

Uganda

Caregiver Name: Sekamwa
Age at Implantation: 12 years

Child: Kato
Age Today: 17

Kato is our twin son, who was born before his due date. He had profound hearing loss from birth. Nobody initially understood how that would affect his future, only that it would influence everything. As parents, we were taught patience at a young age. We discovered how to watch, wait, and hope without certainty.

As parents, we saw that Kato was not reacting to sound the way his twin brother did at two years. He got his first pair of hearing aids when he was three years old. He started wearing them regularly at the age of four. We thought these would be helpful, but it soon became apparent that this was not the case. Communication remained a daily struggle, and language did not develop as anticipated. Words arrived late. Some never showed up. Instead, Kato has had to work hard to learn by reading lips, reading faces, mimicking motions, and learning patterns. He has put forth more effort than most people realise. While other kids speak mindlessly, Kato considers each word before trying it.

We made the tough decision to have Kato implanted at the age of 12 after many years of serious consideration, advice, prayer and love. The doctors had been cautious with their words by that point. Instead of promises, they discussed possibilities.

We thought it would provide the best opportunity to access sound more meaningfully, but it was not an easy choice, particularly at a later age. Kato has improved since receiving the implant. Although his language skills are still limited in comparison to his peers, his speech and comprehension have both improved.

Kato follows the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum in school. He is fond of order. He enjoys anticipating the next move. Teachers say he is intelligent, attentive, and ready to learn. He continues to demonstrate dedication and self-control in his academics. **He listens with a level of focus that is almost overwhelming, as though he doesn't want to miss anything.** Every victory, every new word, every longer statement, every time he decides to speak rather than back down is applauded.

Kato is learning, maybe slower, but he is learning. He is learning language the long way around. As parents, we have realised that Kato's journey is not about catching up, but about moving forward, step by step, at his own pace.

Kato is seventeen years old today. He is developing into a young man and is no longer just a boy. He is still learning not just how to speak but how to belong, how to express himself, how to claim space in a world that often moves too fast, a world that demands fast, fluent, and effortless communication. His words may be limited, but his determination is not.

As parents, **our biggest worry is that Kato continues to struggle with expressive language and communication.** There are moments when he knows what he wants to say but is at a loss for words, and occasionally it has an impact on his self-esteem and academic achievement. However, we firmly think that **Kato's path is not yet complete, and that he may continue to grow and create a meaningful future with the correct understanding and support.**