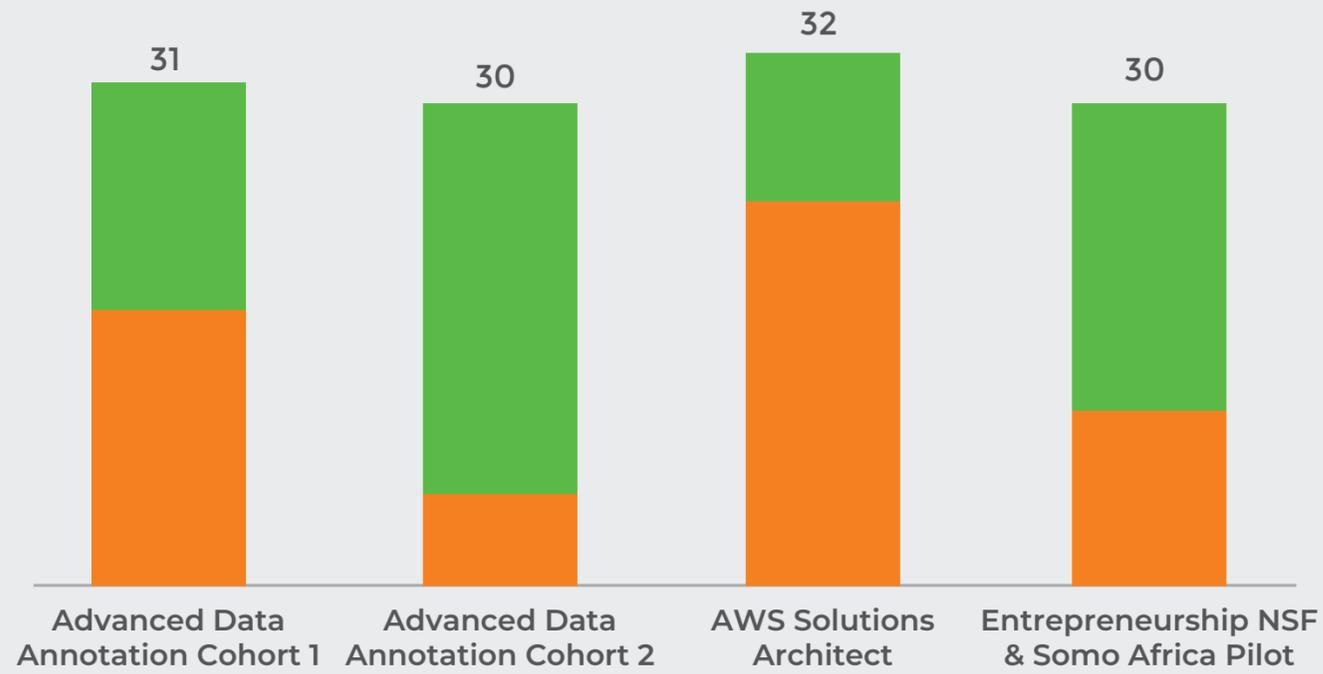
Through their unique perspectives and talents, they enrich our organization, driving innovation & fostering a culture of understanding and acceptance.



**OUR  
IMPACT:**

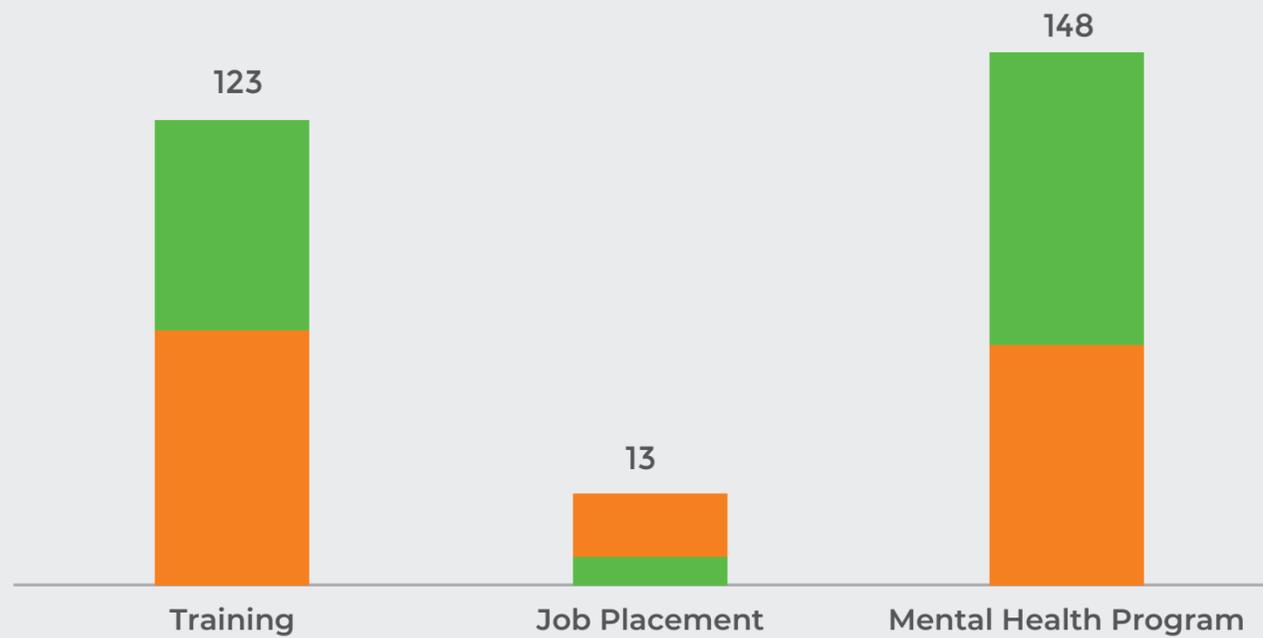


## Training



	Male	Female	PWDs
Advanced Data Annotation (C1)	15	16	11
Advanced Data Annotation (C2)	6	24	9
AWS Solutions Architect	21	11	9
Entrepreneurship	13	17	30

## Programs Numbers



	Male	Female	PWDs	Total
Training	68	55	11	123
Job Placement	11	2	5	13
Mental Health Program	62	86	148	148

# Upili Program's Vision for Students with Disabilities



## UPILI'S MENTAL HEALTH IMPACT IN 2024

The Next Step Foundation's Upili program expanded its impact in 2024, improving mental health support for Youth with Disabilities in Kenya. Under Project Manager Mariam Ndegwa's leadership, the program grew beyond its SA Joytown Secondary pilot to include Treeside Kambui School for the Deaf, where it launched its first group counseling cohort conducted in Kenyan Sign Language (KSL) by a Deaf counselor.

The program's impact was evident in Kambui School for the Deaf's improved national exam results, with Deputy Principal George Wairobi highlighting how increased student confidence and resilience contributed to this success. The team's work earned recognition at the Africa Global Mental Health Institute Conference, where they shared insights on mental health support in underserved communities.

The program is developing an innovative mental health chat platform focused on future-self connection, designed to help students maintain support beyond campus. This ongoing project will be presented at the 2025 DISES Conference in Nairobi. The Upili Aides initiative also launched this year, training Laypersons with Disabilities to facilitate support groups while creating employment opportunities within the disability community.

At SA Joytown Secondary's Parents' Day, Ndegwa shared her experiences as a Kenyan Woman with a Disability, connecting with parents and caregivers about the program's impact. Joseph Etyang's work in Kenyan Sign Language sessions has helped create spaces where Students with Disabilities feel valued.

As the Next Step Foundation enters 2025, Upili continues its work: reducing stigma, supporting self-advocacy, and providing essential mental health tools. Through collaboration with educators, families, and communities, the program helps create a future where every young Kenyan with a disability can reach their full potential.





Our staff during Kasarani Treeside Secondary session.

## Upili's Vision for Students with Disabilities in Kenya

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 fostering participants with self-advocacy skills. By workplace success and economic independence, Upili promotes a more inclusive society and unlocks the potential of youth with disabilities.

## Our Pillars of Action

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.



### Student Support

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



### Peer Support

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



### Staff Support

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



### Caregiver Support

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

## Meet the Counsellors



### Jackline Wangare

A professional counselor with a diploma in counseling psychology and Kenya Sign Language, is passionate about empowering children and adolescents with disabilities. With experience at Kambui Primary School for the Deaf and Care-Tech Medical Center, she also brings skills in crisis intervention, group counseling, community outreach, and disability advocacy.



### Joseph Mbugua

A counselor with 13+ years of experience and a physical disability (Cerebral Palsy), holds a counseling diploma and is registered with the Counseling and Psychologist Board. He practices at SA Joytown Secondary School in Thika and volunteers with institutions offering HIV & AIDS support services.

### Faith Kalia

A counselor with eight years of experience and a Bachelor's in Counseling Psychology from Moi University, specializes in family, adolescent, and school counseling. She has implemented school programs enhancing social support and volunteered at Nairobi West Prison and Faith Community Church, fostering safe, inclusive spaces for marginalized individuals.



### Joseph Etyang

A Disability Programs Officer and GBV Advocacy Specialist with 16+ years of experience, advocates for inclusive healthcare and HIV prevention. An award-winning Deaf Inclusion Champion, he has influenced policies such as the Kiambu County Disability Bill and led initiatives such as Deaf Awareness Week, promoting mental and reproductive health.

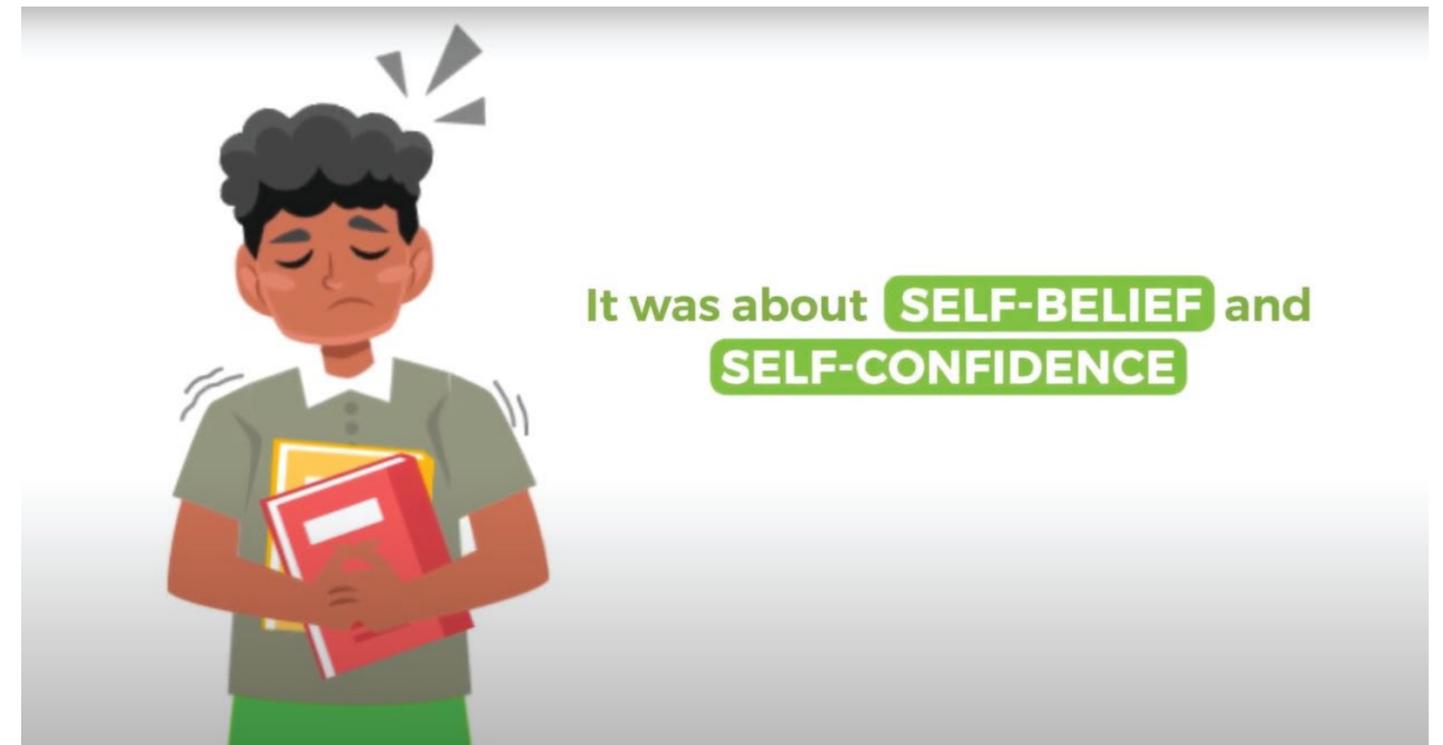




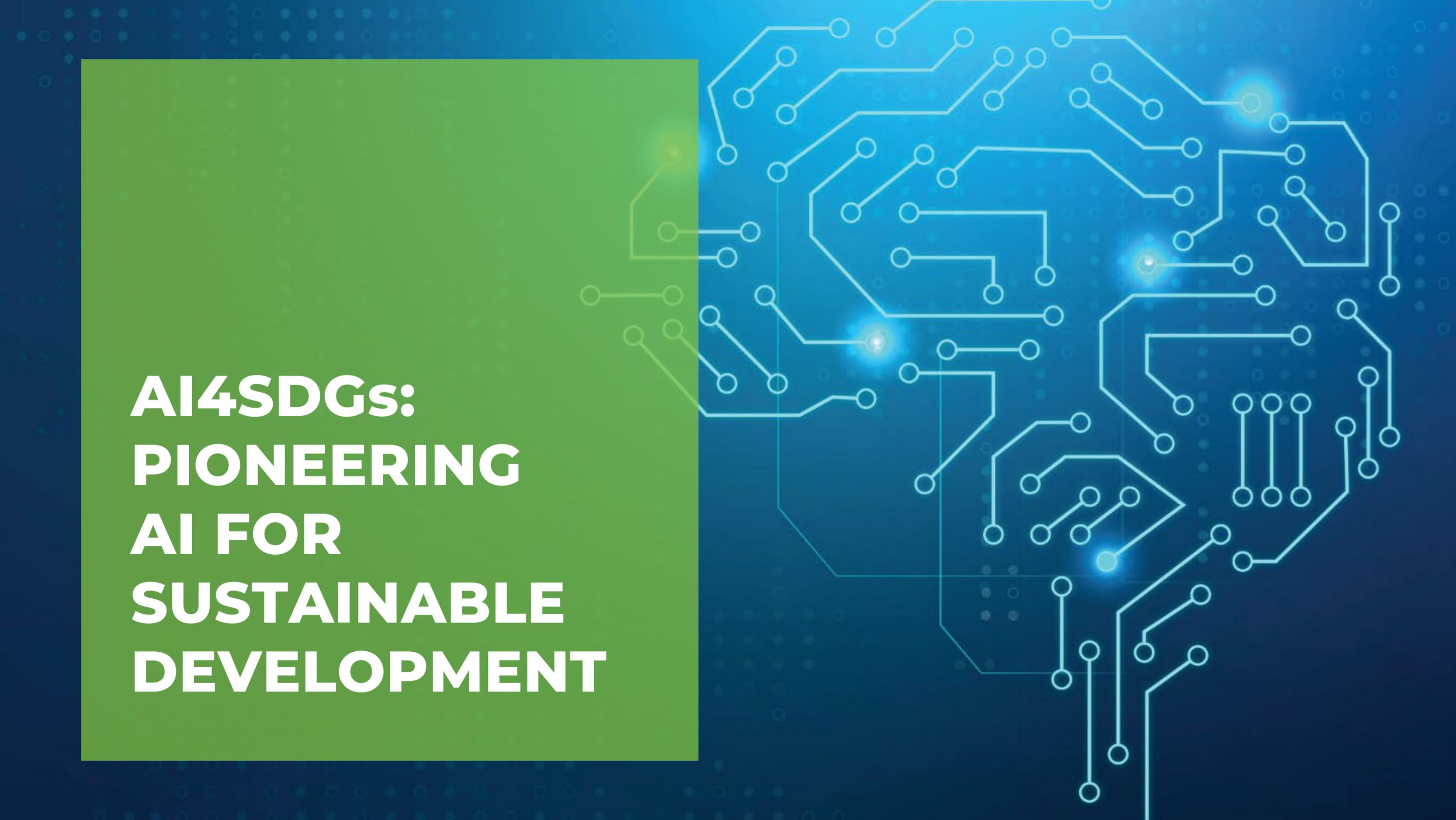
Most of the time he used to be on phone, now he reads,

**Click Here to  
Watch the How and Why Behind Upili**

**Click Here to  
Watch How Upili is Changing Lives**



It was about **SELF-BELIEF** and  
**SELF-CONFIDENCE**

The image features a dark blue background with a pattern of small, light blue dots. On the right side, there is a stylized graphic of a human brain composed of white circuit lines and nodes, with several nodes glowing with a bright blue light. On the left side, there is a solid green rectangular area containing white text.

**AI4SDGs:  
PIONEERING  
AI FOR  
SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT**

## Advancing AI for Sustainable Development in Africa

Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents immense opportunities for Africa, but realizing its benefits requires overcoming key challenges—lack of quality data, a shortage of trained AI professionals, and ethical concerns around bias and inclusivity. Next Step Foundation's Ai4SDG initiative, will be addressing these challenges to ensure AI contributes meaningfully to sustainable development across the continent.

Africa faces a data gap that limits AI-driven solutions for climate change, healthcare, education, agriculture, and job creation. Our newest endeavor, Ai4SDG, strives to close this gap by creating high-quality, annotated datasets through its Responsible AI Data for Development program. In 2025 and beyond we plan to work with local entrepreneurs to identify critical AI-driven solutions and providing the data they need to succeed. Using our Nikkoworkx® Data Annotation platform, we will train and employ local talent to collect, clean, and annotate data, ensuring AI models are built on accurate, representative datasets that reflect Africa's unique challenges and opportunities.

Beyond technical training, Ai4SDG will prioritize ethical AI deployment, fostering responsible innovation that aligns with Africa's diverse cultures and socio-economic realities. Through hackathons, incubator programs, and collaborations with businesses and policymakers, the initiative will nurture AI solutions that are not only innovative but also equitable and sustainable.

By investing in local talent, ethical AI, and the creation of quality datasets, Ai4SDG is laying the foundation for AI-driven solutions that will empower African communities. Our goal is to ensure that Africa is not just a consumer of AI but a leader in its responsible and impactful development.

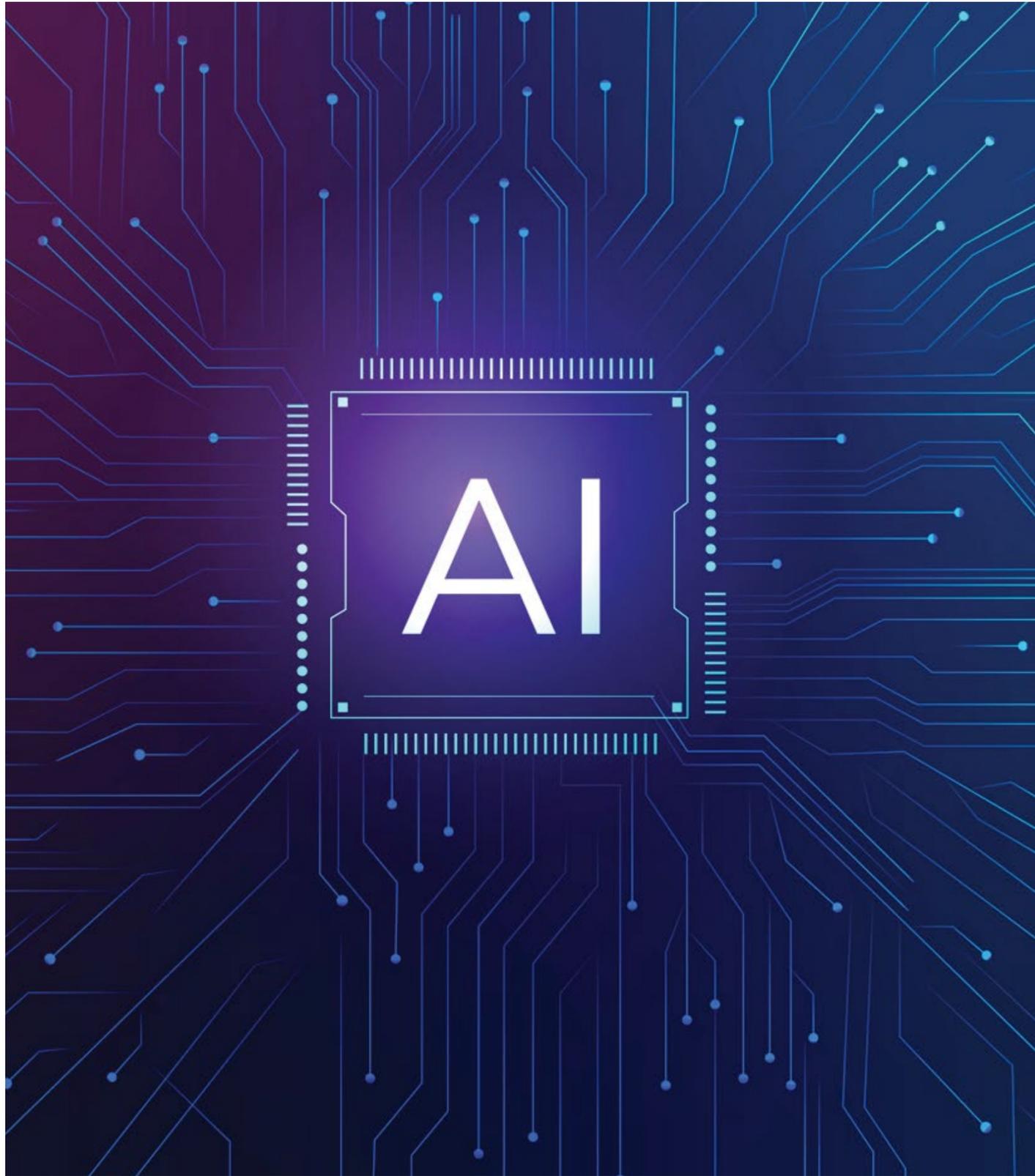


## OUR AI4SDG CENTER LAUNCH

In 2024, the Next Step Foundation partnered with the Assistive Technologies for Disability Trust (AT4D) to launch AI for Sustainable Development Goals (Ai4SDG) Center, a new initiative harnessing AI to advance SDGs in the Global South. Targeting SDGs 4 (Quality Education), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 10 (Reduced Inequality), and 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), the center drives innovation through collaboration.

The launch event featured AT4D Executive Director Bernard Chiira, Next Step Foundation's Executive Chairman Christopher Harrison, J.D., Ph.D., and keynote speaker Philip Thigo, MBS, from the UN High-Level Advisory Board on AI, who highlighted local startups' efforts to reduce inequality, especially for people with disabilities and the elderly. As an incubator, the center supports projects like the NikkoWorkx Data Annotation Training Platform, preparing students for AI careers and fostering equitable, culturally relevant solutions. This partnership reflects our commitment to accelerating SDG progress and ensuring no one is left behind.





# OUR PARTICIPANT STORIES:



## Participant Stories

### Early Life and Education

Olyver Omondi, the second born of nine siblings, has always navigated life with grit and tenacity. Now living with his eldest brother, who serves as the family's sole provider, Olyver's educational journey began in Nairobi, where he completed his primary schooling in Kariobangi. He continued his secondary school studies in Siaya, completing his Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations in 2014. Following high school, he mastered computer packages, building a foundation for his future studies. In September 2015, he enrolled in college to study Business Innovation and Technology Management, graduating in 2020.

Before joining the Next Step Foundation, Olyver volunteered with Raidy Aiders, a local nonprofit organization. Through this connection, he discovered Next Step Foundation. In May 2024, he participated in training sessions covering Data Annotation, soft skills development, and customer service fundamentals. These Next Step Foundation trainings served to both enhance his skills and significantly boost his confidence.

### Career Breakthrough

In September 2024, Olyver successfully interviewed with Nakama Tech and completed their one-month training program. Reflecting on his interview experiences, Olyver shared that despite receiving multiple offers, he chose Nakama Tech for its welcoming culture and commitment to employee development. He is now employed there on a one-year project.

### Adapting to Work

During training, Olyver discovered an unexpected twist: despite the heavy emphasis on English proficiency, he found that many customers prefer communicating in Kiswahili, with some even using Sheng a mix of the two. "I find it interesting," he shares. "Now I need to master both fluent English and Swahili." This highlights Olyver's adaptability and eagerness to learn as he promotes products through outbound calls in his current position.

### Future Goals and Appreciation

As Olyver focuses on successfully completing his probation period, he hopes to secure a long-term contract as a Team Leader in the organization. While he acknowledges the financial responsibility of supporting extended family members as he contributes to their needs, he takes pride in his ability to provide this assistance. Beyond his career aspirations, he expresses profound gratitude toward his trainer, Nickson, stating, "He is the best teacher, very accommodating, and has a unique way with everyone. There can't be a better trainer."

Olyver's story reminds us education, training, and community support through organizations like Next Step Foundation can change lives, showcasing the power of perseverance and personal growth when given the right opportunities.



**Olyver Omondi**

*Advanced Data Annotation*

## Participant Stories

### Sylvia's Early Life and Accident

Sylvia Ambiyu was born a healthy baby girl and lived a typical life until the age of 11, when a tragic accident changed everything. On her way to church, she was struck by a matatu, resulting in a spinal cord injury. As the firstborn in a family of four, a position of leadership and importance, the accident impacted her entire family. Sylvia's recovery process was grueling. She spent nearly a year in the hospital, facing profound physical and emotional challenges. During this difficult time, she received no counseling to help her understand or process the permanent changes ahead. When she was finally discharged, Sylvia was given a wheelchair, a moment that defined her new reality as a Person with a Disability. Unprepared for this shift in identity, Sylvia struggled to adjust.

### Her Education Journey

Despite these challenges, Sylvia remained determined to continue her education. She attended SA Joytown Primary School and completed her studies in 2010 at SA Joytown Secondary School. Following her secondary education, Sylvia joined a vocational rehabilitation center to learn secretarial skills. However, her journey was interrupted when the center unexpectedly closed. Demonstrating her resilience once again, Sylvia enrolled in a diploma program, only to face another setback: she was asked to leave because the institution couldn't accommodate her wheelchair accessibility needs. Once again facing uncertainty, Sylvia felt hopeless about her future.

### Next Step Foundation Impact

Although she did not realize it at the time, Sylvia's life took a positive turn when she happened to meet an employee from Next Step Foundation and learn about the work the foundation does. Initially apprehensive about entering the tech world, especially after 13 years without formal employment or education, Sylvia battled low self-esteem and confidence issues. Today, her outlook is entirely different. Sylvia, after completing her first-ever formal job interview, is now working—a milestone made possible through the support of Next Step Foundation. This opportunity fills her with excitement and pride.

### Dreams and Gratitude

Sylvia now dreams of becoming a counseling psychologist. She hopes to mentor individuals, especially young girls, who struggle with the same self-doubt and esteem issues she once did. Through the Next Step Foundation, she has not only gained valuable skills in data annotation, computer literacy, and job readiness—she has rekindled her sense of self-worth and confidence. With deep appreciation, Sylvia reflects, "The Next Step Foundation has been incredible." She particularly values Trainer Nickson's supportive and knowledgeable approach, which has given her newfound confidence in her abilities.

Sylvia Ambiyu's story serves as a reminder of why we at Next Step Foundation do the work we do. Despite setbacks, with the right resources and encouragement, Sylvia discovered new paths that align with her abilities and aspirations. This reinforces our belief that talent is universal, but opportunity is not. Our mission is to bridge that gap for thousands more like Sylvia, creating ripples of change throughout communities and Kenya.



**Sylvia Ambiyu**

*Advanced Data Annotation*

## Participant Stories

### A Childhood of Change

In a small village in 2006, Judith Musangi's world was irrevocably changed when she lost both parents. Left in the care of aging grandparents, she and her brother faced a childhood marked by instability. Despite their best efforts, her grandparents struggled to provide consistency, resulting in Judith attending four different secondary schools due to financial difficulties. "I was uprooted before I could establish roots," Judith recalls. "Each new school meant starting over: new teachers, new classmates, new challenges."

### Finding a Path Forward

Despite these obstacles, Judith maintained her determination. A key moment came when a friend introduced her to Ready Aiders, a program offering free IT training to girls. Through this connection, Judith discovered Next Step Foundation—an organization that would positively impact her future. "Before Next Step, I knew nothing about customer service or professional communication," Judith explains. "I was often seen as quiet, but I've always been pretty outgoing at heart."

### Judith's Growth

The training program at Next Step provided more than just technical skills—it offered a community where Judith could develop confidence and amplify her voice. Customer service training, IT skills, and public communication techniques became the foundation for growth. Today, Judith works at Salix Data, where she has found not just employment but a sense of belonging. "At Salix, I don't feel like I'm at a workplace; I feel at home," she shares. "Everyone is friendly and supportive, creating an environment where I thrive without pressure."

### Dreams for the Future

Judith's confidence now extends beyond her professional life. Once describing herself as hopeless, she now has dreams for her future. She hopes to establish an orphanage, becoming 'a mother to the motherless.' Her personal experience of loss sparks a desire to create stability for others facing similar challenges. "Next Step Foundation didn't just help me find a job; they helped me find my value," Judith reflects. "They taught me that my past doesn't determine my future."



**Judith Musangi**

*Advanced Data Annotation*

## Placement Update

### Childhood and Early Challenges

Rodgers Onyango, a confident and charismatic 25-year-old from Homabay County, Kenya, was born with a physical disability. As a child, he dreamed of becoming a plant operator, but this dream was sidelined due to his disability. Unlike most Children with Disabilities in Kenya, Rodgers did not have the opportunity to attend a specialized primary school. Instead, he studied alongside able-bodied classmates. Without the necessary accommodations, Rodgers faced challenges his peers did not. Despite these obstacles, Rodgers excelled in school, determined to prove his disability was not inability.

### Secondary Education and Stigma

After primary school, Rodgers surprised his family by continuing his non-special school education for Secondary. Though confident in his academic abilities, he faced persistent societal discrimination. Growing up in a remote part of Kenya where disability stigma was high, his community often viewed him as a burden. Despite believing in his potential, the daily dependence on others for basic tasks eroded his confidence. Yet rather than surrender to these challenges, Rodgers turned this struggle into determination to demonstrate his capabilities.

### Discovering IT Passion

His life's trajectory shifted when Rodgers chose to study computer science in high school, igniting his passion for Information Technology. He pursued this newfound interest at the Technical University of Mombasa, earning a Bachelor of Science in Information Technology. For Rodgers graduating was more than earning a degree, it was a statement to everyone, including himself, that he is more than his disability.

### Career and Aspirations

After graduation, Rodgers knew he wanted to find a way to combine his passion for technology with advocacy for Persons with Disabilities. Through Next Step Foundation's upskilling program, he enrolled in a Cyber security course at a Nairobi-based software training institute. This training opportunity, supported by the Foundation, allowed him to acquire technical and soft skills that would have otherwise been financially out of reach. The Cybersecurity course reshaped Rodgers' life, providing clarity for his professional journey. Today, he works as a Customer Experience Executive at Safaricom, a position that has enhanced both his circumstances and his family's well-being. Rodgers embodies the remarkable possibilities that emerge when personal determination meets opportunity.

### Advocacy and Legacy

Today Rodgers continues to give back to the disability community, sharing his story and inspiring others. As a passionate advocate for Persons with Disabilities, he now educates employers on the added value Persons with Disabilities bring to the workforce reminding them his community possesses a determination and problem-solving ability that sets them apart. Rodgers Onyango has grown from a boy with a dream into a role model for many, including the team at the Next Step Foundation.



**Rodgers Onyango**

*Cyber Security*

## Our Team



**Peres Were**  
Executive Director



**Millicent Obor**  
Head of Programs



**Carol Okara**  
Head of Partnerships



**Carla Birnberg**  
Head of Storytelling



**Jim Cohick**  
Head of Healthcare  
Technology Solutions



**Allan Maonga**  
Head of People,  
Diversity & Culture



**Daniel Ngugi**  
Head of Inclusion  
& Development



**Calvince Ademba**  
Head of Impact  
& Sustainability



**James Ngane**  
Finance Manager

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J.D, Ph.D**



**Scott And Sally Harrison**



**Lillian Wambui Chege**



**Asiya Mohamed**



**Jane Theuri**

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**Prof Bitange Ndemo**



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OBE MD MCh FCS FRCS**



**Rene Syler**



**Skip Hendrickson**



**Ali Ingersoll**



**Bernard Chiira**

# Our Partners



### Early Life and Community Roots

Long before the car accident that would change his life, Mark Mungai was unknowingly building the resilience he would need later in life. Growing up in the outskirts of Nairobi, his childhood was filled with simple joys: spending time with family, stopping for sweets with friends after school, and learning the value of community through his church involvement. He was known throughout his village for his infectious smile and natural leadership abilities. In his early school years, Mark rarely encountered Persons with Disabilities. He recalls meeting only one student in secondary school who used crutches, admitting he "didn't know how to start a conversation with him." This memory would later take on new meaning as Mark found himself navigating life from a different perspective.

### The Accident and Resilience

Everything changed in December 2021. After a car accident resulting in a spinal cord injury, Mark faced a choice: retreat into what he calls his cocoon, a mental space he had developed during previous experiences with depression or remain the engaging presence he had always been. He chose the latter, maintaining his characteristic smile through years of hospitalization and rehabilitation. "I think the depression I faced before prepared me for my accident," Mark reflects. His previous experiences had given him tools for resilience he didn't know he would need. The same spirit that had driven him to volunteer in his community continued to propel him forward in his recovery.

### A New Path with Next Step

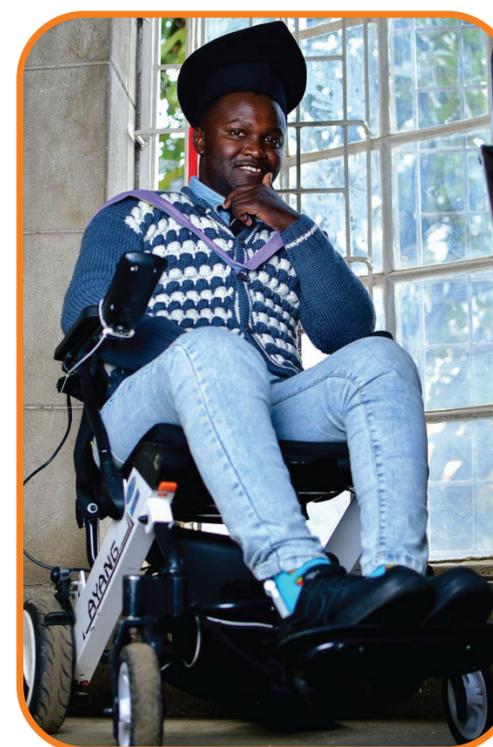
After graduating from the University of Nairobi, Mark's path to recovery led him to the Mastercard Foundation Associates program, which provided training in employability skills for Persons with Disabilities. This opportunity marked a turning point, connecting his natural networking abilities with new professional possibilities. As a communications and marketing associate, he now brings his determination and unwavering smile to each workday.

### Vision for Ethical AI

Drawing from a childhood fascination with technology, Mark dreams of contributing to the ethical development of human-centered AI. "Growing up, I used to talk about technology becoming more human-inspired," he reflects. "Now, as Africa is currently experiencing a technological revolution, I want to be at the forefront of creating ethical frameworks that are inclusive and regulate human inspired AI, considering human emotional intelligence and diverse experiences."

### Moving Forward with Purpose

Today, Mark approaches challenges with both earned wisdom and his characteristic humor. His mantra is simple but powerful: "Move on. Even if you don't know where you're going, move on. I moved on blindly, until I could finally see light. I didn't know if it was a light or an incoming train," he adds with a laugh, "but I moved on."



**Mark Mungai**

*Communications Associate, NSF*



## Keep In Touch With Us



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