



STEVE KITTUR, KENYA

BRIDGING THE GAP: NAVIGATING THE CHALLENGES OF COCHLEAR IMPLANT PROVISION IN LOW- RESOURCED COUNTRIES

Steve is a parent of a child with CI – and is developing audiology services in Kenya against lots of challenges

Challenges of CI provision in Low-Resource Countries (Sub-Saharan Africa)

Bridging Sound and Opportunity!

Mr. Stephen Kittur

Introduction

Cochlear implants offer hope for severe hearing loss, but access in Sub-Saharan Africa is limited due to unique regional challenges.

Cost and Accessibility

- **High cost:** High cost: US\$20,000-\$30,000 per implant, unaffordable for most families.
- Average household **income** is around **\$1,800 USD** annually, means the cost of a CI is **many times higher** than a family's yearly income!
- **Lack of funding:** Limited govt and donor support for CI
- Financial **burden** on **families**.
- In some cases, **insurance** policies **exclude hearing implants** from their coverage.

Limited Specialized Centres

- **Geographical Barriers**-Limited or no facilities within reach:
e.g Only one CI facility in Kenya, located in Nairobi, serving 54 million people.
- Long travel distances for rural patients; delays in treatment due to high demand.
- Some centers represent one brand of CI manufacturers, limits options/choices for consumers

Shortage of Trained Personnel

- Lack of ENT specialists, audiologists, and speech therapists trained in CI surgery and rehabilitation.
- Average of only 1 CI specialist for every **1,000,000** people, compared to about **1:25,000** in the US!!

Awareness and Diagnosis

- **Low awareness** of CIs, especially in rural areas.
- **Late diagnoses:** Many children are identified after age 2, reducing CI effectiveness.

Post Implantation Challenges

- **Rehabilitation services:** Lack of rehabilitation services (audiological follow-up, mapping, speech therapy).
- **Device maintenance and replacement:** Difficulty in maintaining and replacing CI devices due to limited service access

Cultural and Social Barriers

- Cultural beliefs and stigma surrounding hearing loss and CIs.
- Resistance to surgery and technology due to fear or misunderstanding.

Policy and Governmental Support

- No national policy or framework for supporting CI programs.
- Limited integration of hearing health into healthcare infrastructure.
- Govt still imposing tax on CI products and accessories, making them more expensive

Potential Solutions and Approaches

COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF NANDI

WORLD HEARING DAY

Hearing for Life. Don't let hearing loss limit you.

Join us as we mark the World Hearing Day

3RD MARCH 2020 9:00 AM

ACTIVITIES

1. Walk from Namgai through town to Sports Grounds
2. Free Screening of Speech & Hearing Loss.
3. Education on Early Detection and Interventions
4. Advice on Treatment Options-Hearing Aids and Cochlear Implants.

World Health Organization

For more information or enquires call 1548

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WORLD HEARING DAY 2024

HEARING FOR LIFE
Don't let hearing loss limit you

04 MARCH 2024

KIPCHOGE STADIUM GROUNDS, KAPSABET

Join us as we mark the World Hearing Day and you can benefit from:

- ✓ FREE TESTING AND SCREENING
- ✓ EDUCATION ON EARLY DETECTION
- ✓ ADVICE ON TREATMENT OPTIONS

Prevention
Education on causes of hearing impediments and loss

Intervention
Facilitate early and continuous testing

Treatment
Provide interventions such as hearing aids cochlear implants

World Health Organization



1. High Cost of Cochlear Implants and Surgery

- Subsidize CI services through government, NGO, and donor partnerships..
- **National Health Insurance Inclusion:** Include CI services in national insurance schemes (e.g., NHIF).
- **Corporate Sponsorships:** Secure corporate sponsorships for CI surgeries.

2. Lack of Trained Professionals

- **Training:** Establish training programs for CI surgeons, audiologists, special education teachers and speech therapists.
- **Fellowships and Workshops:** Provide fellowships and mentorship opportunities for local professionals.

3. Limited Access to Cochlear Implant Centres

- **Regional CI Centers:** Set up regional CI centers outside capital cities.
- **Telemedicine and Remote Support:** Implement telemedicine for remote CI support.
- Reverse medical tourism (where specialists come to treat and tour in SSA)

4. Lack of Awareness

- **Awareness Campaigns:** Launch public awareness campaigns and community outreach programs. Use all media platforms
- **School Outreach:** Partnering with schools to educate on hearing loss and CI benefits-children are better ambassadors and can influence parents.

5. Sustainability of CI Programs

- **Government Support:** Advocate for government support and integrate CIs within EHDI programs.
- Ensure long-term rehabilitation services (speech therapy, audiological follow-up).
- Demonstrate and provide cost-benefit analysis to stakeholders.

6. Cultural and Social Acceptance

- **Support Group:** Establish strong parent support groups for families undergoing CI procedures.
- **Community Engagement:** to address cultural barriers and stigma.

7. Research and Policy Development

- **Policy Advocacy:** Collaborate with government to include CIs in national health strategies
- **Data Collection and Research:** Collect data on CI outcomes to advocate for policy changes.

Conclusion

While challenges may seem daunting, we draw inspiration from the African proverb: **"The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago; the second best time is now."** This wisdom encourages us to take action today, regardless of the obstacles we face, to foster meaningful change. Together, we can make a difference!