ECHOES FROM THE MARGINS

FOREWORD

As the Executive Director of the Northern Nomadic Disabled Persons' Organization (NONDO), I am deeply honored to present "Echoes from the Margins", a powerful collection of stories that capture the voices, struggles, and triumphs of persons with disabilities from Kajiado West Sub-County. These narratives are not just stories they are lived realities that reveal the resilience of the human spirit and the profound impact of community, support, and inclusive advocacy.

On behalf of NONDO, I extend my sincere gratitude to the CBM Global Kenya and CBM UK teams for making this publication possible.

This work would not have come to life without the dedication and commitment of the project team behind it. I offer my heartfelt appreciation to Sarah Itenya, Serah Muthoni, and Linda Siguna. Your tireless efforts in collecting, shaping, and curating these stories have ensured that each voice is heard with dignity and clarity. Your passion has brought to light experiences that too often remain unseen and unheard.

To the individuals and families who courageously shared their journeys with us thank you for trusting us with your truths. May this publication serve as a catalyst for change, dialogue, and deeper inclusion for all persons with disabilities, especially those living in pastoralist and nomadic communities.

Fatma Mohamed
Executive Director-NONDO

THE STORY OF BABY STEVEN: A JOURNEY OF LOVE, ACCEPTANCE AND HOPE

Baby Steven is a four-year-old child with albinism residing in Kajiado County. He is the fifth child in his family and the only one born with a disability. At first, his mother struggled with denial and found it difficult to accept his condition. However, unlike in many cases, Steven's father was supportive and encouraged her to accept and love all their children equally.

To help his wife come to terms with the situation, the father often cited the example of Rosemary Wairimu, the Chairperson of the Kajiado County Albinism Association. He reminded her that Rosemary, who also lives with albinism, has become a strong and successful advocate. He believed their son had the potential to thrive. His consistent encouragement became the first step toward shifting her perspective. Still, it took Baby Steven's mother a long time to let go of the belief that her child was cursed.

Eventually, the father reached out to Rosemary, who then connected them with Zipporah, an Action for Change champion from Keekonyokie Ward. Zipporah visited the family and sensitized the mother on how

to properly care for Steven, guiding her on how to apply sunscreen, ensure he wears hats outdoors, schedule monthly dermatology visits, and most importantly, embrace and love Steven unconditionally.

Through ongoing awareness and support, Baby Steven was eventually registered with the National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) and enrolled in school in 2025. With Zipporah's support, the family also secured an NCPWD scholarship to support his education.

Today, the family is hopeful and looks forward to seeing Steven thrive and blossom, reaching his f ull potential. His story is one of love, as demonstrated by his father; the power of community, as shown by Rosemary and Zipporah; and the importance of advocacy. It is a clarion call to promote disability rights and inclusion as we strive for a progressive and compassionate society.

The journey of Baby Steven's family reflects the lived experiences of many caregivers raising children with albinism. A caregiver who has not yet come to terms with their child's condition often faces denial, fear, and emotional distress feelings intensified by the widespread stigma and discrimination associated with albinism in many communities.

This emotional strain is often compounded by the financial burden of ongoing medical care, protective gear, and educational needs. In many households, the responsibility of caregiving falls primarily on the mother, who may face these challenges alone.

Steven's story serves as a mirror to many families in our society. It underscores the critical need for community support, awareness, and advocacy to ensure that all children regardless of ability are loved, accepted, and empowered to reach their full potential.

A MOTHER'S HANDS, A FATHER'S HEART: RAISING EMMANUEL.

Emmanuel was born during a doctor's strike, a time of crisis that left his mother with no option but to deliver home. Her labor was prolonged, and when Emmanuel finally came into the world, the umbilical cord was tightly wrapped around his neck. The lack of immediate medical attention resulted in reduced oxygen flow to his brain, an invisible trauma that would later reveal itself in ways his parents never anticipated.

At four months old, Emmanuel's parents noticed signs that to them was delayed milestones. He was weak around the waist and couldn't sit up like other babies his age. Worried, they took him to Magadi Hospital, where the doctor explained that the birth complications had likely caused brain damage, resulting in a disability. Still in denial, and desperately hoping for a different outcome, the family sought a second opinion and travelled to Kijabe Hospital. After several examinations and scans, doctors confirmed that Emmanuel had no ongoing illness, but due to the birth complications and lack of oxygen at birth, he had acquired a permanent disability. The recommendation was clear: Emmanuel needed consistent physiotherapy to help improve his motor function.

The parents began therapy sessions at Kijabe Hospital, but the long distance about 150 kilometers and financial strain became overwhelming. They made the difficult decision to continue with the therapy closer to home, at Magadi Hospital. There, Emmanuel's mother was trained in how to perform physiotherapy at home. Through her tireless efforts and dedication, Emmanuel slowly began to improve. Over time and with relentless love and support he took his first steps. He now walks on his own.

This period was emotionally and economically challenging. Frequent hospital visits and the demands of caring for Emmanuel forced his mother to close her small business. With their primary source of income gone, the family's livelihood was deeply affected. But the sacrifices made were out of love, a love that would soon be repaid in smiles, steps, and strength.

As Emmanuel grew, he began working on his speech and was enrolled in school. His first experience was in a public school in Olkiramatian, Magadi. But the setting proved difficult, large numbers of students, inaccessible desks, and only one teacher for many children meant that Emmanuel struggled. He was often bumped into by other students, and the lack of focused attention slowed his learning. Recognizing these challenges, his parents transferred him to a private school where he could receive more individualized support. There, Emmanuel began to thrive. With more attention and care, he started to express himself and slowly built resilience and independence. Through this process, James Emmanuel's father developed a deeper understanding of the specific care Emmanuel required. He learned that love is not just an emotion, but an action shown daily in patience, acceptance, and hope. He came to see that Emmanuel, despite his disability, is a shining light in their lives.

Behind Emmanuel's journey is the quiet strength of his father, James Lemayian, a community health promoter (CHP) who attended a 3-day participatory workshop supported by CBM UK to be equipped with the skills to take photos that effectively narrate a story and can be easily understood and to document aspects of his day-to-day activities as CHP. While interacting with other participants h e learnt the important of Organization of Persons with Disabilities (OPD) and left with the desire to share knowledge with the community and from this sharing Dupoto Olkiramatian Disabled Group was formed. It is comprised of persons with disabilities and caregivers where members meet regularly to discuss how to promote the living standards of its members.

A story of his child's challenges became a powerful journey of community empowerment. James now uses his experience to sensitize other families, challenge stigma, and promote inclusion. Emmanuel's story is one of pain, perseverance, and progress, not only a testament to the strength of one family but also a call to society to embrace children with disabilities with the dignity, care, and love they deserve.

THE DAY VISION CAME.

In the heart of Mosiro Ward, nestled deep within Kajiado West, lives a vibrant 10-year-old boy whose life was once clouded by darkness. Born with bilateral cataracts, he had never experienced the beauty of clear sight. His world was a blur, and so were his dreams.

Because of his condition, the boy had never been enrolled in school. While other children his age were learning and playing, he spent his days herding livestock in the fields. While attending to the animals, he would often get injured, his body pierced by thorns and sharp objects he couldn't see coming. Life was difficult, and his future uncertain.

But everything changed in May - June 2025 thanks to a mass disability assessment and registration organized by NONDO, with the support of CBM Global, the Kajiado County Government and other stakeholders, the boy was brought for registration. During the exercise, an optometrist confirmed his condition and immediately lined him up for a life-changing opportunity bilateral cataract surgery at the Kajiado County Referral Hospital.

On June 9th, 2025, the boy underwent surgery. The procedure was a success, and for the first time in his life, he began to see the world more clearly. He is now on the road to recovery, and his story has become one of transformation and hope.

Sadly, his family's struggle isn't over. His younger brother, only 18 months old, has also been diagnosed with bilateral cataracts. This news has added urgency to the ongoing advocacy for early intervention and improved eye care services in the region. Cases like this are becoming increasingly common in Kajiado West. Many community members are acquiring visual impairments due to untreated cataracts and glaucoma. If these conditions are not addressed early, they often lead to permanent vision loss.

This boy's story is more than a medical case; it's a reminder of how timely action, community outreach, and collaborative support can change lives. It is a call to ensure that no child is left in the dark when there is a chance for light.

BEATRICE'S JOURNEY: FROM REJECTION TO RESILIENCE

Beatrice was born and raised in Oltepesi, a quiet rural village in Keekonyokie ward. She was born with a disability and from a young age, she faced physical challenges she couldn't walk like other children. For many years, she depended on a wheelchair and crutches. Walking was not natural to her; it was something she had to learn through determination and endless effort.

Growing up with a disability in her community wasn't easy. People stared. Some laughed. Many discriminated against her. In a society where misconceptions about disability are common, Beatrice was often seen not as who she was, but for what she couldn't do. But Beatrice had one powerful thing in her corner loving, supportive parents. Despite the whispers and cruel remarks from others who told her mother that she was a burden, her parents never gave up on her. They encouraged her through school and helped her complete her primary education.

Due to financial challenges, Beatrice couldn't pursue high school. But she didn't let that stop her. With limited resources and lots of courage, she moved to Nairobi and enrolled in a college where she earned a certificate in Fashion and Design.

Even with her qualification, breaking into the tailoring world was a nightmare. When she told people she could sew clothes, they doubted her. Some turned her away. But Beatrice kept going. She began sewing clothes for clients who took a chance on her and they loved the results. Her work spoke for itself. With time, she built a small but loyal customer base, and eventually, she opened her own tailoring shop at Oltepesi Shopping Centre.

Today, Beatrice is not only a business owner but also a mother to a beautiful one year old baby boy. She continues to inspire many in her community with her courage and talent.

WALKING IN CONFIDENCE: A WOMAN'S JOURNEY FROM SHYNESS TO BOLDNESS

My name is Zipporah Ntinine. I am a woman with Albinism. I was born in a small remote village in Kajiado county, Kenya.

I came to know about NONDO in 2017 during their annual flagship event The Desert Wheel Race which was held in Kajiado County. Prior to knowing NONDO I was a very shy girl who could not stand or speak Infront of a crowd. Intrigued and desperate for change, I gathered all the courage I had and decided to participate in one of the event's activities-the Desert Fashion Gala. I remember vividly that day I took the first step of cat-walking in the middle of huge crowd, how my heart was beating so fast and loud at the same time feeling good hearing people cheer me on and I was proud of myself for taking such a bold step. I did not win but it was a win for me. Why? You may ask. Because it marked the beginning of a transformative journey for me. After participating in this activity for three years I could confidently stand and speak in front of a crowd. I was recognized by many disability organizations who invited me to represent them on different platforms.

Armed with my newfound confidence, I started exploring other opportunities at NONDO. I went through several training courses. Including action to change champions' training which was supported by CBM

global. I was able to learn about my rights as a person with disability, participation in the democratic and political process, budget cycle process and other governance issues. Emboldened by the knowledge I gained from the training, I emersed myself in politics where I was vying for member of county assembly in Kajiado county. Even though I did not get the seat, the process made me famous, some media such as bus radio Kajiado and enchipai tv invited me to share my story. I used these opportunities to advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities from Kajiado county. I was recognized in the county and was nominated to represent persons with disabilities in several boards such as constituency Uwezo fund management committee, school boards and this year 2025 I was elected as a Kajiado county disability mainstreaming board member.

I realized with dedication, support and willingness to embrace change any one can overcome their fears and become a beacon of inspiration to others. As I look back, I can't help but appreciate how much I have changed from a timid shy girl who have blossomed into a confident, outspoken and courageous woman. NONDO played a major role in molding me to be the person I am today.

MY JOURNEY OF TRANSFORMATION

My name is Felister Josiah. Like many children with disabilities, my early childhood was filled with pain, isolation, and rejection. I grew up feeling unwanted, especially by my father. Accessing education was a constant struggle, not just because of my disability, but because I was treated differently by teachers and classmates. I felt like a burden, ashamed of who I was. As I grew older and became more aware of the world around me, those feelings only deepened.

Eventually, I found comfort in solitude. Hiding indoors became my sanctuary, my safe space, away from the stares, whispers, and judgment.

But everything began to change the day someone knocked on our door. It was a man from our ward. A fellow person with a disability. He had heard about me and wanted to speak to me. I refused. I asked my mother to send him away. But he didn't give up. He came back again and again. His persistence was confusing and touching. One day, I finally agreed to talk to him. He told me about a self-help group made up of persons with disabilities. He said they met regularly, contributed small amounts of money, and supported each other. I wasn't ready to face anyone, so I made him a deal: I would contribute, but I wouldn't attend the meetings.

He accepted my terms, but he wasn't done with me yet. Not long after, he returned with news about an organization called NONDO. They were looking for persons with disabilities to train as champions. It took a lot of convincing and many visits to get me to say yes. But eventually, I gave in and joined the training.

At first, I was overwhelmed. I felt shy, inferior, and out of place, even though I was surrounded by others like me. But the team at NONDO was incredibly supportive. Slowly, their encouragement began to chip away at my walls. I started having small conversations during our sessions. Then I began attending group meetings. Little by little, I started feeling comfortable in my own skin.

One day, I took a leap. I approached a group of women whose children had disabilities and shared an idea with them what if we started our own support group? To my surprise, they agreed. That was the birth of our group. We began engaging in small livelihood activities like beadwork. Mothers began consulting me on disability matters, how to register their children, which schools they could attend, and how to access support. My confidence grew.

Then one day, I was called to help resolve a conflict among some women in a group. I mediated, and it worked. I was amazed by what I had just done and proud. The girl who once hid in her house had now become someone others turned to for guidance.

Now, during the champions' review meetings, I speak up. I ask questions. I share my thoughts. I've even been selected as a committee member in one of the local primary schools.

Today, I actively participate in pu blic forums, advocating for disability rights and inclusion.

The veil has been lifted. I no longer care what people think when they see me. I stand ten feet tall. Cheers to those who held my hand through it all to the ones who never gave up on me, to those who believed in me before I could believe in myself. And to those whose support made this journey possible thank you in depth from my heart.

FRANK'S JOURNEY: A CHAMPION FOR DISABILITY INCLUSION

My story is a little different. I do not have a disability, but my journey into disability advocacy began when I was still in school. I was in Form Three when I had a roommate who was a person with a disability. Watching him struggle with everyday tasks made me realize how many barriers persons with disabilities face in life. I felt a strong urge to help not out of pity, but because I believed it was the right thing to do.

By the time I was in Form Four, at just 19 years old, I had already had interest in supporting persons with disability in my community Ewaso Kendog and then I registered a self-help group alongside a local pastor in Ewauso, a village near Olgumi. The pastor generously donated a piece of land, and together we dreamed of building a support centre for persons with disabilities in our community.

One day, while guiding a group of tourists up Mount Suswa, I shared my vision for the disability support centre. I had no expectations, just a desire to talk about the work we were doing. To my surprise, the tourists were touched by the story and decided to support our idea. They donated Ksh. 200,000 for bricks and even provided wheelchairs for members of the community in need of assistive devices.

This experience strengthened my resolve. I began mobilizing the community, encouraging the formation of support groups. I helped them see the importance of making regular contributions and officially registering, so they could access funding and operate sustainably.

My journey led me to meet Halima, a fellow advocate from Magadi and a Champion under the Action for Change project by NONDO. She saw the work I was doing and encouraged me to apply to become a Champion too. I did and I was selected.

The training I received from NONDO was a real eye-opener. It broadened my understan ding of disability rights and inclusion. I learned about the budget process, good governance and constitutionalism, advocacy strategies, the rights of persons with disabilities, affirmative action funds, and how to engage with duty bearers.

After the training, I started attending quarterly meetings and got more involved in development processes. My advocacy work also grew through social media, and eventually, organizations like Hand-to-Hand noticed me. They reached out and asked me to serve as a community contact person. Since then, I've been supporting various Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), helping promote disability rights and inclusive development. Today, I serve as a trusted community contact and an ambassador for persons with disabilities.

As an action for change champion, I am proud of supporting with formation of 2 OPDs groups in Ewaso Kendong many people wanted to join the Eduat Kitek Group, which comprises persons with disabilities and their caregivers. But the group's constitution limits membership to 30. So, I encouraged the interested individuals to form their own groups. I linked them up with Eduat Kitek's secretary and treasurer, and together, we successfully formed and mentored two new groups.

I reached out to the Woman Representative, and as a result, all three groups received funding from the National Government Affirmative Action Fund. One group got Ksh. 59,000, another received Ksh. 48,000, and the third received Ksh. 32,000. These funds helped them purchase beads and kick off income-generating activities.

I also approached Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB) and requested support for our groups. After a few discussions, they agreed to train our members on financial literacy, agribusiness, and how to apply for available grant opportunities.

Although I do not have a disability, I remain deeply committed to advocating for the rights, inclusion, and participation of persons with disabilities 1especially those from nomadic and pastoralist communities. My goal is to help eliminate the barriers that hold people back and to ensure that no one is left behind.

ECHOES FROM THE MARGINS

Group photo during a participatory storytelling workshop held in Kajiado town