

KENYA

Caregiver Name: Stephen

Age at Implantation: 3

Age Today: 13

I am a parent from Kenya of a child who is now 13 years old and uses a cochlear implant. My son was implanted when he was 3 years old, but the journey to that point was long, expensive, uncertain, and frustrating.

When we first realized that our child was not hearing, options in Kenya were very limited. Information was scarce, services were few, and the cost of cochlear implantation was far beyond what most families could afford. At that time, accessing a cochlear implant in Kenya felt almost impossible. After many consultations, we made the difficult decision to travel to India for the implant, because it was more affordable and because the options locally were extremely limited.

This decision meant multiple international trips. We traveled first for diagnosis and assessment, then again for surgery, and later for rehabilitation and reviews. Each trip came with financial strain, emotional stress, and time away from other children and work. **The cost of the implant itself was our biggest challenge**, though long-term rehabilitation was equally demanding. Auditory Verbal Therapy (AVT) was essential for our child to learn to listen and speak, yet services were not available close to home. For a long time, we traveled seven hours one way every week to access AVT therapy. This was physically exhausting, emotionally draining, and financially straining, but we knew it was necessary.

Other challenges followed. We worried constantly about device safety, especially in environments where awareness of cochlear implants was low. Finding the right school environment was another hurdle—one that would support listening and spoken language. We also had skeptics—many around us doubted whether cochlear implants worked at all. Some believed that spoken language was impossible for a deaf child. As parents, we had to learn to stand firm in the face of doubt.

Our greatest early support came from family, friends, and fellow parents of children with cochlear implants. Connecting with parents who had already walked this journey gave us hope and practical guidance. Professional support was also critical. AVT specialists from India, the USA, and Ireland provided guidance—often virtually—showing us that technology could bridge geographical gaps even when local services were scarce.

Today, our child's greatest achievement is the confidence he has in his use of listening and spoken language. He is thriving in a mainstream school and classroom, communicating, learning, and participating fully alongside his hearing peers. Watching this 'family miracle' is the greatest joy and reward of our journey.

This experience also changed me as a parent. Inspired by our struggles and successes, I went back to school to train as a speech therapist and later became an Auditory Verbal Therapy trainee. What began as a personal fight for my child's future grew into a calling to support other families facing similar challenges.



Out of this journey, I also helped establish a community organization, which has introduced the first public Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) program in Kenya. Through this work, thousands of children and families have benefited from earlier identification, better referrals, and improved access to hearing services. We also actively advocate for better access to cochlear implants and have connected several families to CI donations, both locally and internationally.

If I were to advise another parent, I would say this: hearing loss is a correctable disability if identified and addressed early. Do not wait. Work closely with qualified professionals, trust evidence-based intervention, and remember that technology has greatly reduced geographical barriers. Most importantly, do not walk this journey alone—other parents can be your greatest strength. Today, technology has nearly eliminated geographical barriers, and support can come from anywhere in the world.

Our story is one of challenge, resilience, and hope. It shows what is possible when families persist; systems begin to change, and children with hearing loss are given the opportunity to reach their full potential.