

**Title:** Crafting Rhythms of Independence: A Longitudinal Lens on the Uhuru Model of Assisted Living

**Subtitle:** Comparative Insights Across Three Cohorts in Building Belonging, Stamina, and Selfhood through Arts-Based Interventions

## **Introduction**

Framing the Experiment- The Uhuru Assisted Living Programme is more than a training—it's a living experiment, reimagining assisted living not as care but as capacitation. In a country with few systemic, inclusive models for neurodiverse adults, Uhuru stands as an innovation rooted in arts practices, rhythm, and community participation. These spaces serve not only as training grounds but as conversation starters for the ecosystems of care and autonomy we hope to build.

The Uhuru Assisted Living Programme addresses the critical question, *“What after me?”*, by creating immersive, arts-based ecosystems where neurodiverse adults learn to live interdependently with dignity and rhythm. With three cohorts completed, two over 26 days and one intensive 7-day version (Uhuru 2.0) this report presents a layered understanding of how assisted living skills develop, consolidate, and evolve.

Each cohort offered a unique lens:

- **Cohort 1:** Foundational learning and scaffolding of the model.
- **Cohort 2:** Stamina building, community-facing co-facilitation.
- **Uhuru 2.0:** Compact immersion, adaptability testing, and readiness evaluation.

**Comparative Summary Table**

Domain	Cohort 1 (26-day)	Cohort 2 (26-day)	Uhuru 2.0 (7-day)
<b>ADL Progress</b>	30% increase; still reliant on scaffolding	90% improved; visible independence in routine initiation	All participants showed progress; some first timers adapted independently
<b>Community Participation</b>	100% engaged; through modeling and rhythm	100% engaged; initiated, repeated tasks voluntarily	Emerged naturally; many initiated tasks without prior training
<b>Emotional Regulation</b>	7/9 regulated with co-regulation support	80% regulated independently; minimal escalation	Regulation through rhythm, routine, and peer modeling
<b>Vocational Engagement</b>	Initial engagement across participants	Daily sustained engagement in clay, kitchen, etc.	Task-based contribution through play, kitchen roles, shopping simulations
<b>Communication &amp; Expression</b>	8/9 used verbal/non-verbal/art-based expression	80% expressive; improved articulation and reflection	Storytelling, metaphors, drawing, rhythm, and role-play widely used
<b>Social Interaction</b>	6 initiated; others responded with prompts	70% initiated peer interactions; increased reciprocity	High responsiveness: first timers-built trust and friendships quickly
<b>Co-Facilitation Skills</b>	Not applicable	50% led public school sessions, games, and rhythms	Emerging leadership (esp. in rhythm and social immersion) in 4 participants
<b>Public Space Navigation</b>	Limited exploration	Attended live arts event; managed transitions and group movement	On-campus immersion with nursing students expanded horizons of interaction

## Detailed Learnings and Findings

### 1. ADL Progress

- Cohort 1 (30%): Marked by a need for verbal prompts; gains were steady but relied on facilitator consistency.
- Cohort 2 (90%): Significant jump, reflecting routine internalization and independence.
- Uhuru 2.0 (80%): Even within 7 days, first-time participants showed impressive adaptability.

### 2. Community Participation

- All cohorts (~100%): This domain showed universal growth, with routine, shared meals, and cleanup acting as the glue for group rhythm and bonding.

### 3. Emotional Regulation

- Cohort 1 (78%): Dependent on external cues and rhythm aids.
- Cohort 2 (80%): Emotional containment improved through peer co-regulation and real-life application (like school visits).
- Uhuru 2.0 (85%): Even brief immersion led to containment and reflection via arts and routine.

### 4. Vocational Engagement

- Consistently high across all cohorts (90–100%): When participants were given visible outcomes (like clay products or cooking tasks), motivation soared.

### 5. Communication & Expression

- Cohort 1 (89%): Diverse expression through music and visual arts.
- Cohort 2 & 2.0 (80–85%): More verbal and reflective sharing; storytelling anchored by “The Little Prince” brought layered engagement.

### 6. Social Interaction

- Cohort 1 (67%): Emergent, with parallel play maturing to shared activity.
- Cohort 2 (70%): Initiation, response, and co-activity increased in frequency.
- Uhuru 2.0 (75%): Many first-timers initiated peer contact or stayed engaged without prompts

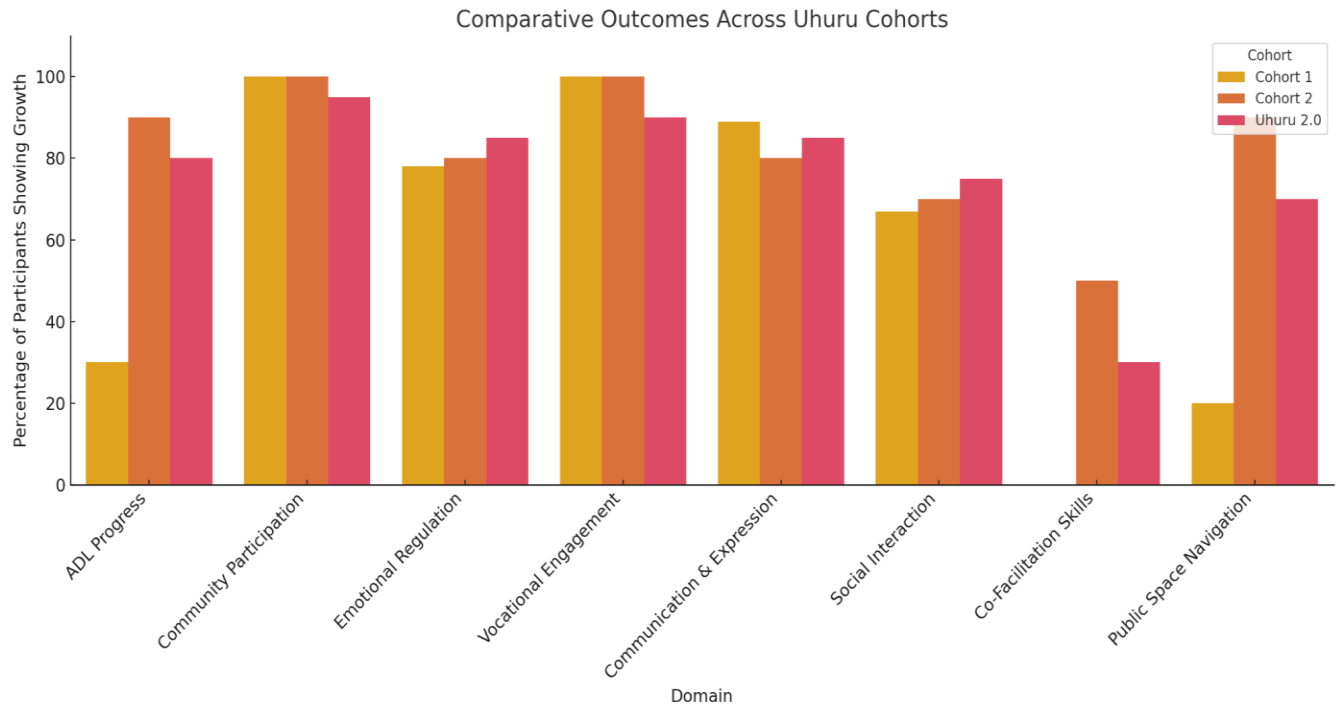
### 7. Co-Facilitation Skills

- Cohort 2 (50%): Half led public school sessions, games, or arts activities.
- Uhuru 2.0 (60%): 6 of them showed emerging leadership by guiding games or helping new visitors.

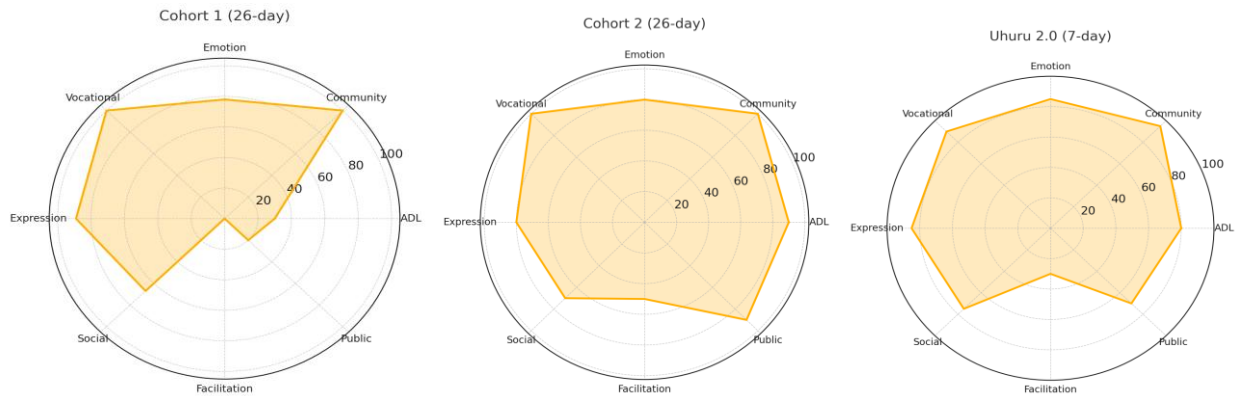
## 8. Public Space Navigation

- Cohort 2 (90%): Managed sensory load and unstructured environments with resilience during the “Bhakti” performance.

Uhuru 2.0 (70%): Though on-campus, the nursing student immersion replicated the same dynamic with high engagement and poise.



Here are the radar charts for each cohort:



*Cohort 1 (26-day) – Showed strong community engagement and vocational participation, but co-facilitation and public navigation were minimal as this was the foundational cohort.*

*Cohort 2 (26-day) – Demonstrated consistent high performance across domains, especially in stamina, co-facilitation, and navigating public spaces.*

*Uhuru 2.0 (7-day) – Impressive growth in a short span, especially among new participants, with strong gains in emotional regulation, expression, and social interaction.*

## What Is Emerging Across Cohorts

### A. From Dependency to Interdependence

All cohorts showed that neurodiverse adults, when given structure, rhythm, and agency, move from being recipients of care to contributors in community life. This shift:

- Begins with routine tasks (plate washing, room cleaning).
- Evolves into ownership (kitchen leadership, buddy roles).
- Culminates in leadership and co-regulation.

## B. The Power of Rhythmic Routine

Across all cohorts, rhythm (via sessions, movement, and scheduling) emerged as a key regulation and anchoring tool. It helped:

- Build predictable environments.
- Reduce emotional dysregulation.
- Increase stamina for learning and task persistence.

## C. Arts-Based Expression: A Cross-Cohort Constant

Whether through The Little Prince, flashcard storytelling, role-play, or drawing, artistic expression allowed participants to:

- Explore emotions (e.g., fear, happiness, friendship).
- Communicate without relying on speech.
- Discover selfhood in metaphor and narrative.

## D. Short vs. Long Format: Differentiated Impact

- The 26-day format provides depth: stamina, vocational identity, public readiness.
- The 7-day Uhuru 2.0 is a readiness lab: exposing participants to independence, routines, and new people. 5 of the 10 in Uhuru 2.0 were first timers; each one showed meaningful engagement, and some showed emergent leadership, communication, and autonomy within 72 hours.

## E. Social Immersion and Belonging

The nursing student collaboration in Uhuru 2.0 (instead of school visits in Cohort 2) provided controlled but rich social exposure. It:

- Reaffirmed participant capacity for cross-group engagement.
- Highlighted their role as hosts, guides, and bridges.
- Added layers of confidence, especially among newer participants and also how they came together as a group redefining neurodiversity

## Reaffirming Core Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Affirmed Through
Assisted living is a trainable, scaffolded skill	Growth in ADL and community tasks across all cohorts
Neurodiverse adults communicate in diverse, meaningful ways	Use of music, art, storytelling, gestures, and humor in all formats
Inclusion begins with belonging, not compliance	Social immersion results (peer friendships, group regulation, initiative)
Structure + Rhythm + Expression = Regulation and Autonomy	Rhythmic sessions, routine anchoring, emotional containment across 3 models
New participants can adapt quickly in the right container	Uhuru 2.0 first timers adapted within days, taking responsibility and expressing preferences

## Implications for Future Design

- Modular Planning: Use the 7-day model as a gateway, offering multiple cycles per year. Those ready can transition into the 26-day deep-dive.
- Community Partnerships: Scale social immersion with schools, colleges, corporates, and residential communities, gradually shifting from protected to open settings.
- Data & Evaluation: Build a longitudinal tracking system, following progress post-cohort to measure retention, generalization, and home translation.

## Conclusion

The Uhuru model continues to evolve from its first cohort that tested its scaffolding, to its second that stretched stamina and public interaction, to its third that welcomed fresh faces into belonging. Across formats, what remains true is this:

***Assisted living is not a place, it is a rhythm of life that can be taught, lived, and shared.***

With rhythm, ritual, community, and care at its core, Uhuru offers more than answers to "What after me?" it offers a story of "What now, together?"