



WINTER NEWSLETTER | 2020

SPEECH & LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST SPOTLIGHT STORY



In this newsletter, we wanted to share with you a personal story from one of our passionate Speech and Language Pathologists (SLP), Deborah!

My name is Deborah, I'm 23 years old and I started working with Hope Speaks one year ago in the Mentorship Program. The course to become a Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) is still very new in Uganda, and my university was the only place offering it in all of East Africa. There were only 11 other SLTs in my class being trained to service the whole of East Africa (including Kenya, South Sudan, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi). To be honest, we didn't really know much about it as we started studying, only that we would be working with children with special needs and we would have to have a passion to help them. There wasn't a lot of awareness or education on disability rights and most people with special needs were left behind in the system. So, I decided that the course would be right for me. I wanted to focus on these children and try to advocate for them in the future.

Growing up, I didn't see many children with special needs. Where I come from, most children with special needs were not brought out in the community. Some were kept locked up for safety, or taken to the grandparents in the village. For some families it was seen as a disgrace to have a child with a disability. BUT, thankfully now it is changing and people are becoming more aware. We still see some people in denial that they would have to raise a child with a disability, though some have really embraced it and they are taking all the steps to help their child. A lot of that is thanks to Hope Speaks because they have given these parents hope that they will be supported with therapy, medications, hospital care, wheelchairs and so on.

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This is why I love the Hope Speaks Mentorship Program. When I finished my education, I got a job as an assistant SLT, but things weren't so easy with the transition. We had spent so much time at school learning the theory of Speech and Language Pathology but did not have much clinical practice. Here in Uganda, there is no official fellowship program. If you want to keep learning you have to really look for the opportunities yourself, and because there are so few SLPs the opportunity to get mentoring is very difficult. It was like being dropped in desert with no way out!

But then I found the opportunity for the Mentorship Program at Hope Speaks. Kari and the other SLPs really helped to pull me up to their level. I really owe them a lot, especially for the good practice and professionalism! First of all, it gave me grounds to work in evidence based practice - Hope Speaks provides resources and up to date research and articles that we wouldn't have the ability or money to purchase ourselves. We get supervision and feedback - without this mentorship I would not know if I was doing things the wrong way, and it helps us ensure we are giving our clients the best care at the highest standards possible. The mentorship program is all about empowering me and lifting me up so that I can empower and lift up my clients. I can confidently say that our clients get the best care because we get good mentoring. The most difficult thing is knowing that this is the only official mentorship program in the country. Hope Speaks has the skills and capacity but not the resources and funding to bring more SLPs into the mentorship program. If we could have the money we would hire more SLPs and deliver high quality services to more children across the country.

I'm inspired by our work, and I hope I can inspire you too. We see for the parents we get to interact with getting their hope rebuilt - they find new energy to take care of their children regardless of the severity of their special needs. Many of them tell us that if it wasn't for Hope Speaks, their child might have died because of malnutrition (Hope Speaks teaches even the basic things like how to swallow, so that a child can eat), or maybe the child would have become depressed and suffered more than they should because they felt neglected, simply because their parents weren't able or equipped to give them the best care. I never thought of speech and language therapy saving lives, but it does!

At the community outreach clinics I do therapy for the children and education for the parents. We give them strategies for speech, for play, engagement and communication. We see most parents there twice in the week. We also go to some care centers and schools once a week where we work with the care givers and teachers to use these skills with the children they are looking after.



In Deborah's first year of university she was the Speaker of the Speech and Language Student's Association, and in her second year she became the President of the Association! We hope to be able to hire many more SLPs, just like Deborah who have so much potential to actively make a difference.

One of the things that is great about Hope Speaks' approach is that we get to see so many more children than an SLP who is perhaps working in a hospital, or privately. Often, they would see in one day the same number of children we can see in a one-hour group session at our outreach clinics.

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I think Hope Speaks has the potential to deliver services to so many more families, even outside of just the capital city. In Northern Uganda where I'm from, there is such a high percentage of children who have disabilities and most never get help. There are refugees who have been through so much who need access to disability services, therapy and social work. All over the country there are so many children who have so much potential to live a good life, and parents who want the help. The Hope Speaks Mentorship Program can help with that - we are ready and waiting, we just need the resources to hire more people!

I hope that you can be inspired to join with us in 2021. I am so excited just thinking about the work we can do when you partner with us to bring Hope Speaks to those who need it most!

— Deborah

Deborah is one of our wonderful national SLPs - a Ugandan who is passionate about providing the highest level of care to children and families that all too often get lost in the system. We know that there are more potential “Deborahs” out there who are looking to match their passions with practical skills to make a difference. We want to lift up and empower SLPs who can join Hope Speaks in our mission to make a difference in the lives and families of children living with disabilities.

It costs \$7,000 to bring an SLP into our mentorship program for a full year. With the shortage of volunteers and the global pandemic crisis, a great gap has been left that could sustainably be filled by nationally trained SLPs who want to see a better future for children living with disabilities. That's why we are asking you to join us to empower and lift up Ugandans to serve Ugandans. When you make a (tax deductible) donation to Hope Speaks you provide an extensive network of services for a community that goes far beyond speech therapy - you provide a future for families through Family Empowerment, business support, nutritional packages, school fees payments, medical coverage, mental health support AND you give an opportunity for a passionate person to become a leader in the field of Speech and Language Therapy. **Will you consider giving today? Join Hope Speaks and help us make a difference in Uganda.**

Ben & Kari David

Ben & Kari David
Co-founders & Directors
Hope Speaks





OUR MISSION:

Inspiring hope and raising voices of people with disabilities through therapy, advocacy, and social services.

OUR VISION:

Transformed communities where people with disabilities are celebrated and living to their fullest potential.

Read more stories online at joinhopespeaks.org

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YOUR DONATION MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

Use the donation card enclosed or visit joinhopespeaks.org/donate to give the gift of communication today.