

ROWAN'S DOWN SYNDROME AWARENESS CENTER



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Theme: *“support for people with Down Syndrome”*



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

1. RDSAC	Rowan's Down syndrome Awareness Centre
2. DS	Down Syndrome
3. GDSF	Global Down Syndrome Foundation
4. DCDO	District Community Development Officer
5. CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
6. LCV	Local Council Five
7. DSA	Down Syndrome Australia
8. GLI	Global Livingstone Institute
9. IEC	Information Communication Education
10. HUDIP	Hoima Union of Disabled Persons
11. VLSA	Village Lending and Savings Association
12. HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
13. HCG	Human Chorionic Gonadotropin
14. MIS	Management Information System
15. ADC	Africa Disability Collaboration
16. ECG	Electrocardiogram
17. MDAs	Ministries Departments and Agencies
18. LGs	Local Governments

1.0 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Mrs. Katusabe Mildred Cripps

It is with great pleasure that I present RDSAC's Annual Report for the year 2025. This year has been marked by significant strides in advocacy, awareness, and service delivery for persons with Down syndrome across our four districts of operation.

Through our targeted campaigns, community engagements, and strategic partnerships, RDSAC reached approximately 15000 individuals, raising awareness on the rights and inclusion of persons with Down syndrome. Our advocacy efforts have contributed to strengthening policy implementation, promoting inclusive budgeting, and mainstreaming Down syndrome services within both government and private sector institutions, public institutions, including LGs, and MDAs. A highlight of the year was the successful commemoration of World Down Syndrome Awareness Day in Buliisa District, which brought together parents, caregivers, children, and key policy makers to celebrate inclusion and promote community support.

Despite these achievements, we continue to face challenges of Limited resources, inadequate stakeholder engagement, and gaps in inclusive service. These challenges, however, reinforce our commitment to continue advocating for the rights, inclusion, and well-being of persons with Down syndrome in every community we serve.

I extend my sincere gratitude to our partners, donors, staff, and the members of our organization whose support and collaboration have made our achievements possible. Together, we remain committed to building a more inclusive society where persons with Down syndrome are valued, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential.

2.0 CHAIRMAN BOARD'S MESSAGE



Mr. Christopher Cripps

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I congratulate the RDSAC team upon a completed successful year 2025. This year has been one of significant progress in our mission to advocate for and raise awareness about, the rights and inclusion of persons with Down syndrome across our four districts of operation.

The organizational efforts have contributed to the promotion of inclusive policies, mainstreaming of Down syndrome services, and increased visibility of the challenges and opportunities faced by persons with Down syndrome and their families.

The board remains committed to giving strategic support to the secretariate to ensure that they realise the mission and vision of RDSAC. We shall continue to mentor, guide and support the organization team. The Board remains confident in RDSAC's capacity to address challenges ahead through innovative approaches, collaborative partnerships, and strong leadership.

I commend the Executive Director, staff, volunteers, and our partners for their unwavering dedication to advancing the rights and well-being of persons with Down syndrome. The Board pledges its continued support in guiding RDSAC to achieve its mission and ensure that every person with Down syndrome can participate fully and meaningfully in society.

3.0 ABOUT ROWAN’S DOWN SYNDROME AWARENESS CENTER (RDSAC)

Rowan’s Down Syndrome Awareness Center (RDSAC) is a registered NGO based in Kanenankumba Village, East Division, Hoima City, Uganda, dedicated to improving the lives of persons with Down syndrome. Since its establishment, RDSAC has been at the forefront of awareness-raising, advocacy, therapy, and community support for individuals with Down syndrome and their families across four districts of Hoima, Masindi, Buliisa and Kikube.

3.1 Vision: A Uganda where the 50,000+ people with Down syndrome are independent, self-sufficient, and fully accepted by society, overcoming stigma and daily challenges.

3.2 Mission: To create and operate a national and regional center of excellence that provides high-quality, affordable services, demonstrating that persons with Down syndrome in Bunyoro, Uganda, and East Africa can lead full and meaningful lives.

3.3 RDSAC operates on six strategic pillars:

1. Center of Excellence: Developing knowledge, training, and therapy facilities.
2. Awareness: Conducting campaigns, media engagements, and community training.
3. Therapy and Medical Support: Offering speech therapy, basic medical care, and pre-school support.
4. Partnerships: Collaborating with local, national, and international organizations to strengthen services.
5. Member Networks: Establishing support groups and a national DS network to improve access to diagnosis, treatment, and livelihood opportunities.
6. Research: Co-leading the Human Trisome Project in Africa to inform evidence-based policy and programs.

Over its first five years, RDSAC has registered 131 members, established four support groups, provided therapy and medical support, implemented livelihood initiatives, and strengthened collaborations with local and international partners. The organization continues to advocate for inclusive policies and sustainable support systems, while addressing challenges such as resource mobilization, professional staffing, and expanding access to therapy and education.

3.5 APPRECIATION TO OUR PARTNERS.

RDSAC values greatly the contributions of all partners. Our partners have guided our interventions, given financial support, moral and Strategic support

International	National	Local
TAWINGO	Tackle	Albertine Water
GDSF	Nurture Africa	HB hotel
Abilis	Uganda Heart Institute	Centenary Bank
ADC	Upasuaji	Revel Medical Center
GDSF	Aspire Africa	Meeting point Hoima
DSI	Makerere College of Health Sciences	HUDIP
M3 Housing	The indian Association of Uganda	Dr. Kalinaki
Marafik DK		Kikube Health Center III
Segal foundation		Flobetto Nursery and Primary School
GLI		Nest of Harmony
		Little More Nursery school

		Spice FM
		Talk gadgets LTD
		Iziba Lodge Hoima.
		Multicultural Urban Design

4.0 INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

The year 2025 marked significant progress for Rowan’s Down Syndrome Awareness Center (RDSAC) in its mission to promote the rights, inclusion, and holistic development of children with Down syndrome in Uganda. With an estimated 40,000–50,000 children living with Down syndrome nationwide, approximately one in every 1,000 births, the majority of these children remain unreached and underserved. In our operational area covering the Bunyoro sub-region (Hoima, Masindi, Kikuube, and Buliisa districts), we estimate that 1,148 individuals are living with Down syndrome. Of these, RDSAC has actively engaged only 11%, highlighting the urgent need for expanded outreach and stronger resource mobilization.

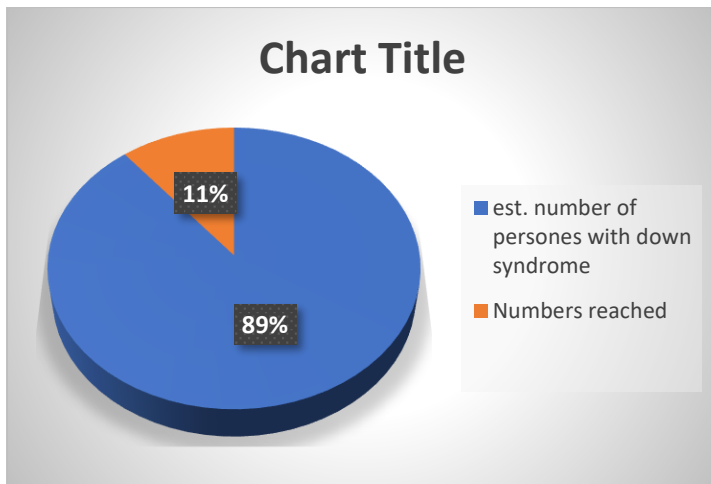
In 2025, RDSAC implemented a wide range of programs spanning awareness and advocacy, therapy and medical support, livelihood initiatives, research, and institutional development. Through community engagement, partnerships, and media campaigns, we reached thousands of individuals, strengthening public understanding of Down syndrome, promoting inclusion, and advocating for improved policies and services. Notably, our programs facilitated early diagnosis, increased community participation, and strengthened caregiver support systems.

The organization also made strides in institutional capacity, recruiting qualified staff, strengthening our Management Information System, and initiating local revenue-generation strategies to support sustainability. RDSAC’s collaborations with national and international partners—including GDSF, GDSI-Australia, Tackle, Nurture Africa, and local stakeholders—kept us connected to global best practices, funding opportunities, and innovative approaches in Down syndrome support.

Key highlights of 2025 include the successful delivery of therapy and medical services, livelihood support initiatives such as goat and pig-rearing projects, expansion of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), and progress on research initiatives aimed at developing knowledge-sharing systems for healthcare professionals, caregivers, and individuals with Down syndrome. These accomplishments reflect the resilience, commitment, and creativity of our members, caregivers, and partners.

Despite these successes, challenges remain. Funding constraints continue to limit program scale, while a large number of children with Down syndrome in our operational districts remain unreached. As we move into 2026, RDSAC is focused on expanding its reach, securing additional resources, and strengthening human and institutional capacity to ensure sustainable impact for the communities we serve.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of our 2025 activities, achievements, and challenges, demonstrating our continued commitment to improving the lives of children with Down syndrome and their families in Uganda.



The above statistics underscore the need for increased efforts to engage all stakeholders in mobilizing resources to support persons with Down syndrome.

5. AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY

RDSAC made substantial progress in advocacy and awareness on Down syndrome across the four districts of operation. Through various community engagement activities and partnerships, RDSAC reached approximately 1500 individuals. These interventions were implemented through direct programming as well as in collaboration with partner organizations.

The advocacy initiatives focused on strengthening policy implementation, promoting inclusive budgeting, and mainstreaming Down syndrome–related services across government institutions and private sector actors.



5.1 Awareness Campaigns Across the Region

RDSAC implemented a range of activities aimed at increasing awareness of Down syndrome among community members. These activities mobilized large numbers of participants and provided

opportunities for RDSAC staff to sensitize communities and disseminate key advocacy messages on inclusion, rights, and access to services for persons with Down syndrome.

5.1.1 World Down Syndrome Awareness Day and world Down syndrome month 2025

World Down Syndrome Awareness Day was commemorated on 21st March 2025 and organized by RDSAC in Buliisa District. The event was attended by over 250 people, including parents and children with Down syndrome, who actively participated in the celebrations. Activities included a community march, bicycle riding, Zumba dance sessions, among others.

Key policy makers present at the event included DCDO, CAO

During the event, the District Community Development Officer (DCDO) of Buliisa Mr. Barugahara Bernard pledged to support parent and caregiver groups of children with Down syndrome through the District Disability Fund.



Rowan's Members March through Buliisa while carrying awareness messages

RDSAC organized the World Down Syndrome Awareness Month celebrations in Kikube District on 25th October 2025. The event was attended by the District LCV Chairperson, the District Community Development Officer, members of the Kikube District Disability Council, and over 200 participants, including parents, children with Down syndrome, and members of the general public.

Through community engagement activities such as band matching and awareness drives, RDSAC reached an estimated 500 community members with messages on Down syndrome, focusing on awareness, inclusion, and acceptance of children with disabilities. A key concern noted during the celebrations was the low involvement of fathers. A roll call of parents and caregivers showed that out of 100 parents present, only four (4) were men.

This reflects the significant burden placed on women in raising children with Down syndrome. Statistics from Hoima District Local Government indicate that 75% of men who have children with disabilities abandon their families, while among the remaining 25%, 60% are not actively involved in the care of their children.



Rowan Presenting a T-Shirt to the guest of honor, The Honorable Peter Banura-LCV Kikube District

In collaboration with local health workers and partners, on-site medical screening and services were provided to participants and community members:

- 42 persons tested for HIV all results were negative.
- 12 women received family planning services, including:-8 Sayana Press (injectable)4 Depo-Provera (injectable)
- 12 HCG pregnancy tests conducted.
- 6 Random Blood Sugar (RBS) tests done, all within normal range.
- 60 children received speech therapy

Following the events stakeholder engagements the district Chairperson Mr. Peter Banura pledged more support to our groups in delivering services to persons with DS. The DCDO pledged to support

the DS groups in Kikube in the areas of livelihoods through the various government programs at the district.

5.2 Media engagements through mainstream and online platforms

A total of three (3) radio talk shows were organized by the team, some of which included preparations for the awareness activities.

5.2.1 Radio talk shows

The radio talk shows provided an opportunity for the team to sensitize the public about Down syndrome, particularly on the identification of individuals with Down syndrome within communities, referral pathways, appropriate support, and the psychosocial support needed for individuals with Down syndrome and their families. RDSAC worked closely with Spice FM, Life FM, Kazi Njema, Kabalega fm and other online radios and TV platforms in Kikube, Hoima, and Masindi districts.

5.2.2 Online Media

Through our strong online presence, we created awareness through our interactive website www.rowansds.org , socials including www.facebook.com/rdsac , www.X.com/rdsac , www.youtube.com/rdsac , www.tiktok.com/RDSAC and www.instagram/rdsac . These platforms helped us reach out to more than 200,000 people online.

5.2.3 Participation in the Empango Run

RDSAC participated in the annual Empango Run, an event held every 11th June to commemorate the coronation of the traditional King of the Bunyoro Kingdom. The event provided an opportunity for RDSAC to enhance its visibility through the display of branded banners, T-shirts, and caps, while engaging with the wider community, promoting awareness and inclusion of persons with Down syndrome.

5.2.4 Participation in the Annual Fun Day for Children with Disabilities

RDSAC participated in the Annual Fun Day for Children with Disabilities organized under Children's Trust. The event provided an opportunity for RDSAC to network and connect with like-minded organizations from across the country, fostering collaboration, knowledge sharing, and strengthened partnerships in support of children with disabilities.

6.0 CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE – Institutional Development

6.1 Staff Recruitment

RDSAC made deliberate efforts to strengthen its human resource capacity by recruiting well qualified staff. A Project Manager was hired to oversee organizational operations, resource mobilization, networking, and partnerships, among other responsibilities. In addition, RDSAC recruited a Communications Officer and the Outreach Officer to support operational activities.



Emanzi Christopher-Project Manager



Ms. Oliver Birungi- Outreach Officer



Mr. Raymond Mugume- Communications Officer

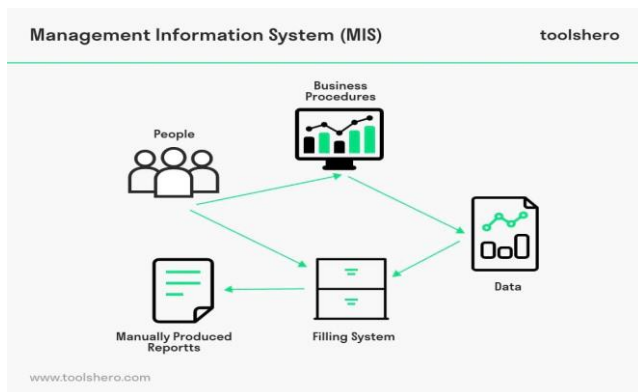
6.2 Board meetings

RDSAC convened its 3rd Quarter Board Meeting, during which key issues pertaining to the organization’s development were deliberated. Among the resolutions passed, the Board approved the recruitment of competent staff to strengthen organizational capacity. Consequently, RDSAC hired a Project Manager, a Communications Officer, and an Outreach Officer.

6.3 System Development

The organization also built a more robust Management Information System (MIS) through the installation of the Therap Global system for beneficiary data storage, and ensuring its proper functionality, installing reliable 24/7 internet services, and improving data storage, management, and online reporting systems. As RDSAC moves into 2026, the organization plans to establish a strong MEAL system that will further enhance the MIS. A strengthened MIS will support better decision-making through timely and accurate information, improve efficiency by reducing manual work, enhance

planning and forecasting, improve communication across departments, and increase data accuracy.



6.4 Resource mobilisation

Resource mobilization remains vital to the realization of RDSAC’s vision of establishing a Centre of Excellence. With the introduction of the Project Manager, more funding applications were submitted in 2025, several of which are currently in the pipeline. Updates on these funding opportunities will

be captured in subsequent reports. The organization also plans to develop a clear artistic impression of the Centre of Excellence, envisioned as a one-stop center for Down syndrome services, with the exception of a few specialized medical procedures.

6.5 Local Revenue Generation

In 2025, RDSAC initiated local revenue generation activities to support sustainability, including small-scale fundraising events, community contributions, and the sale of IEC materials. These efforts helped supplement operational costs and expand outreach services for children with Down syndrome. Looking ahead to 2026, RDSAC plans to strengthen local revenue streams through community sponsorships and income-generating initiatives such as skill-based enterprises and social enterprise projects, group agricultural activities etc. These strategies aim to ensure steady support for the organisation’s beneficiary groups while increasing community engagement and ownership.

6.5 Team building

RDSAC capped off the year with an end-of-year staff party and team-building event on 28th December 2025. Set against the breathtaking scenery of Murchison National Park, staff reflected on the successes

and lessons of 2025 while participating in interactive team-building activities that strengthened collaboration and camaraderie. The event was enriched by the presence of our partner organizations, including Talk Gadgets and Iziba Lodge, highlighting the spirit of partnership that underpins RDSAC's work. This gathering not only celebrated the dedication and achievements of our staff but also reinforced the organization's commitment to a motivated, cohesive, and high-performing team ready to drive RDSAC's mission forward in the coming year.

7.0 . THERAPY, MEDICAL, AND SUPPORT

7.1 Michael Murungi's Heart Surgery

One of RDSAC's major successes in 2025 was the successful heart operation for Michael Murungi in India in October. Michael was identified as a child with Down syndrome earlier on the 14th August 2023, was referred to RDSAC for support. As part of standard procedure, he underwent an Electrocardiogram (ECG) at Mulago Heart Institute, which revealed a congenital heart defect requiring urgent surgery.

In partnership with the Indian Association of Uganda, RDSAC facilitated and supported Michael and his parents, including financing their travel to India for the procedure. We are delighted to report that Michael has fully recovered and is thriving.



Michael and the Mom, the RDSAC Directors, Mildred, and Chris at the Indian Association of Uganda to deliver a certificate of appreciation.

7.2 The table below shows the outlook of speech therapy services in 2025

Activity	2025 target	Achieved
Children reached (new)		10
Families supported	24	24 (100%)
Total therapy sessions conducted	264	167 (63.2%)
Active caregiver groups	8	4 (50%)
Para-therapists trainings	8	8 (100%)



One of the speech therapy sessions in Masindi district

7.3 Milestones and Achievements of speech therapy

Key Milestone / Output	Description of Achievement
8 para-therapists trained	Completed
167 Therapy sessions delivered	167 sessions for the 24 families in our 24 districts of operation
4 Caregiver groups supported	4 groups actively meeting
1(one) Caregiver group is in the process of receiving small funding from the Kikube district-Bugambe sub sub-sub-county	As a result of supporting the groups to formalize and register, they are gaining recognition. The mentioned group shall get support from the disability fund.

8. MEMBERS AND CAREGIVERS



A typical caregiver session with parents and caregivers, facilitated by RDSAC staff.

8.1 RDSAC Membership

At the beginning of 2025, RDSAC had 120 members. By December 31st 2025, membership had increased to 131, representing a growth rate of approximately 9%. This is one of the highest growth rates RDSAC has experienced so far. The increase in membership reflects stronger community engagement, which has, in turn, raised awareness levels and contributed to earlier diagnosis among health workers.

8.2 Group Therapy

Through our caregivers' groups, we observed notable progress in group therapy practices. Members agreed to structure their meetings as therapy sessions, rather than focusing solely on livelihoods. During these sessions, caregivers shared the various challenges their children face, including health, social interaction, and education and offered guidance to one another based on their experiences and strategies that had worked.

8.3 Livelihood support to parents and Caregivers

RDSAC supported 15 families with income-generating projects through a goat-rearing initiative in Masindi district, implemented among members of the God's Mercy Parents of Children with Down Syndrome Group. Following an enterprise selection process and training in proper goat management, each family received two goats. The goats have produced while others are expected to produce soon, enabling families to benefit from the proceeds. In the first phase, a total of 30 goats were distributed to 15 families of children with Down syndrome. The second phase, planned for 2026, will also distribute 30 goats to another 15 families, with each family receiving two goats. Masindi Goat Rearing Project (Model Initiative) has enhanced Business development and goat rearing knowledge and farmers have received quarterly animal treatment support



The ED RDSAC handing over the first batch of Goats to Parents and Caregivers of Children with Down syndrome

Through group initiatives, Bugambe Group members purchased piglets using their monthly savings, demonstrating strong self-motivation and an appreciation of the importance of collective action in improving livelihoods. Having successfully completed the piggery revolving fund, members have since diversified into other income-generating projects.

8.4 Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs)

All six groups are actively participating in Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) to mobilize resources in support of household livelihood priorities. The savings initiatives are fully member-managed and operate under well-defined leadership and governance structures, ensuring transparency and accountability. In addition, the groups have undergone targeted group-strengthening interventions to address compliance challenges related to group constitutions, savings discipline, and participation in group activities, thereby enhancing sustainability and overall performance.

8.5 Vision Boarding 2026

As part of efforts to further enhance livelihoods and attain full growth, the groups undertook vision-boarding exercises to support families in developing clear and focused plans for 2025. Through this process, members identified and articulated their key development priorities, whether economic, social, or spiritual. The vision boards promote focus, goal-oriented action, and accountability among members, while also contributing to overall group cohesion and strengthening.

9.0 PARTNERSHIPS, NETWORK GROUPS

In 2025, the Rowan's Down Syndrome Awareness Center (RDSAC) made significant progress in strengthening partnerships and linkages aimed at improving the lives of children with Down syndrome

and their families. These collaborations were central to advancing advocacy, service delivery, and community inclusion across the region.

9.1 Linkages and partnerships for groups

Additionally, through our support and linkages, the Kigoroby Group was connected to the District Disability Fund and received funding of UGX 5,000,000. The group initially used the funds to start a chicken-rearing project; however, due to management challenges, they changed to goat rearing after learning best practices from the Masindi group. This adaptation reflects the group's resilience and willingness to apply lessons learned from peers to improve their livelihood outcomes.

9.2 Institutional-level partnerships

During the year, RDSAC initiated partnerships with several institutions, including Tackle and Nurture Africa, with these partnerships reaching advanced stages of engagement. In addition, RDSAC initiated membership with the ADC, creating opportunities for increased support through member collaboration, networking, and shared advocacy initiatives.

RDSAC further enhanced its working relationships with district local governments in Hoima, Masindi, Buliisa, and Kikube, reinforcing coordination in program implementation, community outreach, and service referral for children with Down syndrome. These engagements strengthened local ownership and improved access to services at the district level.

At the community level, RDSAC worked closely with local organizations such as Meeting Point Hoima (MPH), HUDIP, and the Hoima Civil Society Network, among others. Furthermore, as part of our networking efforts, we are actively collaborating with the Global Down Syndrome Foundation (GDSF), Down Syndrome International (DSI), and local partners in Uganda. These platforms keep us updated on global trends in financing, organizational management, events related to Down syndrome, enhancing our capacity to implement effective programs and connect our members to international best practices of DS management.

10.0 RESEARCH



In 2025, we made progress on a research project to be conducted among our group members. The projects aim to study and develop systems that improve access to knowledge and support for individuals with Down syndrome in Uganda. Findings from the research will inform the development of an enhanced system for healthcare professionals, individuals with Down syndrome, and their caregivers, providing access to up-to-date information and best practices in healthcare and

wellness, grounded in proven diagnostic and support methods.

10.1 Research and development of a delivery system for medical/therapy project

Diagnosis and support will be defined to align Uganda members conditions and needs with D-S Connect and the Human Trisome Project, and cover inter alia, paediatric care, early intervention, co-occurring conditions (such as congenital heart defects, thyroid disorders, sleep apnoea), behaviour, emotional well-being, nutrition, physical activity, transition to adult care and independent living.

10.2 Human Trisome Project

Further progress was achieved on the Human Trisome Project, culminating in a tripartite agreement between RDSAC, Makerere University, and the Global Down Syndrome Foundation (GDSF) by the end

of 2025. Despite this milestone, the project faces a significant funding challenge, as RDSAC requires approximately USD 30,000 to fully initiate the trisomy research activities. Securing these resources remains a top fundraising priority to ensure the successful launch and sustainability of the project.

11.0 CHALLENGES

Limited financial resources continue to restrict the scale of our programs, the scope of our interventions, and the support we can provide to families and caregivers. To address this, we are expanding our human resource capacity, which we anticipate will strengthen our ability to develop competitive grant proposals, attract new funding opportunities, and enhance overall service delivery. Another key challenge is the high number of individuals with Down syndrome who are still unreached in our operational areas. While our programs continue to grow, a significant portion of the population remains outside our network. The pie chart below illustrates our current reach and provides estimates of individuals and families in our operational regions who could benefit from expanded services.

During the year, it was with deep regret that RDSAC recorded the loss of three members. While this number is significant relative to our membership size, it also highlights the reality that Down syndrome is often associated with co-existing medical conditions that require substantial resources to diagnose, manage, and treat. In some cases, these conditions remain undetected, underscoring the ongoing need for improved access to comprehensive medical care and early intervention services for persons with Down syndrome

12.0 PRIORITIES FOR 2026.

- 12.1 Establish foundational systems for a recognized Center of Excellence.
- 12.2 Scale national visibility and community reach.
- 12.3 Improve quality and access to early intervention services.
- 12.4 Deepen strategic partnerships to expand impact and sustainability.
- 12.5. Build strong, connected parent and member networks.
- 12.6 Strengthen research coordination and policy relevance.

13.0 ORGANISATIONAL FINANCIAL SUMMARY.

PERFORMANCE AREA	AMOUNT
Donations-Income	107,130,008/=
Founders -contribution	85,237,231/=
Sales-tshirts, caps, stocks, vests, wristbands	7,548,140/=
membership	1,445,000/=
Group saving	237,000/=
Total Income	201,597,379/=
Medical	8,706,100/=
Administration	
Travel expenses	14,426,500/=
Utilities	5,434,000/=
Awareness/trainings	28,084,000/=
Legal expenses	14,051,000/=
Office expenses	15,685,600/=
Welfare	5,001,031/=
Totals on expenditure	169,471,499/=