Uhuru 2.0 – January 2026 Cohort

Research Findings from a Mixed Cohort of Newcomers and Returning Participants

Cohort Composition and Design Intent

The January 2026 Uhuru 2.0 cohort marked the first residential cycle of the year and was intentionally designed as a mixed-memory cohort, bringing together nine neurodiverse adults, with an equal balance of first-time participants and returning participants. Anchored in the themes of harvest, renewal, and nationhood, the cohort functioned as a *living curriculum* where assisted living skills were rehearsed through everyday life rather than taught as isolated competencies

Returning participants carried forward embodied memory of routines, rhythms, and community norms, while newcomers entered a ready-made ecosystem of shared practices. This design allowed the cohort to function simultaneously as a readiness lab for first timers and a consolidation space for returnees.

The January 2026 Uhuru 2.0 cohort offers one of the clearest confirmations yet of a central hypothesis emerging across Uhuru's work: assisted living is not a static care arrangement, it is a learnable, rehearsable, and transferable skill set.

<u>**Comparative Findings Within the January Cohort**</u>

1. Activities of Daily Living (ADL): From Prompted Action to Ownership

Across the cohort, ADLs emerged as one of the strongest indicators of skill acquisition and transferability.

- Returning participants (e.g., Sujatha, Manan, Rishabh, Ahira, Avyukt) demonstrated high continuity in personal care routines, meal management, toileting, and spatial navigation. Many required minimal prompting and showed growing initiation, sequencing, and follow-through across days.
- Newcomers (e.g., Madhav, Jyothiraditya, Nishit, Sai Om) showed rapid adaptation, moving from hesitation or partial participation to meaningful engagement in washing utensils, mat rolling, bathing routines, and meal practices within a matter of days.

Trend observed:
ADL competence developed fastest when routines were:

- predictable but flexible
- embedded in group life
- framed as contribution rather than correction

This reinforces the finding that assisted living skills are trainable and repeatable, even within a short 7-day cycle.

2. Community Living: From Participation to Shared Ownership

Community living in the January cohort moved beyond task completion toward shared responsibility and relational belonging.

- Returning participants often modelled community behaviour without instruction, demonstrating when and how to participate in kitchen work, clean-up, and shared transitions.
- Newcomers mirrored these behaviours organically, learning through observation and peer presence rather than adult-led instruction.

Notably, several participants (e.g., Nishit, Ahira, Avyukt) stepped into organising or guiding roles inviting peers to join tasks, ensuring completion, and holding collective routines with calm authority.

Trend observed:
Community living matured along a clear arc:
joining → contributing → organising → holding space for others

This indicates that community itself becomes a pedagogical tool in training assisted living.

3. Emotional Regulation: Rhythm as the Primary Regulator

Across the cohort, emotional regulation was most effectively supported through:

- predictable daily flow
- repeated rituals (assemblies, meals, closures)
- arts- and rhythm-based sessions
- respect for pacing and choice

Participants who initially showed signs of dysregulation, vigilance, or withdrawal (particularly newcomers) demonstrated visible settling over time, without the use of behavioural enforcement strategies.

Trend observed: Regulation was not taught directly; it emerged as a by-product of structure + rhythm + relational safety.

4. Vocational and Creative Engagement: Meaning Drives Motivation

Creative and vocational activities such as kitchen work, handmade paper, resin art, movement, music, and festival-based making functioned as bridges between skill and meaning.

- Participants sustained attention for longer durations when tasks had visible outcomes and cultural resonance.
- Returning participants demonstrated improved stamina and patience across multi-step processes.
- Newcomers showed curiosity-led engagement, often staying longer with tasks than initially expected.

Trend observed: Motivation increased when work was:

- culturally anchored
- process-oriented rather than outcome-driven
- socially embedded

5. Communication and Social Interaction: Peer Scaffolding in Action

Communication across the cohort reflected layered interaction styles such as verbal, gestural, observational, and action based.

- Returning participants often used language to narrate routines, recall sequences, and orient peers.
- Newcomers showed growing willingness to initiate, respond, refuse, or self-advocate (e.g., food choices, sensory needs, pacing).

Group discussions around festivals, citizenship, and shared values provided low-pressure entry points for expression and listening.

Trend observed:
Communication deepened most effectively in collective contexts, rather than one-to-one instruction.

6. Leadership and Peer Mentoring: Distributed, Not Assigned

Leadership in the January cohort was emergent and distributed, rather than positional.
- Leadership appeared through small acts: initiating clean-up, guiding peers, holding group norms, modelling calm transitions.
- Returning participants demonstrated increased self-restraint, turn-taking, and attunement to group needs.
- Some newcomers displayed early leadership cues once safety and familiarity were established.

Trend observed:
Leadership in assisted living contexts is relational, not hierarchical and can be cultivated through repetition and trust.

What the January 2026 Cohort Reveals

Taken together, the January cohort offers strong evidence that:

- Assisted living can be taught as a skill, not assumed as a lifelong dependency.
- Short, well-designed residential cycles can produce rapid and meaningful gains.
- Mixed cohorts (newcomers + returnees) significantly accelerate learning through peer modelling.
- Community living and ADLs cannot be separated—they function as a single learning ecosystem.

The January cohort reinforces Uhuru's evolving thesis:

Autonomy is not built in isolation. It is rehearsed, remembered, and sustained in community.

Maturity Scales – January 2026 Uhuru 2.0 Cohort

Maturity Scale Legend

- 1/5 Emerging – skills just appearing, heavy scaffolding needed
- 2/5 Early Development – growing but inconsistent
- 3/5 Developing – steady signs, needs structure
- 4/5 Consolidating – repeatable, less prompting, beginning to transfer
- 5/5 Consolidated – reliable, embedded, peer-modelled

Table 1: January 2026 Cohort – Domain-wise Maturity Levels

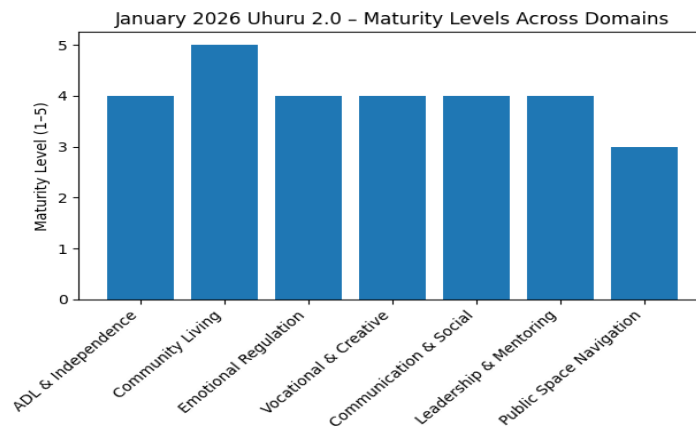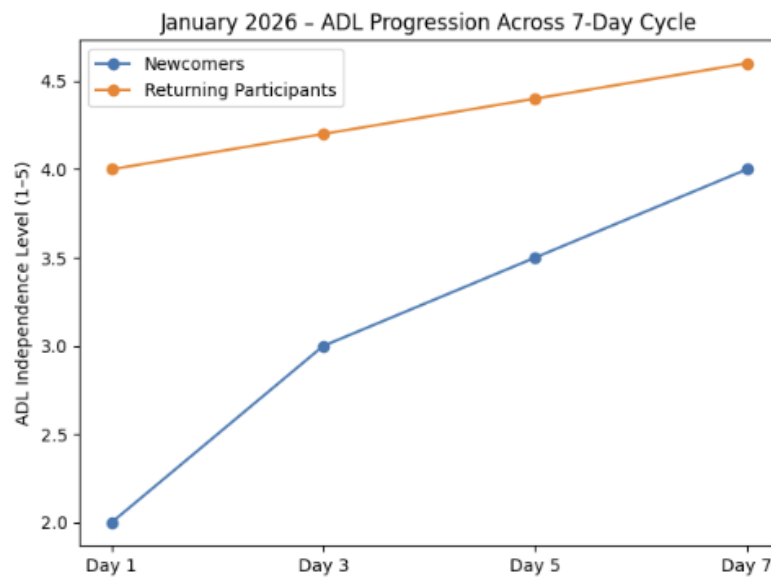| Domain	Observed Maturity Level	Evidence from January Cohort
ADL & Independence	4/5 – Consolidating	Returning participants showed high continuity; newcomers reached partial independence within days. ADLs such as bathing, brushing, toileting, and meal routines became repeatable and increasingly self-initiated.
Community Living	5/5 – Consolidated	Shared chores (kitchen work, mat rolling, clean-up) were peer modelled. Leadership emerged organically; community routines were held collectively with minimal facilitator intervention.
Emotional Regulation	4/5 – Consolidating	Regulation improved through rhythm and predictability. Participants showed reduced dysregulation, improved sleep, and smoother transitions without behavioural enforcement.
Vocational & Creative Engagement	4/5 – Consolidating	Sustained attention in kitchen work, craft, and arts-based sessions. Motivation increased when tasks were culturally meaningful and had tangible outcomes.
Communication & Social Interaction	4/5 – Consolidating	Growth across verbal and non-verbal modes. Peer interaction, self-advocacy (choices, refusals), and group participation strengthened across the week.
Leadership & Peer Mentoring	4/5 – Consolidating	Leadership expressed through responsibility rather than authority guiding peers, initiating tasks, holding group norms.
Public / Semi-Public Navigation	3/5 – Developing	Exposure remained largely within campus; however, participants demonstrated readiness for shared spaces and collective hosting formats.

January 2026 Uhuru 2.0 – Maturity Levels Across Domains

Table 2: Newcomers vs Returning Participants – January 2026

Domain	Newcomers (Jan 2026)	Returning Participants (Jan 2026)
ADL	3–4/5 by end of week	4–5/5 with strong recall
Community Living	4/5 (peer-scaffolded)	5/5 (peer-held)
Regulation	3–4/5	4–5/5
Leadership	2–3/5 (emerging cues)	4–5/5 (distributed leadership)
Transfer Readiness	3/5	4/5

The mixed cohort design significantly reduced onboarding time for newcomers and allowed returnees to consolidate skills through mentoring and modelling rather than repetition.

January 2026 – ADL Progression Across 7-Day Cycle

These findings point to an urgent need to rethink assisted living systems not as endpoints of care, but as educational ecosystems. The January cohort shows that when neurodiverse adults are given structure with agency, they do not merely cope they contribute, lead, and belong.

This is not just a programme insight. It is a framework invitation for families, organisations, practitioners, and policymakers to imagine assisted living as a skill that can be built, scaled, and adapted across contexts, with arts-based, community-rooted learning at its core.

Way Forward: From Programme to Ecosystem

The January 2026 findings reaffirm that assisted living must be re-imagined not as an endpoint of care, but as an educational and community ecosystem one that can be learned, practised, and sustained over time. When neurodiverse adults are offered structure with agency, they do not merely cope within protected environments; they contribute, lead, and belong within shared living systems.

These insights invite a crucial shift in how families, organisations, and communities approach the future of neurodiverse adults. Rather than waiting for institutional solutions, there is an opportunity to build smaller, distributed assisted living models, grounded in rhythm, community, and skill-based learning. The evidence from Uhuru suggests that when assisted living is treated as a trainable life skill, it becomes possible to design environments where autonomy is rehearsed daily and interdependence is normalised.

For parents and caregivers, this opens a new pathway:

- to move from crisis-led planning to capacity-led preparation
- to come together in intentional parent collectives that explore assisted living not as an abstract future concern, but as a skill that can be learned in the present
- to invest in training, shared living experiments, and community-rooted models that are scalable, humane, and dignified

Equally important is the need to hold parallel spaces for parents themselves, spaces of reflection, learning, and mutual support. As assisted living models evolve, parents too must be held as learners in this process, supported to unlearn fear-based narratives and to imagine futures rooted in trust, shared responsibility, and possibility.

Uhuru's work now stands at a threshold from programme to framework. The invitation ahead is not only to replicate a model, but to co-create a movement where assisted living is understood as a collective skill, cultivated through community, arts-based practice, and sustained relational care.