



**CHANGE
THE GAME
ACADEMY**



VOICES **of** CHANGE

FROM LOCAL ROOTS
TO GLOBAL REACH

Colophon

This storybook was co-created by a diverse team of volunteers, partners, and professionals committed to celebrating 10 years of impact by Change the Game Academy.

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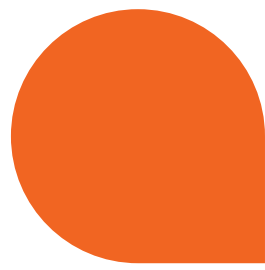
PUBLICATION DATE

November 2025

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Once upon a time, there was a different way to build change

It didn't begin with big budgets or bold slogans.

It began with a question: What if communities could fund their own dreams? What if, instead of relying on external aid, local organisations had the skills, tools, and confidence to raise their own resources and mobilise their communities for lasting impact? In 2005, the Wilde Ganzen Foundation in the Netherlands dared to imagine that future. With support from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and partners from India, Brazil, South Africa and Kenya, they launched Action for Children (AfC) — a programme that shifted the focus from giving aid to building fundraising capacity in the Global South.

It wasn't easy. There was doubt. But slowly, a mindset began to shift — towards autonomy, dignity, and transformation through local fundraising.

A NEW CHAPTER: CHANGE THE GAME ACADEMY IS BORN

After several impactful years, the AfC programme faced a turning point, when government funding ended. But instead of ending the journey, the partners evolved. Drawing from everything they had learned, they launched the Change the Game Academy (CtGA).

What began as a response to a funding gap became a global movement grounded in the belief that every community can change the rules of the development game when equipped with the right tools.



FROM PILOT TO GLOBAL PLATFORM

In 2016, CtGA welcomed new partners in Ethiopia and Uganda. In 2017, Burkina Faso became the first Francophone country to join. By 2018, new partners from Tanzania, Ghana, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, and Nepal joined the movement, and CtGA launched its online learning platform. From 2022 onward, the network has expanded with partners from Gambia, Indonesia, and the Andean region - all committed to equip civil society with tools and knowledge to fundraise locally and mobilise support for what matters most. Today, CtGA has presence in 16 countries.

A MOVEMENT, NOT JUST A PROGRAMME

Over the past 10 years, Change the Game Academy has trained more than 4,000 organizations, supported 200+ local trainers, and reached 16 countries across Latin America, Africa and Asia. Through classroom learning, coaching, and an open online platform available in four languages, we've witnessed what happens when communities take the lead: they don't just survive — they thrive. More than numbers, it's about what these numbers represent: Young leaders, rural women, grassroots organisers, parents, teachers, health workers — all taking development into their own hands.

THIS BOOK IS FOR THEM

Inside this book are stories of people who didn't wait for change — They built it. With courage, creativity, and community.

From public transport advocacy in Brazil to water and biodiversity protection in Peru. From schools in Ghana to health clinics in Indonesia. From fundraising concerts to political action — these stories show what's possible when the game truly changes.

AND THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING

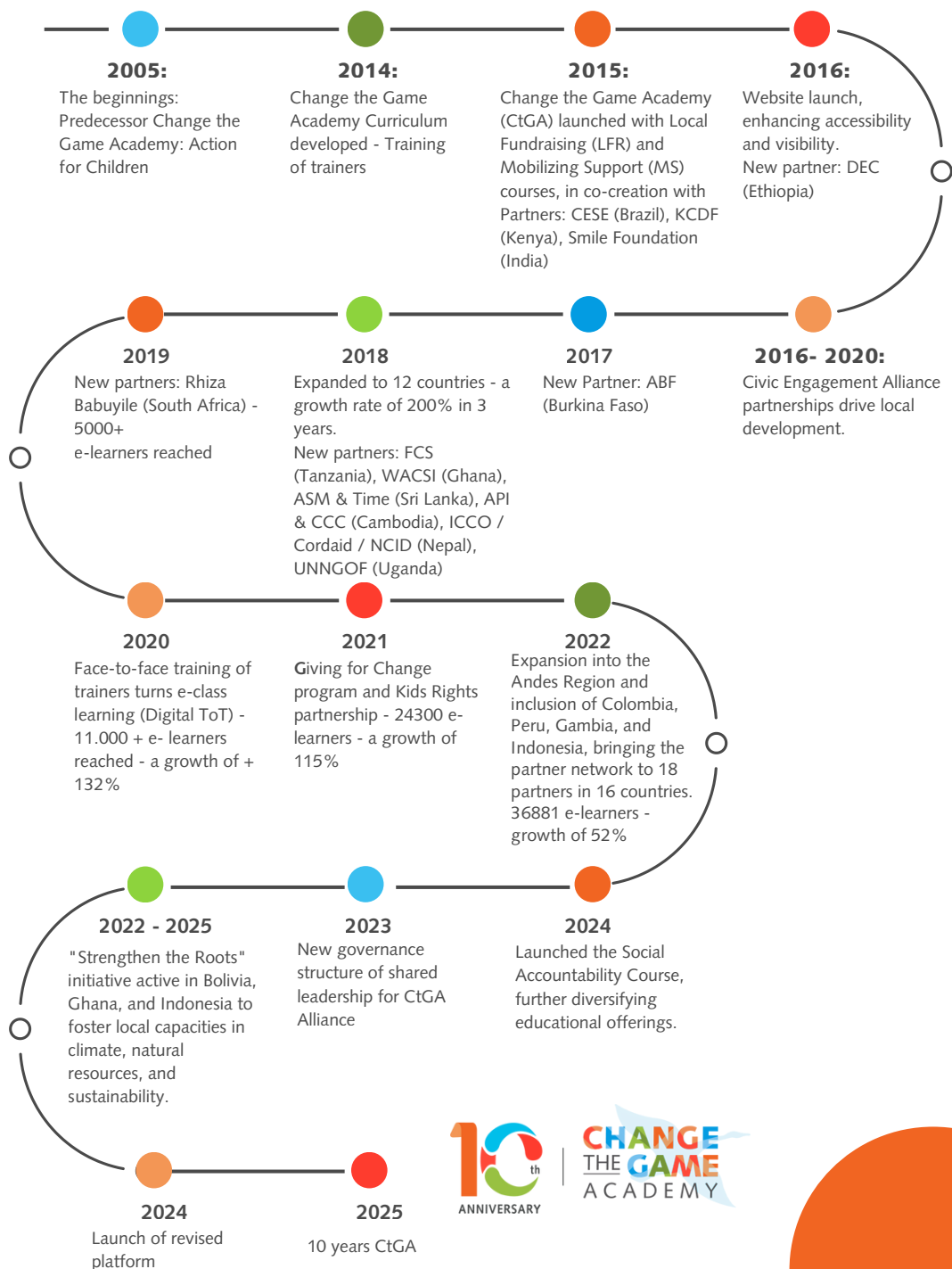
As we look forward to the next decade, CtGA remains committed to a core belief: That local ownership is the key to sustainable change. That when we invest in people — not just projects — we build movements that last.

To all who've been part of this journey, thank you. To those joining us now, welcome. The game has changed and we're just getting started.



10 Years of Impact:

Celebrating Change the Game Academy's Journey





Change the Game Academy: Learn how to raise local funds and mobilise support

OUR METHODOLOGY

Many civil society organisations in low- and middle-income countries depend on foreign funding for their work. This vulnerability places them at risk of working donor-driven. Change the Game Academy's objective is to end this dependency.

We believe, that when capacities of changemakers are strengthened, they become resilient, autonomous, and united by a shared sense of ownership. This way, they become more legitimate, locally rooted, and better positioned to engage their communities and hold governments accountable.

This is made possible through CtGA's Local Fundraising, Mobilising Support & Social Accountability training courses.

HOW IT WORKS

At Change the Game Academy, changemakers can find various ways to bolster themselves and their team:

- Enroll in a **in-person classroom training** combined with individual coaching. Training materials are contextualised for each country and delivered by in-country certified trainers.
- Join **online classroom courses combined with coaching**, which are organised based on demand.
- Gain knowledge, skills and inspiration through the **free online learning platform**, choosing from two full length courses on local fundraising and mobilising support.
- Draw inspiration from our library of **300+ case studies** contributed by alumni, offering insights, tools, and inspiration.





GEOGRAPHICAL REACH:



With partners in **16 countries**, CtGA has delivered face-to-face courses in more than **30 countries worldwide.**

Countries reached: Brazil, Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Guatemala, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Palestine, Paraguay, Peru, South Africa, Srilanka, Tanzania, Gambia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone



“ What others say



Change the Game Academy embodies the spirit of Ubuntu — 'I am because we are.' True empowerment means equipping those around us with the skills, knowledge, and resources they need to create sustainable change. When we lift others, we rise together." The most rewarding part of my work is seeing the ripple effect — when one empowered organization goes on to uplift many others.

Being part of CtGA means being part of a global movement dedicated to sustainable impact, collaboration, and shared success. I am incredibly proud to contribute to this network and to celebrate 10 years of Change making.

FATOU TOURAY, CASA GAMBIA



Change the Game Academy is transforming the way civil society operates, fostering a global movement of local organisations that are more self-reliant, locally rooted, and equipped to drive long-term, sustainable change from the ground up. Through our collaboration, particularly in delivering local fundraising training for members from multiple regions. We've been able to strengthen the resilience and autonomy of grassroots organisations, aligning directly with GNDR's mission to amplify local voices in disaster risk reduction and ensure that decision-making is grounded in local realities.

AMINATA SOME

Membership Engagement Coordinator, Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR)

TRAINING STATISTICS

4000+
organisations



trained, impacting a wide spectrum of local stakeholders.

150 active trainers fluent in over 20 languages, supported by **15 Master Trainers**.

ONLINE LEARNING IMPACT

App in 4 languages, 20 modules

totaling 80 hours of free online training content in 5 languages.



53.917 e-learners

benefited from courses such as LFR (48 hours) and MS (32 hours).

Features include
56 toolkits
140+ inspiring local examples



52 568 facebook followers
4619 Instagram Followers
2951 Linkedin Followers
53.917 e-learners

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

300 certified trainers



- A total of **319 in-person training sessions** were held, including **183 Local Fundraising** trainings, **122 Mobilising Support** trainings, **11 hybrid sessions** (LFR, MS, SA), and **3 Social Accountability** trainings. In addition, **16 Training of Trainers (ToT)** sessions were also conducted.



- Developed robust local expertise, with **trainers driving community-led initiatives**.



- Collaborated with major partners under frameworks such as the **Civic Engagement Alliance** and **Giving for Change**



- Partnered with **INGOs and Foundations** such as Misereor, Bread for the World, Kids Rights, Save the Children, GNDR, Light for the World, Terre de Hommes, Dutch Ministry of foreign affairs, and others

WHY CHANGE THE GAME?



For CSOs:

- Diversified funding base, less dependency in foreign funding
- More local support, legitimacy and a stronger voice



For communities:

- Increase of local ownership and bottom-up change
- More funds available



One Size Doesn't Fit All: Tailored Solutions for Social Challenges

Social challenges vary in different contexts. Changemakers are there to define the best solution for their specific context. And although situations are improving in many areas, our community of changemakers is working on diverse development issues as highlighted below.

Healthcare



Access to (qualitative) healthcare remains a challenge in many countries, especially in remote or conflict-affected areas. Accessibility is hindered by long travel distances to reach facilities, a shortage of medical staff and resources, a lack of early diagnosis and prevention of specific diseases.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), at least half of the world's population lacks access to essential health services, and over 100 million people are pushed into extreme poverty each year due to out-of-pocket healthcare expenses. While some countries provide public healthcare services, many others struggle with resource-strained systems, leaving patients with the expensive option of private treatment.

Education



Access to basic education remains a struggle for many, especially for girls and the marginalized groups. Education systems still struggle with overcrowding, outdated curricula, and limited learning infrastructure in many regions.



Inclusion



Inclusion and equality are values that still need to be defended everywhere around the world. Social stigma, discrimination and regressive laws exist, especially for cultural or religious minorities, people with disabilities, youth and LGBTQ+ individuals.

Climate & biodiversity



Climate change is escalating, with rising temperatures and extreme weather conditions affecting vulnerable communities. Low-income countries are disproportionately impacted, facing challenges in mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Gender



Gender equality is advancing, with more women in leadership roles and greater access to education. However, in some regions, regressive policies and traditions restrict women's autonomy and freedom.

Water and Sanitation (WASH)



The challenge with the current WASH infrastructure remains how to ensure equitable access to clean water and sanitation, particularly in conflict zones and marginalized communities. Around 2 billion people lack safe drinking water, and more than 4.5 billion lack access to proper sanitation facilities.



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REGION:
**LATIN
AMERICA**

COLOMBIA
PERU
BRAZIL



When the System Fails, We Rebuild Ourselves

How Fundación PT is turning local action into lasting change in Bogotá

The neighborhood of Patio Bonito is a place where resilience flourishes amidst contrasts. In this area of Bogotá, social challenges such as forced displacement, poverty, and a growing migrant population coexist. Amid these difficulties, hope can easily fade. Yet it is also a space full of diversity, community strength, and a deep desire to move forward. What stands out the most is the strength of its people: organized communities, committed youth, and a collective will to transform reality. For nearly 40 years, one organization has worked hand in hand with local residents, proving that real change is possible, when it starts from within.

A mission that refuses to fade

Founded in 1986, **Fundación PT (Participación, Pedagogía, Productividad)** has stood beside children, youth, and families in situations of vulnerability. But the ground beneath them has shifted. As international funding dwindled, the organization faced a difficult question: how do you sustain a mission when the resources run out?

The answer? You transform. Not just how you fund your work — but how you see your role in the community.

From dependency to determination

That transformation began with a decision: five women from the Fundación PT team joined a nine-month training program with Change the Game Academy.

They didn't just learn to write better proposals or attract partners; they started to dream bigger and act more strategically. They stopped seeing fundraising as something external. Instead, it became part of the culture.

“Before, it felt like a burden for one or two people. Now it’s a shared responsibility. And we began to see allies everywhere, even in places we had never looked before,”

Luz Stella Talero, Director of Fundación PT.

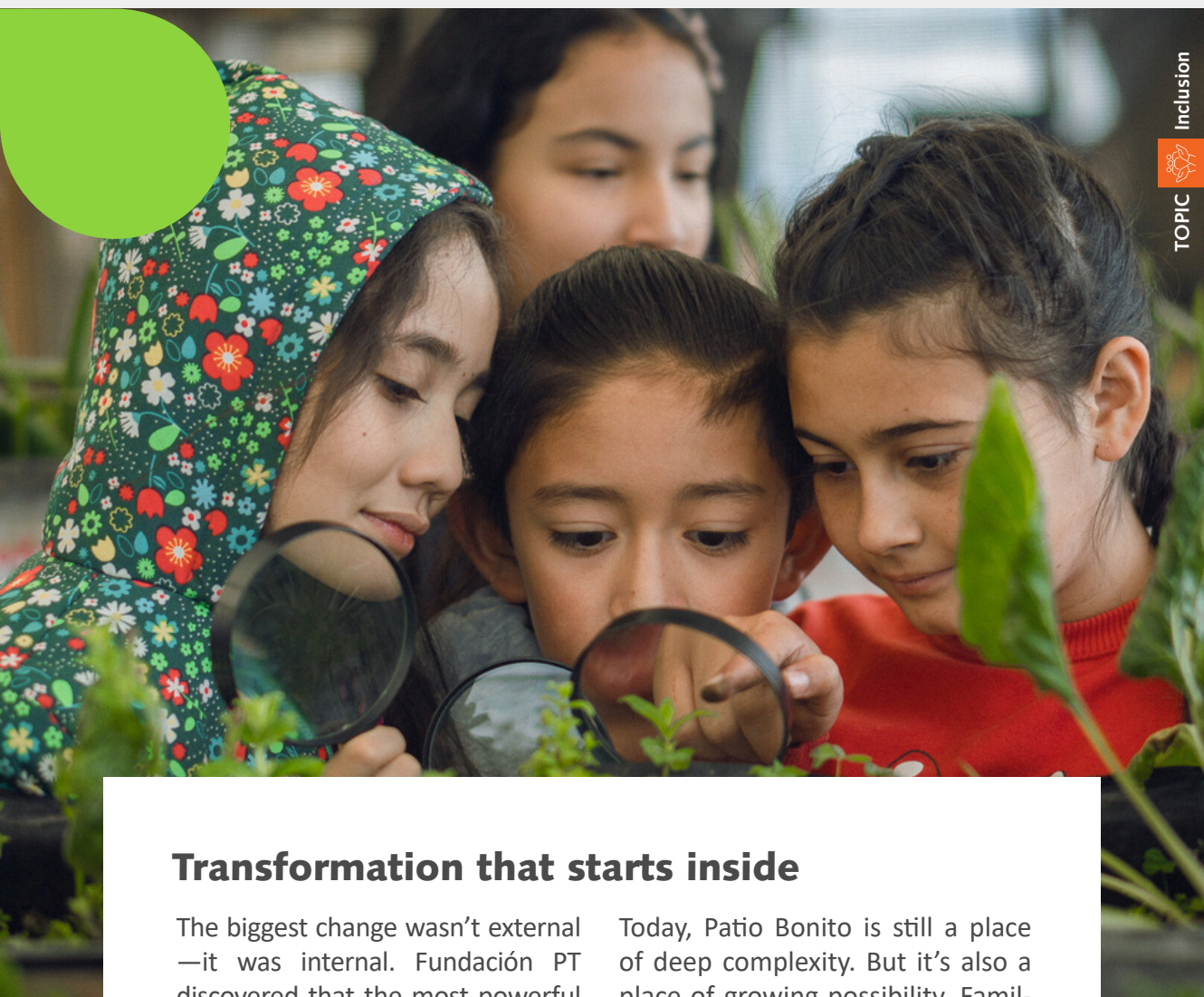
With this new perspective, the Fundación PT team began seeking district-level calls for proposals and followed all the necessary steps to build projects in dialogue with the community, aligning with their needs. As a result, they won two grants related to environmental action and social cohesion. Organization’s members became more eager to highlight how long they’ve been active in the community and what difference they’ve made there over time. Because of this, the interest in the organization grew and it became more visible. For this reason, they were invited to apply for an award organized by the Mayor’s Office of Bogotá — and they received the **“Childhood Award 2024”** in the community organization category.

Small wins, real impact

The team applied what they learned with determination: they submitted joint proposals with other social organizations at both national and international levels. Out of 21 applications, 7 were approved (4 at the national level and 3 at the international level), and 3 are still under review.

These weren’t just numbers. Each approval meant programs continued, more families were reached, and more lives changed. At the same time, the team strengthened relationships with public institutions and civil society, expanding their ecosystem of support and deepening their roots in the neighborhood.





Transformation that starts inside

The biggest change wasn't external—it was internal. Fundación PT discovered that the most powerful tool they had wasn't funding. It was **trust in their own capacity**. The training didn't hand them a solution. It handed them the tools and they built the rest.

"We learned that sustainability isn't just about money. It's about people. About connection. About deciding to do things differently."

Today, Patio Bonito is still a place of deep complexity. But it's also a place of growing possibility. Families now have greater access to training, support networks, and resources to rebuild their futures. Even in communities facing immense adversity, change can start with a decision to act differently. Fundación PT is living proof: when local actors believe in their own strength, real change begins. Not from above. But from classrooms, kitchens, sidewalks — and from the courage to keep going, together.

A Landscape of Hope: How Puno Is Protecting Water, Biodiversity, and Ancestral Wisdom - together

High in the Peruvian Andes, where the sky meets the snow-capped mountains and people live in deep connection with the land, a quiet but powerful movement is taking root. Since early 2022, the Mesa Multiactor del Paisaje Puno—a multi-stakeholder platform—has become a space where communities, cooperatives, farmers, and institutions come together to protect what truly matters: water, biodiversity, and cultural identity.

When water disappears, so do traditions

In Puno, the climate crisis isn't loud—it's slow and unforgiving. Year after year, the rains come later or not at all. Native crops struggle, springs dry up and harsh frosts destroy what remains. With each failed harvest, more families send their children to the cities, and with them, ancestral knowledge quietly disappears. But those who remain have made a choice: **to organize, to protect, and to act—together.**



Rooted in tradition, led by community

The Mesa Multiactor emerged from a shared realization: facing the climate crisis requires collective solutions. Led by the Centro de Capacitación Campesina (CCCCP) and supported by Change the Game Academy and the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) Small Grants Programme, the platform focused on three key strategies: Political advocacy to strengthen public investment in sustainable water management; Community-led biodiversity projects to recover native species and traditional farming practices; Women's leadership and empowerment, placing women at the center of territorial governance.



"This training and the support from UNDP was deeply nourishing. As women leaders, we're now shaping proposals that truly serve our communities. The tools helped us to focus, prioritize, and act with purpose," reflected Ayde Quispe Meneses, Mesa participant.

Visible change, deep roots

The impact is already visible. Through joint advocacy, the Mesa helped secure a public ordinance protecting 10,000 hectares of agrobiodiversity in Lampa Province. Even more significant, a \$3.9 million public investment was approved to expand irrigation systems and preserve biodiversity across 12 communities. Meanwhile, economic resilience has grown: Eleven local artisan groups created 56 new bio-based designs, registered five collective brands, and sold goods online, generating over \$8,500 in income.

But perhaps the most powerful transformation happened on gender equity, an important symbol of change in a region where patriarchal norms still shape public life. 59% of all participants in Mesa's sessions were women, including the leadership. In addition, 57% of the community project beneficiaries were also women, many of them accessing training and new income opportunities.



The tools were shared. The path was theirs to build.

Change the Game Academy didn't bring ready-made answers, it offered tools. And the communities of Puno—guided by CCCP—turned those tools into vision, structure, and self-determination.

In just a short time, the **Mesa Multiactor del Paisaje Puno** has become a model of participatory and sustainable governance. Its experience is already inspiring similar platforms in other regions.

Because in Puno, people know that defending the land means defending identity. That the future isn't built by abandoning the past—but by honoring it. And that even when the rain disappears, hope can still take root if communities work together.

When the Bus Won't Come, the Youth Take the Wheel

Imagine not being able to attend a medical appointment, arriving late to work, or even missing an exam. This was the daily experience of young people in São José da Mata, Brazil. But then, AJURCC stepped in — transforming frustration into action and giving the youth of São José da Mata a voice to demand their right to reliable public transportation.

Stuck in Transit

The community of São José da Mata, a town of about 20,000 residents in Campina Grande, Paraíba, has been facing public transport issues since March 2020. Buses ran irregularly—sometimes with one-hour waits—and service stopped altogether after 7 p.m. On Sundays and holidays, there were no buses at all. Students struggled to access half-fare passes, and poor schedule integration made it difficult to reach the city center. This lack of transport didn't just complicate daily life—it blocked access to jobs, healthcare, education, banking services, and leisure. For many, it deepened unemployment, and infringed on their basic right to move freely within their own city.

Youth in the Driver's Seat

When the public transportation system fell into crisis, it was a passionate group of young people who mobilized to drive the change. AJURCC (Association of Youth, Culture, and Citizenship) is a nonprofit organization founded in 2004 with the mission of empowering young people through cultural and political education. Unlike many youth groups, AJURCC is made up primarily of young people—under the age of 29, mostly black, from low-income backgrounds, and with a leadership team that values gender parity. Its focus is clear: to promote youth leadership and participation in shaping public policies that support marginalised communities.



From Training to Action

AJURCC took part in the Mobilizing Support course offered by the Ecumenical Coordination of Service (CESE), which led to the creation of a youth working group of 12 people. They identified transportation as a major issue and developed a strategy to address it. The result? The project “Youth for the Right to the City and the Defense of Quality Public Transportation.” Over 35 youth leaders from São José da Mata and five other neighborhoods were trained in political advocacy, learning how to mobilize their communities and push for real change. The campaign brought together youth, women, and workers in a collective effort to demand their right to reliable public transit.



Taking it to the Streets—and Winning

The campaign literally took to the streets. Young people organized petitions both online and in key local spaces like public squares and schools, rallying residents to demand immediate action from the local government. They held public hearings and organized a seminar with social leaders and transit officials to discuss public transport and the right to the city. Their persistence paid off. Public transportation was reinstated on weekends and during night hours in São José da Mata and Campina Grande. Additionally, restrictions on student fare cards were lifted, making it easier for youth and vulnerable people to get around.

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REGION:

WEST AND
SOUTH
AFRICA

GAMBIA
GHANA
BURKINA FASO
SOUTH AFRICA

When the waters rise, so do the Gambian Red Cross Volunteers

When the rains come to Gambia, they bring more than just water. They bring the risk of floods, disease, and destruction. Yet in the low-lying Kombo North District, one group of volunteers is determined not to let their communities be washed away.

Floods can't stop us

Gambia, like much of West Africa, is on the frontlines of the climate crisis. With every rainy season, floods grow more intense; displacing families, damaging homes, and putting pressure on already stretched health services. In just three decades, the region has seen an 80% increase in flood frequency and severity. But amid these rising tides stands the Kombo North District Red Cross Committee of the Gambia Red Cross Society, powered by the commitment of local volunteers who show up- rain or shine. *"It's the passion for helping people that keeps us going,"* says Awa Touray, the disaster chair lady of Kombo North Red Cross Committee, and driving force behind the team. For Awa and her fellow volunteers, this isn't a job. It's a calling.

From passion to practical action

Goodwill alone doesn't stop the floods. To train volunteers, run emergency programmes, and respond effectively to disasters, resources are essential. But unlike big international NGOs, this Red Cross team operates from the grassroots, relying on the power of community. So, they got creative. Debate competitions, cultural performances, carnivals, Awa's team turned local events into fundraising platforms. In 2025, they planned a full calendar of community driven initiatives: school food sales, talent shows, cultural evenings, and football matches between youth groups. These aren't just fun, they fund first aid kits, training sessions, and essential disaster gear. Still, challenges remain. *"The rainy season is the toughest,"* Awa admits. *"We often lack pumps and protective equipment. But our volunteers keep going. Many of them balance studies or small jobs alongside their Red Cross work."*





Building skills, building confidence

To strengthen their approach, the team joined a Local Fundraising training by Casa Gambia, part of the Change the Game Academy. The training equipped them with practical tools: stakeholder mapping, donor profiling, strategic event planning. “It gave us the structure we needed,” says Awa. “Now we plan events that both raise funds and build our capacity.” One such event was a 10-day capacity-building camp, funded entirely through local fundraising. It supported 250 participants with meals, transport, and materials. It left them better prepared to face the next disaster. *“It brought us closer as a team,”* Awa reflects. *“It showed us what we’re capable of.”*

A movement gaining momentum

Looking ahead, the Kombo North District Red Cross Committee will host the commemoration of the World Red Cross Day for the entire West Coast Region: bringing together hundreds of volunteers across nine districts. It will be a celebration, yes, but also a reminder: when communities come together, they can do more than respond to disasters. They can prevent them.

As one volunteer put it:

“We may not always have the equipment. But we have each other. That’s what matters when the floods come.”





Ctrl + Alt + Fundraise

In Ghana, where the promise of a digital future glimmers like gold, the government's ambition is bold: to transform the nation into a high-income, knowledge-driven economy through the power of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Yet, for the Billa Mahmud Memorial Future Leaders School in Accra, that dream often felt just out of reach.

An error in the system

For more than 300 students in some of Accra's most under-resourced neighbourhoods, computer literacy isn't just another subject on the curriculum, it's a lifeline. Yet, despite the urgent need, broken computers and outdated equipment stood between them and the future they dreamt of. Mabel Akpor, the school's headmistress, felt the weight of this daily struggle. *"We target children from the most deprived communities in Accra,"* she said. *"Their parents can barely afford basic school fees, so there's nothing left to fix the lab."* Even with Ghana's national ICT policy aiming for digital inclusion, the school had no way to provide the most basic tools for teaching. Every local fundraising attempt had fallen short. Then, just when they were about to give up, they discovered Change the Game Academy (CtGA).

Cedi by cedi

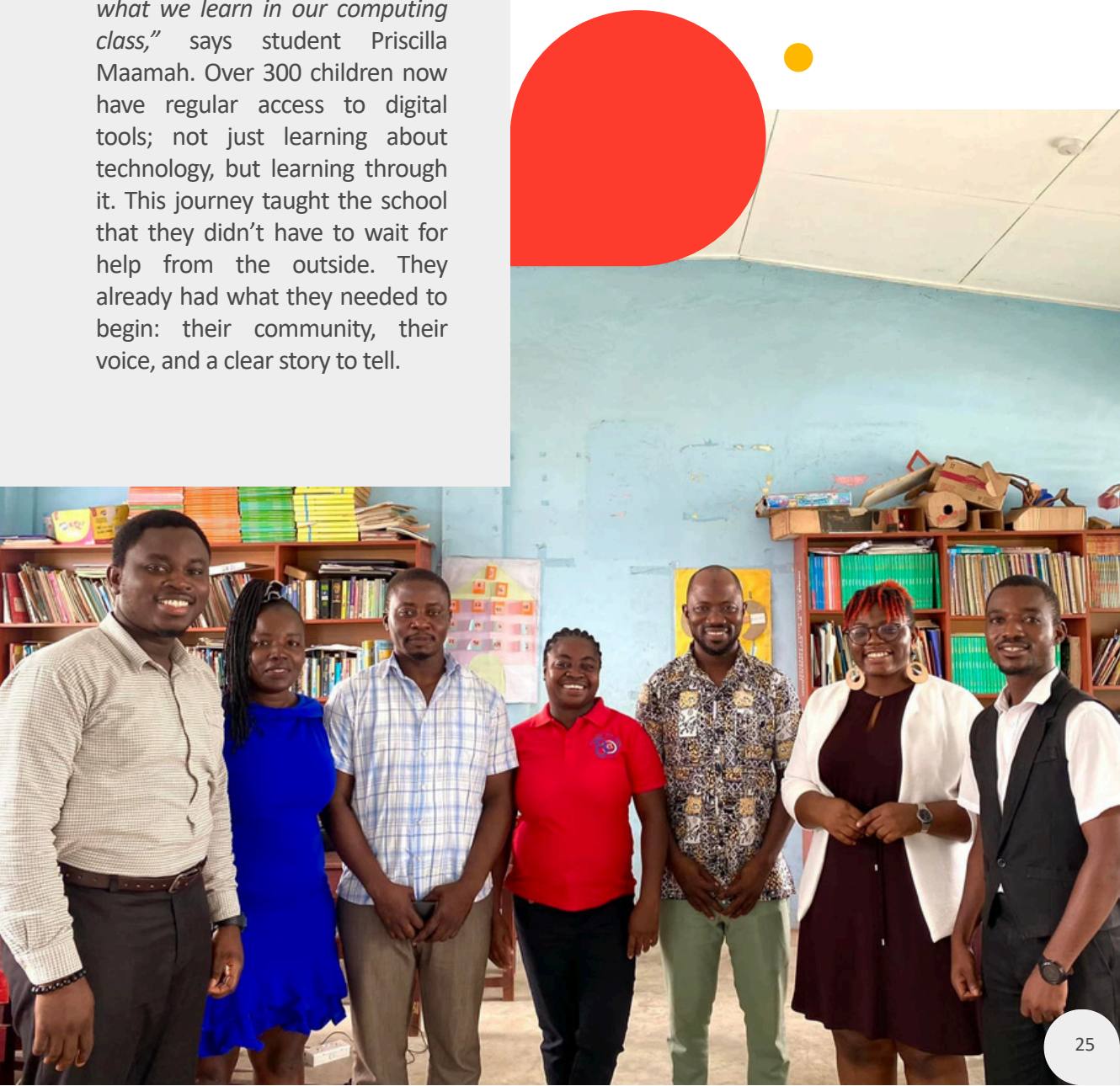
In 2022, the school took part in a local fundraising training through CtGA. What followed was nothing short of a revelation. Armed with new energy and practical strategies, the team got to work, launching a grassroots fundraising plan through the Parent-Teacher Association Levy. They started with what they had: a tight-knit community, strong local connections, and a shared vision. In just five months, they raised 2,000 Ghanaian Cedis / \$129. It wasn't enough to fully renovate the lab, but it showed something more valuable: the community's belief in the project. Their determination caught the eye of CtGA's local partner, the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI), who stepped in with match funding of 10,000 Ghanaian Cedis / \$645, providing the boost they needed.

An updated lab

With GHC 12,000 (\$775) in hand, Billa Mahmud Memorial School set its plan into motion. The old computer lab was brought back to life. The broken machines were replaced, and within a short time, the room was buzzing with new energy. *"We are happy about these new computers because they will allow us to gain hands-on experience that complements what we learn in our computing class,"* says student Priscilla Maamah. Over 300 children now have regular access to digital tools; not just learning about technology, but learning through it. This journey taught the school that they didn't have to wait for help from the outside. They already had what they needed to begin: their community, their voice, and a clear story to tell.

A boost for Gen Z

CtGA's training didn't bring the funds directly; it brought the skills to unlock them. *"The work isn't finished,"* says **Adjei Erasmus**, the school's computing teacher. *"We'll keep moving forward, helping the school with local fundraising to support these students and the next wave of digital leaders."* This school in Accra may be small, but they've already taken a big step forward, not by waiting for change, but by driving it themselves.



A School Built from Within

In the Hauts Bassins region of Burkina Faso, the village of Sidi B dreamed of a school for their children, but overcrowded classrooms and limited resources kept that dream out of reach. The community knew change was urgent, without it, their children risked falling behind in both education and life.



Hands on deck

The villagers knew that the key to breaking the cycle lay not in waiting for out-side help, but in taking matters into their own hands. And that's where the story really begins. It all starts with the Association des Petits Projets Africains (APPA), a non-profit based in Bobo Dioulasso, a city not far from Ouagadougou. APPA was created in Bobo-Dioulasso in 2015, and since then has a reputation for helping rural communities lead their own development efforts.

When they learned about Change the Game Academy's local fundraising course, they saw an opportunity to build not just a school, but a movement. With a renewed sense of purpose and the right tools, APPA mobilised the villagers of Sidi B. Men of the community rolled up their sleeves to do the heavy lifting, literally. The women took on the critical role of providing water for the construction site. It was all hands on deck, with everyone contributing in their own way. And together, they built something that no one could have done alone, a school.

The ripple effect

In 2021, they set their plan in motion. The goal: to build three new classrooms for the school at Sidi B. **But this wasn't just about building walls. It was about building ownership, responsibility, and a sense of community.** Local villagers -men, women, young and old- mobilised themselves to work together on the project. Ten men worked daily on the construction, while the women took charge of the water supply. Each person knew they had a stake in this new future. "We didn't just build classrooms," says Mrs. Odile Téri Sawadogo, one of the leaders in the project. "We built a community." And she's right. With external partners and local donations in kind, they raised enough funds to make it happen. But the real success? It was the people of Sidi B who drove the change. They were doing it themselves, in ways that were both practical and personal. APPA's approach, focused on "endogenous development" (meaning development that comes from within a community), has become a model for others in the region, and even the national government of Burkina Faso is taking notice.

From one to many

The future looks bright for Sidi B, but the story doesn't stop here. The community now has the confidence and the know-how to tackle even bigger challenges. Their next goal: to ensure that all their schools, not just one, have the resources and infrastructure they need to thrive in the modern world. And it all started with a single classroom.





Lebohang Mashaila Former Student

From Zero to Tech Hero in Malealea

In Southern Africa, access to technology remains a challenge for many rural communities. For students in Malealea, Lesotho, this gap has meant being left behind in a world increasingly defined by digital skills education.

No signal

Across the country, many schools in the area had no computers, no internet, and no way of bridging the gap to the opportunities that lie beyond their community. Without access to technology, students struggled to apply to universities, write CVs, and explore their world. For teachers, the lack of resources made it difficult to keep up with modern educational demands. According to UNESCO, 463 million children globally lack access to digital learning. Sub-Saharan Africa remains one of the regions where, in places like Malealea, the gap between dreams and reality is widening.



Khotso Au
Project Manager

One lab, 1000 futures

When Malealea Development Trust (MDT) recognised this gap, they knew something had to change. Khotso Au, a project manager at MDT, recalls, *"We were tasked with applying for funding for an ongoing project. When we reviewed the computer centre we had, it was clear that we needed more support."* But the team didn't just want temporary solutions. They were looking for sustainable, long-term change. They turned to Change the Game Academy (CtGA) and took part in a local fundraising training led by Rhiza Babuyile. The training taught them how to effectively communicate their mission and document their needs in a way that would attract support. Armed with this new knowledge, MDT secured funding from Vodacom Lesotho Foundation. The result: a solar-powered computer laboratory, benefiting over 1,000 students across five primary schools and two high schools.

Domino effect

The impact of the new lab is big. *"This lab has allowed me to explore university options and review admission requirements,"* says former student Lebohang Mashaila. *"It also gives us access to information that textbooks alone can't provide, making homework easier and learning more engaging."* Beyond students, the entire community benefits from the lab. Local entrepreneurs are using it to create resumes and apply for jobs, while teachers are receiving digital skills training. *"Job applications are mostly online now. This lab has made things so much easier and cheaper,"* says youth representative Liteboho Rabolets. While there has been success, the journey wasn't easy. MDT is a volunteer-driven organisation, and raising funds while managing other responsibilities was no small task. But their persistence paid off. Looking forward, MDT aims to expand their digital infrastructure to ensure every school in the region has access to the technology that will enable students to succeed in a digital world.

"The training showed us that support can come in many forms, not just financial," says Khotso Au. *"We now know to never underestimate what we can achieve within our own community."*

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AFRICA

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KENYA
TANZANIA
UGANDA



Pumping Life Back Into Sebeta

Chala lives in Sebeta, Ethiopia. One day, while tending cattle, he noticed a fruit hanging from a thorny tree and reached to pick it. As he did, a thorn struck his eye, causing immediate pain. He returned home but chose not to tell his uncle, with whom he lived. Over time, the pain worsened, and he eventually went to an eye clinic in a nearby city. After an examination, doctors confirmed he had lost his sight, a life-changing diagnosis in 2016.

Water under the bridge...

But, at the age of 10, Chala has found hope and opportunity at Sebeta School for Blind Children (SSBC), where he has been thriving ever since. For over 70 years, SSBC has been there for visually impaired children in Ethiopia, providing education, shelter, and care. However, financial challenges have persistently hindered the school's ability to provide essential support for its 246 students, including dormitory accommodation, food, and educational resources. A critical crisis emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, when the school's motor pump, essential for the water supply, malfunctioned. This threatened daily operations, as clean water is vital for hygiene, food preparation, and overall wellbeing. Without immediate action, the school faced severe disruptions.

Turning the tide

Former Principal Berhanu Bobo and the school community refused to let the crisis define them. Drawing on strategies learned from Change the Game Academy's local fundraising training organised by DEC, they took charge of their situation. "The training gave us the tools and confidence to tackle our water crisis head-on," said Berhanu. SSBC developed a strategic plan, instead of relying solely on annual budget from the government, they empowered their students and community to advocate for a new motor pump. The students became powerful ambassadors, sharing their stories to create connections with potential donors. The school also identified key stakeholders, including local businesses and organisations invested in inclusive education. This targeted approach maximised their chances of success.



Big players

SSBC reached out to Awash Bank, a prominent Ethiopian financial institution. Armed with a compelling project proposal and student testimonies, they secured a \$6,000 donation. Within months, a new motor pump was installed, restoring the school's water supply. This success sparked further momentum. Using the "elevator pitch" concept, SSBC attracted additional donations, including 30 white canes valued at \$650, significantly improving students' mobility. Media coverage by Oromia Broadcasting Network amplified the school's visibility, leading to donations of mattresses, bedsheets, and blankets worth over \$1,500. Ethiopia's First Lady, Mrs. Zinash Taya-chew, contributed 100 metal roof sheets and nails for a new storage facility. To ensure long-term sustainability, SSBC launched a small-scale vegetable garden. This initiative not only provides fresh food for students but also demonstrates the power of self-sufficiency.

Looking ahead

Just as Chala found hope at Sebeta School, the school itself has shown that real change starts within the community. By tackling the water crisis through local fundraising and collaboration, Sebeta School turned a significant challenge into an opportunity for (sustaining) growth. Their story is a testament to what can be achieved when a community comes together, proving that solutions don't always have to come from the outside.

The Gifted Community Centre Rewrites the Narrative

A disability isn't something to overcome; it's something to build on. On Karanja Road in Kibera, Nairobi County, Kenya, where life moves quickly and challenges are many, the Gifted Community Centre (GCC) stands as a place of change, where young adults with disabilities are not just surviving, but thriving.



From classmates to changemakers

The Gifted Community Centre is a leadership space for young adults with disabilities, where they are not only trained but also supported, mentored, and encouraged to grow into leaders and role models for themselves and others.

GCC has a unique and inspiring story. Having grown up in Kibera, the founders of GCC, both of whom are persons with disabilities, saw firsthand the challenges faced by others in the disability community among the most vulnerable and excluded groups in society. People with disabilities were often denied access to basic services and opportunities, and the founders knew something had to change. Hellen Mueni, the finance officer, shares that when the organisation started, its two founders were still in secondary school. *"That was back in 2008, though GCC wasn't officially registered until 2018," she explains. "We mentor, educate, inform, empower, and advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities," says Hellen. "As a leadership hub for young people, many of whom are social media-savvy, we focus a lot on advocacy through social media to reach as many people as possible."*

Many hands, lighter work

*"In 2022, we became part of the Nairobi technical working group as the only organisation focusing on persons with disabilities," says **Dennis Kaburu**, a project coordinator at GCC. "We also joined a consortium of organisations advocating for disability rights. To push disability inclusion at all levels and to be able to draft policies, we knew we needed to apply for the Mobilising Support (MS) training by the Kenya Community Development Foundation (KCDF) through Change the Game Academy."*

He adds:

"The training has been a game changer for us, we learned the importance of collaboration with like-minded organisations. We also had a mentor come in who helped us identify gaps in our existing strategic plan. Now, we're working on a new plan that will help us reach even more people."



Local to national

Today, GCC's impact stretches far beyond Kibera. They work across all 13 villages of the slums and have ambassadors in various schools throughout the country. The organisation runs programmes in health, community education, sustainable livelihoods, research, outreach, advocacy, and organisational growth. By the end of 2021, GCC had reached nearly 1,000 people with disabilities, including 400 women, 500 young people, 100 children with disabilities, and 100 caregivers and community members.

They provided services ranging from sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), HIV and COVID-19 prevention, gender-based violence (GBV) awareness, to employability skills and services. What started as a group addressing single issues around disability has grown into a powerful coalition that now tackles multiple intersections of disability, race, gender, and sexual orientation. They're no longer just raising awareness for individual disabilities, they're working as a united front to create long-lasting, inclusive change.

A Heartfelt Challenge: a Cardiac Institute in Kilimanjaro

Heart disease severely impacts children and young adults in Northern Tanzania, where specialized cardiac care is concentrated in urban centers like Dar es Salaam. Rural populations in Kilimanjaro, Arusha, Manyara, and Tanga must often travel over 500 kilometers for treatment, facing long journeys, high costs, and limited access to doctors. This de-lays or denies life-saving care, underscoring the urgent need for local solutions.

Filling the gap

In response to this need, Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Centre (KCMC) -a 720-bed teaching hospital- launched a bold initiative to establish Northern Tanzania's first cardiovascular center. Backed by local leaders and international partners, the center will provide care to millions and serve as a hub for training cardiac professionals across the region. At the heart of this movement are individuals committed to change, including KCMC staff members Joel Massawe and Robert Mtawa. After attending Change the Game Academy's Local Fundraising and Mobilizing Support training organized by FCS in 2023, they returned with a renewed sense of purpose.

Changing the game

Planning for the KCMC Cardiovascular Centre is underway, with ambition to open in 2026. The center will be equipped with catheterization labs, operating theaters, and hybrid surgical spaces. It will also host a structured training program to build a national cardiac team—currently in progress through three-year fellowships in Dar es Salaam and India. Partners like the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation, ZGT-Overzee Foundation, and the American College of Cardiology are providing vital support.



From outsiders to insiders

One of the most transformative outcomes of this initiative is the shift in mindset in the approach of funding. Local ownership and participation are now at the center of the effort. To close the funding gap estimated at approximately \$2.5 million KCMC launched the KCMC Marathon, a regional fundraising and awareness event held in July 2024. The goal was to raise \$85,000 through local businesses, professionals, and community contributors. Eventually they were able to raise \$74,142. The response has been overwhelmingly positive: “This isn’t just about building a hospital wing,” explains Robert Mtawa.

“It’s about building a movement - people who believe we can create something meaningful and lasting, together.”

For families across the region, the promise of local care brings more than medical hope, it brings emotional relief. “My younger brother has lived with a heart condition since birth,” shares Zawadi, a university student in Moshi. “We’ve spent years saving for every trip to Dar. When I heard about KCMC’s plans, I felt hope for the first time. Even though the center isn’t open yet, knowing it’s coming lifts a burden we’ve carried for so long.”

A vision for Africa

The strength of this initiative lies in its foundation of partnerships - between hospitals, communities, ministries, and international allies. With support from the Foundation for Cardiovascular Care in Africa (FCCA), and collaboration with local stakeholders, KCMC is creating a replicable model for other regions. The dream is ambitious: not only to open one center but to eventually establish three cardiovascular training centers across Africa. By investing in people, infrastructure, and knowledge, this initiative aims to permanently shift how cardiac care is accessed and delivered. KCMC’s story proves that when local action meets global collaboration, transformational change is possible. While the cardiovascular center is still under construction, the momentum it has created is already changing lives and redefining what healthcare can look like.



“Before the training, we thought fundraising meant looking outside,” says Joel Massawe. “Now, we understand that the power to change must come from within.”

The Ugandan Batwa sewing project: Stitching a New Life

The Batwa, a forgotten community in Uganda, are finding new hope through a sewing project that brings skills, pride, and a sense of purpose.

The Batwa community is known to be among the most marginalized indigenous communities of Uganda. The Batwa, once forest-dwelling hunter-gatherers, were evicted from their ancestral land in the 1990s when the government turned their forests into national parks for gorilla conservation. This displacement stripped the Batwa of their land, livelihoods, and cultural identity.

A struggle for survival

Today, the Batwa community faces extreme poverty, social exclusion, and limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Many Batwa families live on the fringes of society. It is difficult for them to integrate into mainstream Ugandan society. For Batwa women and girls, the situation is more challenging. Cultural norms limit their roles, and without income-generating skills, they remain dependent on external aid.

Now it was time to break this cycle of poverty and ensure sustainable development.

Learning to fundraise

In 2023, three members of KADOLHA, an organization supporting orphans and children with HIV/AIDS, attended a Local Fundraising training by the Uganda National NGO Forum (UNNGOF). It enabled KADOLHA to mobilize resources within the community and reduce reliance on external funding. Inspired by this training, they launched a series of local fundraising campaigns over the next six months. The team utilised diverse strategies to encourage contributions, such as organising public meetings, holding awareness events, and sharing the project's impact story on local radio stations.



The Batwa are taking ownership

The Batwa community rallied behind the cause, contributing in-kind donations of sewing materials, fabric, food, and clothing. Their efforts resulted in a successful campaign, matched by UNNGOF. With these funds KADOLHA acquired 21 sewing machines. To ensure community ownership, they held an orientation meeting with board members, local council leaders, and head teachers. This meeting generated additional funds. Several dialogues to involve all stakeholders from the outset, resulted in numerous community contributions, including pledges of two sewing machines and sewing tools for four months of training for the learners. Market visits resulted in the sale of 82 reusable pads and the donation of a sewing machine and two rolls of fabric, with a local shop owner providing a free three-month training program for quality pad production.

From threads to triumph

The initiative has transformed the lives of the Murubindi Batwa Group members and their families. With their new skills, the group has made over 450 reusable sanitary pads, generating an income for members. The increased production capacity has also created new opportunities. The Kalengyere Teenage Mothers' Group won a contract to produce uniforms for the Mothers' Union, further boosting their income. The initiative has benefited 119 households, impacting approximately 476 individuals. Families now have a stable source of income, enabling them to purchase food, cover daily expenses, and sow school uniforms for their children. Beyond economic benefits, the project has created a strong support system within the community, fostering solidarity and collaboration among members.

"Sometimes, fundraising is not about money. In-kind resources can be just what you need. Change the Game Academy changed my thinking about fundraising. I thought that fundraising could only be done from rich countries, but now I know that it can also be done successfully locally."

Andrewm Buhungiro
KADOLHA - Uganda



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Seeds of Change: Empowering Rural Resilience in Satara

Amidst the landscapes of Maharashtra's Satara district, a quiet but powerful transformation unfolded, highlighting the critical need to support farmers and rural women in India.

According to the 2011 Census, approximately 69% of India's population resides in rural areas, and women represent nearly 48% of rural workers. Despite their crucial contributions, farmers and rural women frequently face significant economic hardships, limited market access, and environmental vulnerabilities intensified by climate change.

About the changemaker

Recognizing these challenges, Action for Women and Rural Development (AWARD), founded and led by Advocate Nilima Kadam, has championed the cause of rural women and farmers since 2001, firmly believing that meaningful global change must begin with local actions.

In November 2021, AWARD embraced this belief by participating in a Local Fundraising (LFR) training organized by Smile Foundation under the Change the Game Academy. The training, rich with practical exercises and experiential learning, **empowered AWARD's** members with skills such as donor profiling, elevator pitches, and case development. Manjusha Khedkar, Programme Coordinator at AWARD, recalls the training as: *"The mentorship we received not only equipped us with fundraising skills but also gave us the confidence to engage our local community meaningfully."*

From local goods to lasting good

It didn't take long before the first fundraising project was set in motion: AWARD organized a two-day Food Festival event in Satara in May 2022. It was a fundraiser that went hand in hand with community building. Farmers and women from local tribal communities came together, proudly showcasing their farm produce and handmade products like ghee, honey, pickles, and papads. The collective efforts resulted in an astonishing economic upliftment; while AWARD invested \$313 in organizing the event, it impressively raised \$1,506 through generous contributions from local individuals including IT professionals, doctors, and lawyers.

But the real triumph belonged to the farmers themselves, who astonishingly earned up to Rs. 600,000 (\$7100,-) by selling their products. The event didn't just raise funds—it strengthened community bonds, and most importantly, restored dignity and self-reliance among the local farmers and women.



She who sows, grows

"I felt an enormous sense of pride seeing our farmers smile with dignity as they successfully sold their products," shared Manjusha. Advocate Nilima Kadam reflected on this journey, emphasizing, "While we cannot single-handedly solve global issues like climate change, we have witnessed firsthand how impactful small, local actions can be. It's about empowering ordinary people to realize they have the power to create extraordinary change."

For AWARD, the Food Festival proved what they already believed: real change starts local. With practical tools from Smile Foundation's training, they didn't just raise funds, they set an example. One that others are now beginning to follow.

Not just football: a Charity Cup to promote inclusivity

Imagine wanting to learn but having to walk for hours to the nearest school, skip meals, or quit school just to help your family survive. This is the reality for many children in Cambodia.

An organisation trying to overcome these challenges is the Indochina Starfish Foundation or commonly known as ISF Cambodia. Established 18 years ago, ISF supports Cambodian children's right to quality education. Through education, football, and community projects, ISF builds foundations for learning and helps families overcome poverty related challenges.

On November 3, 2024, the 3rd ISF Charity Football Cup took place at the ISF Sports Ground in Phnom Penh, bringing together football enthusiasts from private companies, schools, and the local community as well as spectators. The charity match was more than just a game — it celebrated how sport can build life skills, promote inclusion, and develop leadership in vulnerable children. It supports ISF's football tournament and education programs, which helps over 4,000 kids each year, including girls and children with disabilities.



Not only shooting for goals

The idea was born after ISF joined a 2024 Local Fundraising (LFR) training program hosted by the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC). Inspired by the course, ISF launched the Charity Football Cup as a community-driven fundraising event. Ms. Sin Putheary, Executive Director of CCC, emphasized the power of grassroots support: *“Contributions and donations are sincere resources for sustainable development. We encourage the community to participate in social events like this because it not only strengthens community bonds but also improves support for Cambodian children.”*, she says.

“Each team of 15 participants contributed \$250 to join the event, forming the core of our fundraising model. Second to that, an online campaign across social media helped boost donations. The result? An incredible \$11,025 was raised to support the cause.”, says Chourp Vicheka, Executive Director of ISF.

She expressed her gratitude and excitement for the growing support. *“At the event we have seen the strength of the football teams, not only about shooting for goals but also the mindsets to support the communities,”* she stated. *“This is our third year. We started with 13 teams. This year, 17 teams and 255 players took part. The growth is incredible.”*



Private companies care

Mr. Dave Ulmer, Executive Director of CBS, shared his enthusiasm for joining ISF’s charity football tournament. *“We are happy to participate in this football tournament. Education is crucial to building a nation, and we all have a responsibility to promote it.”* He also encouraged private companies and institutions to contribute to ISF’s impactful work in education and sport. Looking forward, ISF aims to expand the Charity Football Cup next year, inviting more groups and community members to join and help build a brighter future for Cambodian children through education and foot-ball.

How to become a champion in sustainable development?

Sri Lanka's Sahana Social Development Alliance would know they deserved the title 'champion' when they went in the ring. With just a bit of training they fought the traditional top-down system in funding.

Funding on our own terms

For seven years, Sahana Social Development Alliance (SSDA) fought an uphill battle to secure the funding they needed to support their important community projects. Despite their best efforts, many initiatives were either delayed or scaled down due to limited resources. It became clear that relying on international donors wasn't sustainable. Something had to change, SSDA needed a new approach to secure the long-term future of their work. SSDA's approach was rooted in local action. As a network of nine community based organisations, SSDA works with women, youth, children, and marginalized groups, including differently-abled individuals, families of missing persons, and those affected by substance addiction. These groups, who have long been underserved, wanted to become active participants in their own development.



From donor-dependent to DIY

The turning point came when SSDA participated in a local fundraising training organised by The Institute for Monitoring & Evaluation (TiME). The training was an eye-opener. *“We realised that sustainable development won’t happen if we keep waiting for outside help,”* says Chamodi Kaushalya, SSDA’s Head of Projects. After the training, SSDA developed a plan to become financially self-sufficient. Instead of asking for donations to fund one-off projects, they decided to invest in assets that would generate income for the organisation in the long term. They presented the idea to their main donor, who was initially hesitant but ultimately agreed to contribute \$45,000. With this funding, SSDA and its members purchased great assets: buffet sets, 100 chairs per organisation, coffee machines, and sound systems. These items could now be rented out to generate a steady income stream.

A sustainable business model

The income generated from their investments is now empowering the communities they serve. *“We’re no longer reliant on the traditional donor model,”* explains Chamodi Kaushalya. *“Our member organisations are now equipped to raise their own funds and make decisions about their own projects.”* The next step is to further build sustainable, long-term fundraising mechanisms that can ensure the continuity of SSDA’s and its members’ work:

‘Our overall fundraising capacity has grown significantly,’ says Chamodi. “Before the training, we didn’t know how to do it professionally. Our efforts were ad hoc. Now, we have the tools and confidence to plan for the future.”

The SSDA has demonstrated that with the right strategies and a little innovation, it is possible to become a champion and fight for an autonomous society in Sri Lanka





Empowering Rural Cambodia: How Village Support Group is Transforming Lives

In Cambodia's rural provinces, agriculture supports nearly a third of the population. However, changing weather patterns and limited resources challenge livelihoods, making the future uncertain for many families who rely on the land. Village Support Group (VSG) empowers farmers and marginalized communities to face these challenges together.

Change must start with us

VSG is a grassroots organization supporting Cambodian farmers and rural communities. Led by Oknang Pichitra, a passionate advocate for local development, VSG believes real change begins at the community level. "We cannot wait for large-scale policies to reach the most vulnerable," Pichitra says. *"Change must start with us."*

VSG builds local capacity by helping farmers adopt organic practices, conserve water, and explore new livelihoods such as poultry farming and beekeeping. Women are empowered to lead village savings groups, and communities receive training in disaster preparedness to better manage floods and droughts. Under Pichitra's leadership, VSG promotes sustainable agriculture, disaster resilience, and financial empowerment—equipping communities with the tools to drive their own transformation.

Knowledge is a lifesaver

After attending a Mobilising Support training, offered by the Advocacy and Policy Institute (API), community members created action plans, learned fishery law and conflict resolution, and improved advocacy and communication with local authorities. Digital literacy, including social media and ICT tools, also helped strengthen community organization and outreach.

“Alone, change is slow, but together, we create a movement,” says Li Roth, a VSG trainer. He reflects on the success of the training, which has helped communities connect with local decisionmakers, advancing both environmental and development goals.

Mr. Hor Sam Ath, a fishery community member, highlights the changes in his everyday life: *“I am very thankful to VSG, donors, and authorities for their support in protecting the conservation area of our fishery community. The number of fish has increased, and community members now have better access to fish during the rainy season. This has improved our living standards, and the fish population continues to grow each year.”*, he says.



Looking Ahead

Despite challenges such as limited funding, VSG remains committed to longterm impact. With strong partnerships and a focus on local leadership, VSG is expanding its work. The organization plans to integrate digital literacy, especially among youth, to ensure continued community resilience and innovation. With continued support and a shared vision for inclusive development, VSG proves that small, strategic changes at the local level can overcome global challenges.



Restoring dignity for Indonesia's Forgotten Children

Every year, millions of children in low-income countries die from treatable conditions—not because medicine doesn't exist, but because healthcare remains out of reach. In Indonesia, where 1 in 3* children in remote areas lack access to basic medical care, this injustice is compounded by geography and poverty. For children with cleft lips or post-surgical needs, exclusion can be lifelong. But in Bali, an NGO named Kolewa Harapan Indonesia ("Circle of Hope") refused to accept this fate.

Kolewa Harapan Indonesia's shelter for vulnerable children was at capacity. Eleven children slept on torn mattresses, while others awaited life-changing surgeries their families could never afford. *"Foreign donations were unpredictable," recalls Ni Luh Juliani - known by the nickname Anna- the organization's chairperson. "We needed a sustainable solution—one our community could own."*

Turning meals into medical funds

Through Change the Game Academy's local fundraising training organised by Satunama, Kolewa Harapan Indonesia gained more than skills — they gained a strategy. Leveraging local networks they partnered with ACK (a fried chicken vendor) to sell 1,000 coupons through direct outreach to personal networks and acquaintances. This way, they turned meals into medical funds. Through a digital crowd-funding campaign on Kitabisa.com - Indonesia's top giving platform - , they touched the hearts of donors by sharing stories of children born with a cleft lip and were able to raise IDR 150 millions (which equals 9.126 USD)





In just 6 months, Kolewa Harapan Indonesia purchased 11 new mattresses, in order to support their shelter home, which can accommodate up to 26 patients and their guardians (52 people in total). This helps the children feel more comfortable during the recovery phase. The organization was also able to fund three (3) cleft lip surgeries, transforming lives (and futures) for many kids.

"All they want is healing for our children. They never get bored of helping the children who need help"

said Silvina Suryati, one of the child companions who became a beneficiary of Kolewa Harapan Indonesia.

"The funds we raised locally may seem small compared to foreign donations, but they represent our first steps toward sustainability," said Anna.

Sustainable change starts when communities write their own solutions. Kolewa Harapan's success demonstrated how local fundraising can address immediate needs and how community-based approaches can create sustainable impact.

*<https://indonesia.ureport.in/>
(UNICEF Indonesia, 2022; World Bank, 2023)



Who Run the World? These Women

Women's rights are facing a global backlash; rising discrimination, shrinking legal protections, and dwindling funding are threatening decades of progress. In Sri Lanka's rural communities, where conservative traditions often suppress the potential of women, Muslim women face a stark reality: exclusion from education, economic opportunities, and decision-making spaces. But, the Women's Development Organization (WDO) saw a different future, one where women could unite, advocate, and thrive.

From talk to walk

In Sri Lanka, the Asian Muslim Women's Union (AMWU) had existed informally for years. However, without formal recognition, their influence was limited, and their voices were not heard. The greatest hurdle they faced was the scepticism of religious leaders, who questioned the role of women's collectives. *"Many believed women's unions were unnecessary,"* recalls Ilmunisa Mohamed Nizmy, WDO leader. The lack of recognition stifled progress and community acceptance, but this did not stop the WDO. They knew change would not come easily, so they turned to Change the Game Academy's Mobilizing Support Training for solutions. This training, filled with practical strategies and real-world advice, equipped WDO with the tools they needed to move forward. They launched a 35-day campaign to raise awareness and mobilize support for the AMWU. Women volunteers went door-to-door in their communities, explaining how collective action could improve lives and livelihoods. They also held meetings with local religious leaders, explaining how the union could support community development, not challenge tradition. Through this approach, the WDO was able to build trust and form crucial alliances.



Stronger than yesterday

The impact of their efforts was immediate. The AMWU was officially registered as a civil society organization, allowing them access to funding and a wider range of programs. The previously sceptical religious leaders, seeing the positive impact on the community, became vocal supporters. They publicly endorsed the AMWU, highlighting its role in addressing education and poverty alleviation. *“When we invest in grassroots women’s leadership, we don’t just transform communities, we redefine what’s possible,”* says Ilmunnisa Mohamed Nizmy. The membership of the AMWU grew. Twenty women joined the union, many of whom came from outside the village. In collaboration with other organizations, they learned the tools to empower themselves and their communities. These women took their new skills back to their villages, launching social change initiatives and engaging other women in local projects. The real change, however, was not just in the number of women involved. The members of the AMWU began negotiating with local authorities for access to essential services, such as education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, conversations that were once unthinkable for women in their community.



The future is female, and it's here

The Women’s Development Organization’s work in Sri Lanka is a model of grassroots empowerment. They have shown that when women unite and work together, they can achieve lasting, transformative change. Their work continues to gain momentum. Their efforts to build women’s leadership, challenge outdated norms, and create lasting social change have set a powerful example for others to follow. In Sri Lanka, and beyond, their story is a testament to the power of women who dare to stand up, take up space and make their voices heard.

Breaking Taboos

Globally, autism affects approximately 1 in every 100 children, according to the World Health Organization, but in Nepal, this issue is magnified. With minimal awareness, limited diagnostic resources, and little access to specialized education, many families endure social exclusion and stigma.

Waiting is overrated

Autism affects roughly 3 out of every 1,000 children in rural Nepal, and without the proper support, these children are often left behind in their communities, deprived of the opportunity to engage and thrive. While global change remains slow, efforts like those in Pokhara, Nepal, are demonstrating how small, community-led actions can have a lasting impact. In 2019, Autism Care Society Gandaki (ACSG) was founded by a group of parents, including Mukunda Lamsal, whose own child is autistic.

For Mukunda, the motivation was deeply personal. “ACSG is a need-based organisation,” he says. “Our mission is to create a society where children with autism can live independently and be respected, supported by a community that accepts them.” ACSG wasn’t founded on abstract ideas or policy debates, it was born from the daily struggles and desires of a father who wanted better for his child and others like him.





A confidence boost

Turning their vision into reality was never going to be easy. In the beginning, ACSG relied heavily on external funding, but they quickly realized that for their work to have lasting impact, they would need to become more self-sufficient. This led them to Change the Game Academy, where they participated in the Local Fundraising and Mobilizing Support training organised by NCID.

“CtGA’s training helped us identify the right people, plan effectively, and it gave us the confidence to keep going,” says Mukunda. “It made us more sustainable.”

Money talks, kids walk

Equipped with the skills from the training, ACSG set out to raise the funds needed to support their programs. They organized various fundraising events, from food stalls to T-shirt sales, and raised an impressive \$12,000 (NPR 1,200,000), far exceeding their initial goal of \$4,000. But the financial success was just the beginning. The real impact was seen in the community. Since 2021, ACSG has seen a steady increase in enrollment, with over 60 children and adolescents benefitted from their daycare programs in 2023-2024.

The transformation in children’s lives has been remarkable. “One of our kids, Arav, joined in the 16th batch,” says Parbati Shrestha, ACSG’s in-charge. “He used to be shy and avoided eye contact. Now, he plays with friends, communicates better, and is progressing academically.” Similar success stories are shared by other families. “My daughter used to be shy, restless, and non-responsive,” says Dhan Raj Gaut. “Since she started coming here, she now responds when we communicate and focuses better.” For many parents, seeing their children thrive is the greatest success.

The future is inclusive

Looking to the future, ACSG has big plans. “Our dream is for autism to no longer be seen as a barrier,” says Mukunda. “We want the government to be more responsive to the needs of these children.” To achieve this, ACSG is expanding its outreach, aiming to train teachers, healthcare providers, and civil society members across Gandaki to improve awareness and care for those with autism. ACSG continues to grow, and so does the movement for dignity, respect, and inclusion for people with autism in Nepal.

"While we cannot single-handedly solve global issues like climate change, we have witnessed firsthand how impactful and transformative small, local actions can be. It's about empowering ordinary people to realize that they have the power to create extraordinary change".

NILIMA KADAM - ACTION FOR WOMEN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (AWARD) - INDIA

Be Part of the Change

Over the past 10 years, Change the Game Academy has empowered thousands of changemakers across the globe to build stronger, more independent civil society organizations. Our journey is just beginning and you can help shape what comes next.

Here's how you can get involved:

- **Donors:** Invest in sustainable impact. Your contribution helps us reach more grassroots organizations and strengthen local fundraising skills where they're needed most.
- **Participants:** Start learning online or through our classroom courses. Look at our website for upcoming training in your country.
- **Alumni:** Share your story, become a local ambassador, or mentor new changemakers. Your experience is a powerful tool to inspire and grow our community.
- **Everyone:** Follow, like, and share our work. Every click helps spread the word and amplify the voices of those creating real change.



Let's co-create the next decade of impact.
Join the movement.
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