



# The Future is Collective: Case Studies of Collective Social Innovation

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→ **Cover Image:** Amazon Sacred Headwaters Alliance, Ecuador  
**Images:** Getty Images

# Introduction

Collective social innovators are cross-sector leaders who lead, orchestrate or facilitate groups or networks of organizations addressing societal challenges.

Since 1998, the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship has recognized social entrepreneurs and innovators around the globe developing outstanding models and approaches to solving the world's greatest challenges. These awards are given to leaders, recognizing the unique talents and skills that social entrepreneurs and innovators bring to their work. Today, the Schwab Foundation's network encompasses 500 leaders positively influencing the lives of 900 million people across the globe.

These awards shine a light on the growing importance of social innovation in achieving systemic change. However, this approach has a blind spot. In many cases of social innovation, the recognition of visionary individuals can unintentionally obscure the more patient and less public role of collectives in social innovation. Collectives are assemblages of citizens, communities and colleagues who innovate together, often in a distinctly co-creative manner that does not distinguish the innovations of a single individual or leader.

Recognizing that this type of social innovation plays an outsized role in the development of social change, in 2022, the Schwab Foundation decided to expand its award types to include the Collective Social Innovation Award. In the last three years, the Schwab Foundation has awarded this designation to 21 innovators representing 11 collective social innovation organizations.

This case study book highlights the efforts of these awardees, recognizing the unique approaches that collectives are using to develop and promote social innovation.

## What is collective social innovation?

Today's social challenges are increasingly interconnected and complex. In a rapidly changing world, it is no longer feasible for single organizations to tackle systemic issues in isolation. Rather, there must be ways of working together that overcome historical divides, such as scientific disciplines, industries and sectors, cultural divisions, and geographic borders.

The Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship defines collective social innovators as cross-sector leaders who lead or facilitate groups or networks of organizations committed to addressing a bigger problem than what individual organizations can take on. This definition highlights models that seek to overcome social inequalities, while incorporating the perspectives and needs of excluded and marginalized groups as well as vulnerable ecosystems. Finally, these approaches are distinct from scaling programmatic interventions and are best suited to achieving large-scale systemic change.

Despite the urgent need for collective innovation, collective approaches are not new. Historian Yuval Noah Harari writes, "[Humans] rule the world not because we are so wise, but because we are the only animals that can cooperate flexibly in large numbers."<sup>1</sup> The archetype of the lone innovator is actually a relatively new one. Collective approaches to social change have been prevalent throughout human history, with small changes accruing over time as communities and groups share information, build upon promising ideas, and collaborate to solve problems.

While collective action is not new, the size and complexity of social challenges has grown immeasurably. Contemporary problems, with greater interconnectedness between geographies and disciplines, require innovation with forms of organizing that can incorporate more diverse perspectives and bridge conventional divisions. Collective social innovation is growing in importance for solving large-scale challenges, and it is important to understand and celebrate these approaches as they evolve to meet current needs.

## Why feature case studies of collective social innovation?

In this book, you will find **10 case studies of collective social innovation** from around the world. These initiatives are exceptionally diverse, representing a range of constituencies, geographies, impact themes and strategies. In spite of this diversity, they are united in their commitment to fully representing a multitude of perspectives and approaches, rather than elevating single solutions and organizations.

1. Harari, Y. N. (2024). *Nexus*. Penguin Random House.

These case studies have been developed with the aim of addressing some key barriers to collective action:

- **First, collective social innovation approaches are not as readily understood as programmatic or organizational innovation.** Some of the key aspects of the work may be overlooked by prospective partners, funders and policy-makers. These case studies dive deeply into the detail of each initiative, with the hope that the work will be better clarified and understood by potential stakeholders.
- **Second, collective social innovation requires new skills and mindsets, as well as new ways of measuring impact.** Collective social innovators display a significant emphasis on building connections and facilitating shared narratives across groups. By bridging groups across disciplines and geographies, these innovators are able to share knowledge widely about what is working while elevating promising practices. They are also able to assemble data that supports effective policies and financing. This type of work is different from promoting a single organizational model and requires a shift from proprietary ownership models to sharing models. It also requires standing back from the limelight and elevating the work of others. While these skills and mindsets are beneficial for systems change, they can make it harder to quantify and attribute impact.
- **Third, collective social innovation requires different types of engagement from stakeholders.** Collective social innovators are committed to a collective outcome, rather than a specific programme or organization. In nearly all cases, initiatives have modified their strategies significantly over time, matching their approaches to the shifting landscape and new opportunities. They are constantly in learning mode, seeking to continuously improve rather than stick to rigid plans. Supportive stakeholders, therefore, should bring a level of flexibility and openness, with a commitment to learning alongside these innovators.

## Key themes in this case study collection

In this collection, readers will find a number of key learnings that have helped the Schwab Foundation understand the work of collective social innovation. These themes include:

- **Collective social innovators construct collective architectures to mobilize vast constituencies:** The case studies show how each collective is composed of a collective architecture that enables the representation and participation of hundreds of thousands – and in some cases millions – of people.

In most instances, there are three distinct layers: the **action layer** (groups which carry out grassroots activities by enabling the participation of constituents), the **network layer** (the connective tissue which links these groups to each other over geographies), and the **supporting layer** (the administrative team which supports the work over time).

- **Collective social innovators develop collective pathways that keep groups working and learning together:** The case studies also show the collective pathways that these innovators develop to ensure a common vision, principles, methods and practices for groups to work together. These pathways provide a means for groups to journey together, seeing their work as part of a coordinated rather than isolated effort.
- **Collective social innovators conduct collective activities that ensure alignment and momentum for change:** The case studies provides detailed examples of a range of collective activities that initiatives conduct to align groups and keep them motivated to carry out their work. These activities are also designed to grow broader ecosystems that pave the way for more collective action, including supportive policies and financing. They are grouped into five activity areas: 1) movement building, 2) strengthening data systems, 3) influencing institutions, 4) hosting learning communities and 5) investing in systemic solutions.
- **Collective social innovators establish supportive infrastructure that sustains collective action:** Finally, the case studies describe the administrative aspects of the work, including governance and participation, team culture and competencies, and enabling technology. While this work is conducted “behind the scenes”, it is critical to ensuring that collective action can be maintained even as the landscape is shifting and changing.

## The future is collective

In a rapidly evolving world, championing collective action has never been more crucial. The social challenges humanity faces today – including climate change, conflict proliferation, global pandemics, racial inequities and economic inequality – cannot be solved within narrow geographic boundaries or specific sectors and industries. At the same time, the rapid rise of new technologies offers promise for greater collaboration as well as the potential for greater division.

The Schwab Foundation invites you to learn alongside these initiatives and consider how you might use these lessons to support collective action in your area of interest. Humanity’s most unique skill is developing new ways to collaborate across ever larger groups; the time to harness this talent to its full potential is now.

# The case studies at a glance

## 01 Amazon Sacred Headwaters Alliance



### Protecting 86 million acres of bio-culturally rich rainforests on behalf of the planet

The Amazon Sacred Headwaters Alliance (ASHA) is an Indigenous-led coalition that brings together 30 Indigenous nations representing 700,000 Indigenous People residing in the headwaters of the Amazon River. Prior to ASHA's formation, these nations were fragmented by national borders and exploitation by multinational companies. This initiative marks the first time in history that such a large number of Indigenous nations have come together for a single cause. ASHA conducts regeneration and reforestation projects, advocacy against extractive industries, legal action in support of Indigenous sovereignty, and education to promote economic activities and environmental leadership. ASHA and its constituencies are currently in the process of enacting its Bioregional Plan, which calls for a series of pathways that will protect the Amazon as a vital organ of the planet's biosphere.

## 02 Community Solutions



### Creating a future in which homelessness is solvable, not inevitable

Community Solutions is a non-profit organization building a movement called Built for Zero to create a lasting end to homelessness. The organization works with communities to go beyond managing homelessness to solving the problem, ensuring that when people do experience homelessness, it is rare, brief and nonrecurring. To realize this vision, communities within the Built for Zero movement follow a shared methodology to work towards ending homelessness in their place-based communities. Community Solutions' network currently includes 142 communities in the US and 103 international communities in five countries. Since 2011, 44 communities have measurably reduced homelessness, and 15 communities have made homelessness rare and brief for veterans and/or individuals experiencing chronic homelessness.

## 03 Financing Alliance for Health



### Strengthening and sustaining community health systems through multistakeholder partnerships

The Financing Alliance for Health (FAH) is an Africa-based, African-led entity that convenes governments, donors, private sector companies and communities to address systemic financing challenges to scaling primary and community health programmes at country, regional and global levels. FAH bridges the worlds of health and finance to enable new and additional investments in health systems with community health at their core. Since its inception, FAH has mobilized close to \$660 million towards primary and community health efforts. Additionally, FAH has supported the recognition and institutionalization of more than 450,000 community health workers (CHWs).

## 04 MapBiomias



### Producing free, open and interactive land use maps for tropical forests worldwide

MapBiomias was founded in 2015 as a collaborative initiative in Brazil to use advanced technology and data to monitor land use and cover changes across the country. Today, MapBiomias supports 20+ geographic and thematic initiatives across the world producing maps with precision and speed that would have been unfeasible and prohibitively expensive in the past. By integrating satellite imagery, machine learning (ML), cloud computing and contributions from universities, civil society and technology start-ups, MapBiomias initiatives provide detailed, annual reports on deforestation, agricultural expansion and other transformations in natural landscapes. Its comprehensive datasets are crucial for understanding the impacts of human activities on ecosystems and provide an essential tool for policy-makers, researchers and environmental advocates.

## 05 ProjectTogether



### Creating a new “operating model” for social change

ProjectTogether is based on the idea that society needs a new “operating model” to work collaboratively to solve its most pressing challenges. ProjectTogether started in 2015 as a grassroots social incubator and in 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, ProjectTogether co-organized #WirVsVirus, mobilizing citizens, business and government to develop solutions to challenges arising from the pandemic. This virtual hackathon brought together 28,361 citizens and generated 1,498 solutions in just 48 hours. ProjectTogether has since codified a new “operating model” for mobilizing cross-sector alliances, bringing together hundreds of actors to address significant social challenges. Today, ProjectTogether has applied this approach to 10 themes – including shortage of skilled workers and green jobs, arrival processes for refugees and migrants, circular economy, regenerative agriculture and food systems, and more – while mobilizing more than 100,000 citizens in 3,000 organizations.

## 06 Shikshagraha



### Mobilizing a people’s education movement dedicated to improving 1 million public schools in India

Shikshagraha is a nationwide movement in India ensuring that every child completes their education in a community-led, locally-empowered public school system that values and enhances their potential. The collective promotes simple but powerful “micro-improvements” – ideas that build on what already exists in schools and classrooms through a process of continuous improvement. The movement began in the state of Punjab where, in four years, micro-improvements led by schools themselves lifted Punjab’s state results from the lower half of all 28 states to ranking first in the entire country. Encouraged by these results, two more statewide collectives were set up in 2022. Building on these efforts, Shikshagraha aims to reach 1 million public schools, impacting over 150 million school-age children in India.

## 07 StreetNet International



### Strengthening the rights of street vendors, market vendors, hawkers and cross-border traders as the backbone of local economies

StreetNet International is an autonomous and democratic alliance representing street vendors, market vendors, hawkers and cross-border traders around the world. Street vendors play a significant role in the worldwide economy, providing essential goods and services at affordable prices, particularly in the Global South. Yet, as informal workers, these vendors face numerous challenges, such as inadequate infrastructure, harassment from authorities, risk of eviction and unfair taxation. In just over two decades, the organization has grown to incorporate 62 affiliate members in 55 countries on four continents, representing 916,015 informal economy workers worldwide. StreetNet also collaborates with other informal workers’ organizations, including WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing). Today, StreetNet has strengthened the leadership and organizing skills of its member organizations while successfully advocating for policies that recognize and protect street vendors at local and national levels worldwide.

## 08 StriveTogether



### Building civic infrastructure to put more young people on the path to economic mobility

StriveTogether expands economic mobility for children by improving cradle-to-career outcomes through a network of “place-based partnerships”: initiatives that connect nonprofit organizations, businesses, schools, philanthropy and more. Place-based partnerships use quantitative and qualitative data to uncover the root causes of inequitable and depressed outcomes for children and families. They then identify successful practices to address those root causes and scale them to achieve broader policy change. StriveTogether has worked with network members to codify its methodology, which has been rigorously evaluated to show its efficacy. Today, StriveTogether brings together 70 partnerships in 29 states representing 7,000 organizations, collectively reaching nearly 14 million youth across the US.

## 09 Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement



### Ending poverty in all of its forms

Tamarack supports individuals and communities to change systems to end poverty, create sustainable and equitable climate transitions, inspire a sense of belonging and community, and improve opportunities with and for youth. Tamarack began in the 1990s, and then grew in 2002, when 13 cities in Canada committed to embarking on a 10-year journey to explore a collaborative, cross-sector approach to poverty reduction. When this effort exceeded its goals, the network began to grow rapidly with Tamarack applying its proven approach to three additional issue areas: belonging, climate transitions and youth futures. Each of these issue areas has grown into a network of local collaboratives bringing together different sectors and individuals to implement large-scale change initiatives in their cities. A total of 39,000 changemakers around the world belong to Tamarack's learning network and use Tamarack's resources, consulting and coaching services to collaborate on community-driven outcomes.

## 10 vartaLeap Coalition

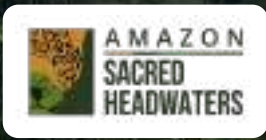


### Nurturing inside-out youth leadership in India

The vartaLeap Coalition was formed in 2019 to grow understanding and strategy for youth leadership and development in India. The coalition initially started with 40 organizations and has now grown to over 150 members. The coalition aims to build vibrant and empowered spaces that nurture the leadership potential of young people to transform themselves and society. Building on Gandhi's mobilization of youth during the Indian independence movement, vartaLeap aims to understand young people as more than just assets, consumers and workers, and rather as individuals in society whose well-being is linked to that of the community around them. Every year, at least 150,000 young people are engaged through deeply transformative leadership experiences centred on well-being, gender equality, climate action and constitutional values.



Collective Action Convening 2024



COLLECTIVE ACTION CASE STUDY

# Amazon Sacred Headwaters Alliance

Protecting 86 million acres of bio-culturally rich rainforests on behalf of the planet

**Year founded** 2017

**Groups assembled** 30 Indigenous nations

**Regions represented** 86 million acres across Ecuador and Peru

**Organizations involved** 28 member organizations of which 25 are Indigenous-led

**Entity type** Originally fiscal sponsored by Pachamama Alliance, now also an independent non-profit organization

**Constituents represented** 700,000 Indigenous People residing in the bioregion

## Background

Recent scientific studies have shown that the Amazon rainforest is critical to maintaining the planet’s climatic equilibrium. The Amazon stores over 150 billion tonnes of carbon<sup>2</sup> and generates atmospheric vapour that regulates weather and rainfall patterns around the world. Yet, extractive industries in the region are contributing to high rates of deforestation and biodiversity loss that will cause catastrophic global disruption if not reversed. The Ecuadorian and Peruvian governments have so far made insufficient commitments to protect Amazonian resources.

The Amazon Sacred Headwaters Alliance (ASHA) is an Indigenous-led coalition that brings together 30 Indigenous nations residing in the headwaters of the Amazon River. Prior to ASHA’s formation, these nations were fragmented by national borders and exploitation by multinational companies. This initiative marks the first time in history that such a large number of Indigenous nations have come together for a single cause.

Since 2017, ASHA has assembled these 30 Indigenous nations represented by 28 member organizations, of which 25 are Indigenous-led, and three non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have been long-term allies. Each of these nations and organizations have their own histories and activities but have agreed to unite in pursuit of a common vision, agenda and activities. Over 3.5 years, ASHA organized a series of workshops which culminated in the publication of the Bioregional Plan, a 166-page summary launched in September 2021, which develops a comprehensive vision for ensuring the protection of the Amazon biome and maintaining the forest cover necessary to preserve the planet’s hydro-climatic system. ASHA and its constituencies are currently in the process of enacting this plan, which calls for a series of pathways that will protect the Amazon as a vital organ of the planet’s biosphere.

**Headquartered:** Ecuador



**Number of employees** 13 full time

**Budget range** \$2-3 million

2. Bryce, E. (2023). *Why is the Amazon So Important for Climate Change?* Scientific American. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-is-the-amazon-so-important-for-climate-change1/#>.

## Collective architecture

### Action level



ASHA assembles **30 Indigenous** nations serving as traditional stewards of 86 million acres of land encompassing the watersheds of the Napo, Pastaza and Marañón River Basins, forming the headwaters of the Amazon River.

### Network level



ASHA brings together **28 member organizations** – 25 of these organizations are Indigenous-led and three are NGOs allied to the cause.





### Supporting level






ASHA is supported by a **technical secretariat** that provides financial management and administration support to the alliance and coordinates various working groups focused on planning, fundraising, project implementation, evaluation and advocacy.




## The collective pathway

-  **Vision:** ASHA's collective vision is that the Amazon rainforest remains a thriving ecosystem for future generations and that the voices of its Indigenous guardians are heard and respected.
-  **Method:** In order to develop its collective vision and set of pathways, ASHA – at the time named the Amazon Sacred Headwaters Initiative (ASHI) – undertook a multi-year participatory process to ensure that the voices from all nations, organizations and allies were included. The process included 10 workshops assembling the initiative's partners, technical teams and territorial groups. In addition to these workshops, ASHI also consulted more than 50 national and international specialists. As a result of this process, ASHA published the Bioregional Plan, articulating the collectively-visioned pathways and then, in 2022, established a new Indigenous-governed alliance to work to implement the plan's vision.
-  **Principles:** ASHA is promoting five objectives to support its collective vision: 1) strengthen Amazonian well-being (through the philosophy of *buen vivir*); 2) ensure Indigenous self-determination and territorial governance; 3) stop the advance of extractive industries; 4) promote forest and river conservation and restoration; and 5) eliminate forest loss and ecosystem degradation.
-  **Practices:** To support these objectives, ASHA has articulated nine "pathways": 1) create a just transition from a socioeconomic model based on extraction to one based on regeneration; 2) ensure territorial governance and Indigenous self-determination; 3) increase Indigenous sovereignty through technology, transport and connectivity; 4) transition towards decarbonized renewable energy systems; 5) include intercultural ecological awareness in education systems; 6) develop intercultural health programmes in the bioregion; 7) prioritize smart city planning and the right to dignified and sustainable housing; 8) create productive economic opportunities through the forest economy and regenerative entrepreneurship; and 9) co-manage the conservation and restoration of forests and river basins.

## Collective action activities

Capability	Activities
<p><b>Building movements</b></p> 	<p><b>Creating a shared narrative:</b> ASHA conducted a 3.5-year participatory process to build a shared long-term vision called the Bioregional Plan, which it describes as an “Amazon Green New Deal”.</p> <p><b>Identifying a common agenda:</b> ASHA’s Bioregional Plan maps out nine pathways to achieve its collective vision, which serves as the common agenda for bringing together all members of the alliance. ASHA is also supporting the creation of “life plans” for each Indigenous Peoples’ territories, taking unique worldviews and living conditions into account.</p> <p><b>Expanding the stakeholder base:</b> ASHA brings together Indigenous nations, governments, civil society organizations and like-minded private sector actors who have historically not collaborated in this manner.</p> <p><b>Centring lived experience:</b> In all of its activities, ASHA centres Indigenous Peoples’ voices and their traditional role as territorial stewards of the Sacred Headwaters land.</p> <p><b>Organizing field-level convenings:</b> ASHA convenes a general assembly of its members annually. They also participate in global fora at the United Nations and the multi-lateral development banks (MDBs).</p> <p><b>Designing and promoting multistakeholder processes:</b> ASHA strongly holds that well-designed multistakeholder processes are needed to reach multiparty agreements for the ecological economic zoning of the bioregion. They actively engage key actors including NGOs, local governments, environment ministries and academia within the bioregion. In the past four years, there have been a series of national dialogues between Indigenous leadership in Ecuador and the executive branch of the Ecuador government. The national Indigenous movements of both Ecuador and Peru are also actively engaged in ongoing dialogues with local and national governments.</p>
<p><b>Strengthening data systems</b></p> 	<p><b>Creating shared definitions:</b> ASHA promotes the Amazonian worldview of <i>buen vivir</i> as a comprehensive approach to well-being that centres people and nature rather than extractive economies in goals and decision-making.</p> <p><b>Developing shared metrics:</b> ASHA is co-creating a set of biophysical and territorial governance indicators for <i>buen vivir</i> that will measure a country’s well-being beyond conventional economic measures, such as GDP (gross domestic product).</p> <p><b>Collecting, sharing and analysing data:</b> ASHA is developing a comprehensive, online geographic information system (GIS) that monitors the state of the bioregion and helps build a strong case for Indigenous governance.</p>
<p><b>Influencing institutions</b></p> 	<p><b>Conducting advocacy campaigns:</b> ASHA participates in global meetings and advocacy campaigns to influence the global economic system, the activities of extractive industries, while promoting the cultural and historic rights of Indigenous Peoples and nature.</p> <p><b>Organizing legal action:</b> ASHA conducts litigation and legal actions to advance legal recognition of Indigenous land claims and to address socio-environmental and territorial conflicts in the region. The ultimate aim is to strengthen the Indigenous governance and territorial rights to more than 22 million acres of Indigenous Peoples’ territories that have not yet been legally recognized, mostly in the Peruvian Amazon.</p> <p><b>Working with government:</b> ASHA works with local and national governments to develop regional planning agreements that prioritize Indigenous nations’ rights and life plans.</p>

## Collective action activities (continued)

Capability	Activities
<b>Hosting learning communities and building capacity</b> 	<p><b>Conducting pilot projects:</b> ASHA is piloting a number of projects devoted to reforestation and the creation of a regenerative bioeconomy. Their aim is to ensure the conservation of 49.4 million acres and the restoration of 21.5 million acres of forest necessary to maintain the connectivity of the Andean Amazon landscape.</p> <p><b>Developing education programmes:</b> ASHA is developing the Living School of the Amazon (Escuela Viva de la Amazonía, EVA) which will support technical training for Amazonian youth and intellectual property (IP) protection for ancestral knowledge.</p> <p><b>Conducting capacity building:</b> ASHA is strengthening Indigenous institutional capacity and leadership of member organizations for territorial governance, advocacy, project implementation and financial management.</p>
<b>Investing in systemic solutions</b> 	<p><b>Sub-granting to collectives:</b> ASHA is creating a Sacred Headwaters Fund that will directly support Indigenous-led initiatives for food security, livelihood alternatives, forest monitoring, intercultural health and education, and renewable energy.</p> <p><b>Developing financing solutions:</b> ASHA is developing systemic solutions to incentivize forest protection and halt deforestation (cancelling debt, well-being indicators, universal basic/intact forest income, bioeconomy hubs, voluntary carbon credits and ecosystems services).</p>



### Case vignette: Sacred Headwaters: Territories for life

#### The vast network of waterways born in the glaciers of the Andes of Ecuador and Peru descends to form the headwaters of the innumerable rivers that feed the Marañón and the Amazon River itself.

These headwaters, which extend over an area of 86 million acres (35 million hectares), are home to more than 30 Indigenous nationalities, and to dense forests that support incalculable forms of life. These are some of the most diverse ecosystems in the world, regulating the hydrological cycle of much of the South American continent and, indeed, the climate for our entire planet. These sacred headwaters are of vital importance as we face a human-driven ecological crisis of unprecedented proportions. The ecological crisis is exacerbated by the increase in the extraction of oil and minerals, and deforestation to log timber, and propelled by a “modernizing” logic that treats “nature” as if it were a mere resource to generate short-term profit to benefit of a small subset of life forms that exist on Earth.

The Sacred Headwaters initiative proposes a viable alternative to this modernizing logic, one that, in its stead, seeks to “ecologize” our economies, our political structures and our modes of ethical behaviour. The Sacred Headwaters Initiative recognizes this hydrographically inspired Amazonian form of relating and coming together across differences, drawing inspiration from it as it creates political alliances between nationalities, governments and NGOs to face the planetary ecological crisis affecting us all. These alliances are nested within each other in the same way that the vast sacred headwaters of the Upper Amazon link one basin to another through their emerging networks. We have much to learn from the wisdom of the Indigenous Peoples, to protect the vast Amazon basin of Ecuador and Peru, since it is the only possible solution that is now within our grasp if we aspire to reach the future. – Wisdom Keepers Council, Amazon Sacred Headwaters Alliance.

**Source:** Adapted from Sacred Headwaters: Territories for Life, prepared by Eduardo Kohn based on the deliberations of the 1st gathering of the Council of Wisdom Keepers, Tumbaco, Ecuador, May 2019.

## Supporting infrastructure

### Governance and participation

During the participatory visioning process, ASHA (then called ASHI) was fiscally sponsored by the Pachamama Alliance. In July 2023, ASHA transitioned its operations to a new Indigenous-led non-profit entity legally incorporated in Ecuador with the Spanish name “Alianza Cuencas Sagradas Amazónicas”. The new alliance is governed by a general assembly of members which is composed of representatives of the 28 member organizations and meets twice annually to make decisions about strategic priorities. ASHA is operationally governed by an 11-member board of directors which meets every one to three months to provide direction to the secretariat. The board includes four seats for the Indigenous co-founders of the newly constituted organization; three permanent seats for the three regional associations (AIDSESP, CONFENIAE and COICA); two rotating seats from local Indigenous organizations; and two rotating seats for NGO members of the alliance. The alliance is further guided by a council of Indigenous wisdom keepers and a global commission of experts.

### Team culture and competencies

**Competencies:** The competencies that the technical secretariat team bring to the work are currently open as ASHA is in the process of transitioning from a mostly non-Indigenous technical secretariat serving the Indigenous member organizations to one that has greater Indigenous leadership in senior management. This requires deep trust building and patience as the organization works to fill the key management roles such as executive director and programme manager with committed and talented Indigenous leaders.

**Values:** ASHA's work benefits from the deep commitment of their team and board to Indigenous ancestral values, spirituality and sacred nature. Its solutions are rooted in Amazonian territories and holistic in its proposed solutions. The Bioregional Plan is based on Indigenous philosophy and cosmivision of *buen vivir* (living in collective harmony with all life). Indigenous Peoples' worldviews, knowledge systems and holistic approaches to problem solving can truly light the way to designing effective transition strategies at scale.

**Collaborative and adaptive learning:** ASHA is in the process of designing a more robust learning monitoring and evaluation system in 2025 that uses both qualitative and quantitative assessments to measure impact and share learnings.

### Enabling technology

ASHA has been working with technology developers and monitoring and evaluation experts to use ArcGIS in the design of a geographic information system (GIS) platform, which includes a social atlas (socioeconomic and population/census data) of the Sacred Headwaters bioregion. The platform is currently in beta and is publicly accessible. The project represents the first comprehensive map developed and designed by Indigenous Amazonians, representing these territories. It will be used as a tool for analysis and prioritization as well as documenting ASHA's interventions and telling stories that include maps and geospatial information. So far, ASHA has not had the staff capacity to put the system into full use, but they have begun to train Indigenous organizations' own teams to use and access the information.

ASHA is also developing a platform for visibly seeing the myriad projects that the technical secretariat and members of the Alliance are implementing or fundraising to implement in the territories. This platform is currently in beta in collaboration with the Open Futures Coalition.



## Building the world's largest Indigenous-led conservation alliance

Since ASHA's inception, membership has grown from 11 to 28 member organizations, including 25 Indigenous-led organizations. The Bioregional Plan, completed in 2021, was the result of a 3.5-year participatory process bringing together an unprecedented number of stakeholders to align on a single vision. To progress this vision, in 2023, ASHA became a legally established, independent non-profit organization in Ecuador.

## Regeneration and reforestation projects

To date, ASHA has supported a handful of pilot projects focused on creating a regenerative bioeconomy, including several small-scale agroforestry productions with crops such as vanilla, fish farms and traditional crafts. ASHA has also supported a reforestation project in the Ecuadorian Amazon, resulting in the planting of 160,000 plants, including 20% of at-risk, near-extinct or high-risk species, and the rehabilitation of 1,600 acres (900 hectares) of land. The goal is to secure funding to scale up these pilot programmes throughout the bioregion.

## Advocacy

ASHA's advocacy efforts, together with many Ecuadorian environmental and youth organizations, contributed to the Ecuador 2023 people's referendum in which citizens voted to "keep oil in the soil" in the Yasuni National Park, preventing the extraction of an estimated 1.67 billion barrels of crude oil. ASHA has also collaborated with partners to launch digital advocacy campaigns for Indigenous People living in voluntary isolation, resulting in the successful shelving of a Peruvian bill which would have stripped isolated populations of their rights. ASHA also supported the Chapra nation in their successful efforts to compel extraction companies to clean up a major oil spill that occurred in 2022.



## Legal action

ASHA has supported collective advocacy and legal actions that have delayed or cancelled new oil blocks (blocks 79 and 83 in Ecuador and blocks 64 and 67 in Peru). ASHA has also supported the legal case that stopped the proposed Piatua dam in Ecuador and conducted various legal strategies to advance protection for isolated and uncontacted peoples in the Peruvian Amazon. This included providing funding for evidence-gathering that led to a court decision that asks the Peruvian government to legalize the Napo Tigre isolated Indigenous Peoples reserve. ASHA's funding to an Alliance member recently led to a favourable court ruling in the department of Loreto Peru that orders the regional government to stop authorizing logging concessions in territories of isolated and uncontacted peoples including proposed reserves.

## Stopping extractive activities

In 2022, ASHA's support of Indigenous-led efforts successfully expelled illegal gold miners from the Awajun/Wampis territories in the northern Peruvian Amazon. In 2022, national mobilizations led by Indigenous alliance members supported in part by the alliance led to a 12-month negotiated moratorium on new drilling in Ecuador. In cases where government has not complied with legal mandates, ASHA members continue to use legal and advocacy strategies to force compliance.

## CASE STORY

### The Living School of the Amazon (EVA)



The Living School of the Amazon (Escuela Viva de la Amazonía, EVA) is an initiative to train and support future generations of Indigenous leaders who will advance the permanent protection of the Amazon rainforest. The school is an essential component of ASHA's Bioregional Plan, providing capacity building and training on leadership, governance, legal rights and project design technology within the framework of Indigenous ethical values and worldviews.

On 9 March 2023, EVA welcomed its first cohort of 34 students representing 11 Indigenous nations for a one-year programme. Currently, ASHA is in the second cohort of 41 students who will be graduating in March 2025 while preparing to recruit the third cohort for 2025. The programme is both practical and ontological, teaching Indigenous cosmology. Students attend lectures and workshops by inspiring Indigenous leaders who share traditional ecological knowledge and Indigenous worldviews. They also engage in internships with Indigenous organizations to work on

projects and campaigns contributing to land conservation, community health and bioeconomy. Students are provided accommodation and meals so they can focus exclusively on their studies. The programme culminates in an independent project presentation delivered to their peers.

ASHA's vision is to grow the leadership school and expand into the Peruvian Amazon, while garnering resources to build a more permanent campus with adequate dorm facilities. In the next phase, ASHA plans to create opportunities for international students to come and learn from the Indigenous-focused programme and share skills from the modern world with Indigenous youth. There are also plans to create an online course library and resources and make the materials available to a broader set of people in the region. In the long term, there is also a desire to create a four-year university degree track from this one-year course, partnering with international academic institutions.



# Community Solutions

Creating a future in which homelessness is solvable, not inevitable

<b>Year founded</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>Groups assembled</b>	<b>142 communities in the US; 103 international communities in five countries</b>
<b>Regions represented</b>	US, Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, UK	<b>Organizations involved</b>	<b>Approximately 3,800 organizations</b> (communities assemble 5-30 organizations each)
<b>Entity type</b>	Non-profit organization	<b>Constituents represented</b>	Communities each represent hundreds of clients, staff, board members, funders and volunteers

## Background

In the US, a record number of people experienced homelessness in 2023, with more than 650,000 people sleeping without permanent shelter on a single night. Current trends show that more people are struggling to find and afford permanent housing, with nearly 1 million people in 2023 experiencing homelessness for the first time.<sup>3</sup> Despite the fact that local response systems continue to add temporary shelter beds and importantly, invest in housing, the rate of homelessness is rising faster than these systems can keep up.

Community Solutions is a non-profit organization building a movement to create a lasting end to homelessness. The organization works with communities to go beyond managing homelessness to solving the problem, ensuring that when people do experience homelessness, it is rare, brief and nonrecurring. The organization also works with communities to ensure that this achievement is sustained over time, even when local conditions change.

Community Solutions' work was pioneered by Rosanne Haggerty in the 1990s in New York City. Over time, she and her team recognized that one of the key challenges to ending homelessness is the distributed and fragmented system of homelessness response. Community Solutions' Built for Zero methodology evolved with the participation of community teams across the country who have joined with Community Solutions to develop a solution. Built for Zero involves uniting all stakeholders addressing homelessness in a community to operate as a single team and pursue collective success: making homelessness rare and brief for all. Technically, this milestone is called "functional zero" and indicates that over time, a community has demonstrated that they can rehouse anyone who becomes homeless within 30 days and established a system to stay ahead of housing crises and homelessness. Since 2011, 44 communities have measurably reduced homelessness and 15 communities have made homelessness rare and brief for veterans and/or individuals experiencing chronic homelessness.

**Headquartered:** New York, US



**Number of employees** **90** full time

**Budget range** **\$21-25** million

3. Soucy, D., M. Janes and A. Hall. (2024). *State of Homelessness: 2024 Edition*. National Alliance to End Homelessness. <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness/>.

## Collective architecture

### Action level



Community Solutions supports **142 US and 103 international place-based community teams** working to make homelessness rare and brief in their localities.

### Network level



Community Solutions' **Built for Zero Movement** brings together all of the communities working towards making homelessness rare and brief.

### Supporting level



Community Solutions' **team of employees and strategic partners** support communities and the movement to carry out its work.







Aspen Cierra Photography





Brendan McGowan Photography



## The collective pathway

-  **Vision:** Community Solutions envisions a more equitable society where homelessness is never inevitable, inescapable or a way of life.
-  **Method:** To realize that vision, communities within the Built for Zero movement follow a shared methodology to work towards ending homelessness in their place-based communities. This method includes: 1) bringing together all stakeholders working to solve homelessness in a community; 2) establishing a shared goal (homelessness is rare and brief) and a shared measurement system; 3) collecting and using real-time, by-name data to drive decision-making and assure equity; 4) providing a menu of tools and strategies tested within the network; and 5) securing flexible resources.
-  **Principles:** The Community Solutions methodology requires a set of “mindset shifts”, starting with the idea itself that homelessness is an intractable problem. Before communities can begin to solve homelessness, they must commit to measurably ending homelessness for entire populations. Communities must also make the shift from addressing homelessness through fragmented services to a system of shared goals and accountability. This mindset shift involves moving from a mentality of “my client” to “our clients”. Finally, to solve homelessness, communities must shift to using comprehensive, real-time, by-name data that enables a complete and dynamic view of homelessness, revealing inflow and outflow patterns and opportunities for improvement to existing practices for preventing and quickly resolving homelessness.
-  **Practices:** Each community establishes a real-time, by-name list of all people experiencing homelessness to drive their work together. This by-name list – updated monthly, at a minimum – enables communities to quickly match housing solutions with individual needs and identify opportunities for making the housing system itself perform more effectively. Communities also commit to meeting and reviewing data on a weekly basis to examine (as a team) ways to connect people to stable housing. Often, communities will set initial goals to work together to make homelessness rare and brief for specific target populations (veteran, chronic, family, youth, all singles). By making progress with specific populations, communities can feel a sense of accomplishment on the path to solving homelessness and making homelessness rare and brief for everyone.

## Collective action activities

Capability	Activities
<p><b>Building movements</b></p> 	<p><b>Creating a shared narrative:</b> Community Solutions is working to shift the narrative from “homelessness is intractable” to “homelessness is a solvable set of issues that can be fully resolved with collective effort”.</p> <p><b>Expanding the stakeholder base:</b> Community Solutions ensures that communities bring together everyone who touches the problem – service providers, government agencies and others – to connect the dots across the resources and actors to prevent or quickly resolve homelessness.</p> <p><b>Organizing field-level convenings:</b> Community Solutions hosts annual “learning sessions” that bring together network communities and national partners to share key learnings.</p> <p><b>Centring lived experience:</b> Many communities have created dedicated roles for those with lived experience of homelessness to inform their services and contribute to more equitable outcomes.</p> <p><b>Celebrating key milestones:</b> Community Solutions communities are celebrated when they reach key milestones such as achieving quality real-time data, significant system improvements and reaching functional zero for specific populations.</p> <p><b>Monitoring progress:</b> Community Solutions plays an important role creating accountability to outcomes by monitoring community-level and network-wide progress towards population-level aims.</p> <p><b>Engaging media and journalists:</b> Community Solutions is partnering with journalism network Solutions Journalism to create educational resources for journalists reporting on homelessness.</p>
<p><b>Strengthening data systems</b></p> 	<p><b>Creating shared definitions:</b> Community Solutions has created a framework for measurement that includes key definitions for its network, including functional zero, the milestone that indicates homelessness is measurably rare and brief for a population, and by-name lists, which are the databases used by communities when solving homelessness.</p> <p><b>Developing shared metrics:</b> Communities commit to producing real-time, by-name data that accounts for every person in a community experiencing homelessness, updated no less than monthly.</p> <p><b>Collecting, analysing and sharing data:</b> Communities meet weekly to analyse the real-time, by-name data and create shared action items at the person and systems level based on the data.</p>
<p><b>Influencing institutions</b></p> 	<p><b>Developing policy recommendations:</b> Community Solutions has grown its advocacy work by developing policy recommendations at the national, state and local levels based on learning and the emerging evidence base derived from its network.</p> <p><b>Improve public- and private-sector effectiveness:</b> Community Solutions supports government and non-profit agencies, along with their private sector partners, to redesign governance structures for population-level impact.</p> <p><b>Developing government data systems:</b> Community Solutions advocates for revising the US’ Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) to make by-name lists standard for the sector.</p> <p><b>Augmenting system-level staffing:</b> Community Solutions provides coaching and training to the local government and “Continuum of Care” system-level coordinators that are responsible for coordinating local strategies.</p>

## Collective action activities (continued)

Capability	Activities
<p><b>Hosting learning communities and building capacity</b></p> 	<p><b>Codifying a methodology:</b> Community Solutions has codified the “Built for Zero” methodology, which is used by communities to build sustainable systems that can make homelessness rare and brief for all.</p> <p><b>Capturing and disseminating learnings:</b> Community Solutions develops case studies, white papers, documentaries, policy briefs and research to document and share the learnings of communities widely.</p> <p><b>Hosting communities of practice:</b> Community Solutions convenes affinity groups and communities of practice around topic areas and job functions.</p> <p><b>Consulting, coaching and training:</b> Community Solutions trains communities on the Built for Zero methodology and helps communities with specific technical tasks, such as setting up their real-time, by-name list, identifying key leverage points in the system, and adapting evidence-based practices such as coordinated case conferencing.</p>
<p><b>Investing in systemic solutions</b></p> 	<p><b>Providing flexible community investments:</b> As dedicated funding is available, Community Solutions provides salary support for key system coordination roles in Built for Zero communities (for two years), provides grants for certain “catalytic” projects representing an innovation with potential network-wide benefit, and flexible funding to accelerate progress towards system outcomes for communities in the Built for Zero network.</p> <p><b>Developing financing solutions:</b> Community Solutions recently secured \$135 million for the CS Large Cities Housing Fund, a social impact private equity fund to acquire mixed housing projects including resources for individuals exiting homelessness.</p>



### Case vignette: Thurston County, Washington

**Thurston County, including the state capital city of Olympia, Washington, achieved a key milestone towards eliminating homelessness in 2024: they reached “quality data” for all single adults experiencing homelessness.**

This comprehensive, by-name, real-time awareness of the dynamics of homelessness is key to transforming the community’s approach to this complex problem. Prior to joining the Built for Zero movement, supported by Community Solutions, incomplete, dated or duplicate records among service providers meant that no one had a complete understanding of what was happening, and which interventions were working across the county’s homeless response system. To achieve this milestone,

the community created the Greater Regional Outreach Workers League (GROWL), a coalition of 18 outreach partners including traditional outreach teams, street medicine providers, the Department of Health and anti-trafficking organizations. GROWL meets biweekly to review the data and discuss specific action plans to move each individual or family towards a stable home. This unified approach has allowed them to use resources more effectively and better meet the needs of specific groups, such as those fleeing domestic violence. Thurston County is getting closer to ending chronic or long-term homelessness through this data-driven, collaborative approach. Reflecting on the role of data in serving vulnerable people, Alison Waters, Coordinated Entry Data Coordinator at Family Support Center of South Sound, says: “You can put people first and still collect good data.”<sup>4</sup>

4. Adapted from Ranney, K. (2024). *Thurston County, Washington, Certified for Quality Data for All Single Adults Experiencing Homelessness*. Community Solutions. <https://community.solutions/case-studies/thurston-county-washington-certified-for-quality-data-for-all-single-adults-experiencing-homelessness/>.

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## Supporting infrastructure

### Governance and participation

Community Solutions is overseen by a voluntary fiduciary board of directors. Currently, the board has eight members and will soon grow to 11 members. The board also oversees the community investment fund (regranting activities) and the social impact real estate fund. Day-to-day operations are led by the executive and leadership teams. Community Solutions is in the process of establishing an advisory council to support its expanded organizing and communications strategy.

### Team culture and competencies

**Competencies:** Community Solutions focuses on a set of core competencies and values for their team. All team members receive training on the foundational areas of improvement science, human-centred design, facilitation, data analysis and project management.

**Values:** The organization draws on its values to guide performance planning and professional development. These values include: 1) solve for impossible; 2) learn by doing; 3) focus on the user; 4) face what is not working, don't let failure keep one from moving forward; 5) operate from generosity; 6) take

ownership of what happens; 7) embrace appreciation, humour and joy; and 8) promote racial equity.

**Collaborative and adaptive learning:** Teams at Community Solutions use a general strategic planning format and a six-month cadence for learning and adaptation. Teams set longer-term goals and short-term milestones that are assessed every six months for course corrections to strategy. Teams capture their strategies in an improvement planning tool called a "driver diagram" which visually displays the drivers of project achievement.

### Enabling technology

Technology is a critical enabling factor to both Community Solutions' internal work as well as their direct support of communities. HMIS are essential to community coordination and measurement. The software that enables HMIS needs to be designed with the user in mind, be capable of measuring population-level trends (not only monitor programme participation by individual clients), and enable data visualizations and built-in reports that support sense-making and data-driven decision-making. Internally, Community Solutions relies on data visualization software, a cloud-based customer relationships platform, business intelligence and machine learning (ML) platforms.

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## Impact

# 15

## communities

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have made homelessness rare and brief for at least one population, with 13 achieving this for veteran homelessness, five solving chronic homelessness, and three ending both.

# 40%

## of Built for Zero communities

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reduced homelessness for veterans or people who have experienced chronic homelessness in a year where overall numbers were on the rise.

# 192,000

## people

---

have been housed in Built for Zero communities (as of 2024).

# 1,635

## affordable homes

---

have been acquired across 14 properties in nine housing markets through the social impact investment model.

## Metro Denver Homeless Initiative



The Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI) is the continuum of care (COC) designated by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development to coordinate the homelessness response across the broader Denver, Colorado region. MDHI joined the Community Solutions Built for Zero movement in 2015. MDHI is coordinating a regional system of government agencies, elected officials, nonprofit leaders and people with lived experience of homelessness to solve homelessness across seven counties, 40 municipalities and a population of 3.2 million.

Since Metro Denver is so large and diverse, MDHI divided their approach into nine subregions. Each subregion has its own structure, consisting of an executive team of elected officials that meets regularly, a homeless coordination team of nonprofit and agency leaders, and case conferencing teams of case managers that discuss individuals experiencing homelessness to coordinate support. In each subregion, MDHI convenes key partners, builds buy-in, monitors data quality and consistency, provides coaching and technical assistance, and coordinates funding.

So far, six out of nine subregions have achieved quality by-name data for veteran homelessness, which has contributed to a better understanding of the barriers to ending veteran homelessness. Using this data, regions have been able to better tailor their services – for example, one important

discovery is that more than half of veterans experiencing homelessness in the subregions are over the age of 60, often requiring healthcare support and assisted living. By mining the data for important information, MDHI and its partners have been able to design better systems to support veterans. Local leaders have also taken the learning from veteran homelessness and are applying them across their systems. In 2024, the City and County of Denver launched the All In Mile High initiative, based on Built for Zero practices, and are working to make unsheltered homelessness in the city rare and brief. Through the application of this framework, this team has driven down the number of veterans experiencing homelessness to near zero and built a system that can identify and connect a veteran to shelter or housing in a single day.

This approach is working – Metro Denver partners have helped more than 1,874 veteran households move into housing since 2020, which equates to a reduction in veteran homelessness by 30% over the past four years. Additionally, through the leadership of the State of Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Division of Housing, Office of Homeless Initiatives, the Built for Zero framework has spread to communities across the state, which has further increased coordination and alignment in the Metro Denver region. Since 2019, one Colorado community, Fremont County, achieved functional zero for veteran homelessness and five others outside of Metro Denver have met the quality data milestone.<sup>5</sup>



James Chance, Chance Multimedia

5. Adapted from Gonzalez, B. (2024). *Metro Denver Archives Quality Data in Five Out of Nine Subregions*. Community Solutions. <https://community.solutions/case-studies/metro-denver-achieves-quality-data-in-five-out-of-nine-subregions/>.

COLLECTIVE ACTION CASE STUDY

# Financing Alliance for Health

Strengthening and sustaining community health systems through multistakeholder partnerships

Year founded

**2016**

Groups assembled

**22** national and sub-national governments

Regions represented

**16** countries  
Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Haiti, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo, Senegal, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe

Organizations involved

Financing Alliance for Health (FAH) convenes governments, donors, private-sector companies and communities to address systemic financing challenges to scaling primary and community health programmes.

Entity type

Non-profit organization

Constituents represented

**450,000+** community health workers have been recognized in policy and practice through FAH's efforts.

## Background

Community health systems in Africa play a critical role in delivering primary healthcare to underserved populations. These cost-effective and impactful systems staffed by dedicated CHWs are key to strengthening healthcare by connecting local communities to national health initiatives and improving access to care. Yet, current policies and funding support mostly vertical, disease-specific programmes that are costlier and less efficient than integrated, holistic programmes. There is currently an annual \$4.4 billion funding gap needed to make these essential systems a reality on the African continent.

The Financing Alliance for Health (FAH) is an Africa-based, African-led entity that convenes governments, donors, private sector companies and communities to address systemic financing challenges to scaling primary and community health programmes at country, regional and global levels. FAH was founded in 2015 in Addis Ababa at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development as a result of recommendations put forward by a group of global leaders, including His Excellency Hailemariam Dessalegn, Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Ray Chambers, Joy Phumaphi, Tim Evans, Paul Farmer, Chelsea Clinton and Jeff Walker.

FAH bridges the worlds of health and finance to enable new and additional investments in health systems with community health at their core. Since its inception, FAH has mobilized more than \$150 million in domestic resources as well as through its "big and bold" idea, the Africa Frontline First (AFF) initiative. FAH has also contributed to the allocation of over \$500 million through its broader ecosystems towards community health efforts. Additionally, FAH has supported the recognition and institutionalization of more than 450,000 CHWs.

**Headquartered:** Nairobi, Kenya



Number of employees

**~60**  
full time

Budget range

**\$10**  
million  
approximately

## Collective architecture

### Action level



FAH has worked with **22 national and sub-national governments** to increase financing for primary and community health systems and integrate them into the overall public health system.

### Network level



A subset of these countries is united in the **AFF** initiative, which brings governments into partnership with donors and high-level political champions to advocate for increased funding and support for community health systems.





### Supporting level



The **FAH team** was the sole seed financial investor in the ideation of AFF, and currently acts as a fiscal sponsor to AFF. It supports governments individually and through the AFF partnership network.




## The collective pathway

-  **Vision:** FAH envisions a new reality where domestic and international funders prioritize primary and community health as a key contributor to achieving universal health coverage. In this vision, funders recognize primary and community health as a critical investment rather than a cost to society.
-  **Method:** FAH describes itself as a “systems orchestrator” focused on strengthening African public sector ecosystems for primary and community health financing. To this end, FAH focuses on the following principles: 1) multistakeholder alignment: align multiple stakeholders towards a common vision; 2) comprehensive strategies: co-develop effective primary and community health strategies and less fragmented modalities to finance them; 3) more and better funding: advocate for the prioritization and greater effectiveness of primary and community health financing; and 4) greater government capacity: build the health financing capabilities of government and global health stakeholders to ensure evidence-based resource allocation.
-  **Principles:** To create strong ecosystems, FAH is guided by four essential pillars in its current five-year strategy (2023-2027): 1) the money: increase the amount, mix and alignment of community health funding to reduce the annual \$4.4 billion funding gap in Sub-Saharan Africa; 2) the policies: demonstrate practical paths to achieving sustainable primary and community health financing while driving inclusion of community health systems into the primary health and global health agendas; 3) the skills: expand the uptake and delivery of training curricula for CHWs while upskilling policy-makers and health leaders on public finance management, and strengthen cross-country learning through communities of practice; and 4) the people: build partnerships and collaboration that bring together multiple stakeholders to strengthen and sustain primary and community health strategies.
-  **Practices:** FAH designs and implements innovative financing mechanisms that channel private- and public-sector funding to primary and community health systems. FAH also builds long-term partnerships with national and sub-national ministries of health and finance to steward their health systems towards scale and sustainability. Finally, FAH advocates at the local, national and global levels to showcase the evidence for primary and community health and build momentum at all levels.

## Collective action activities

Capability	Activities
<p><b>Building movements</b></p> 	<p><b>Creating a shared narrative:</b> FAH is creating a shared narrative that primary and community health systems are cost-effective, scalable and essential for achieving universal health coverage on the African continent.</p> <p><b>Expanding the stakeholder base:</b> Prior to FAH, primary and community health stakeholders were fragmented and operating in isolation. FAH brings together governments, donors, NGOs and communities to develop collective strategies for primary and community health.</p> <p><b>Organizing field-level convenings:</b> FAH brings together government ministers, funders, CHWs and other stakeholders for dialogues and roundtables during significant global convenings throughout the year.</p> <p><b>Centring lived experience:</b> FAH strives to be representative of its constituency base. Its leadership is 100% African and 75% female with 50% representing a younger demographic.</p> <p><b>Celebrating key milestones:</b> FAH hosted a five-year celebration in 2022, bringing together key stakeholders and marking their key accomplishments since inception.</p>
<p><b>Strengthening data systems</b></p> 	<p><b>Creating shared definitions:</b> FAH is working to harmonize language used by governments and donors to strengthen policy-making and financing for primary and community health systems.</p> <p><b>Collecting, analysing and sharing data:</b> FAH enables governments and partners to share data through cross-country communities of practice.</p>
<p><b>Influencing institutions</b></p> 	<p><b>Developing policy recommendations:</b> FAH works with health and finance ministries to co-develop primary and community health strategies, investment cases and financing policy briefs. Specifically, FAH advocates for budget line items for CHWs so that they are formally included in the government payroll system.</p> <p><b>Developing government data systems:</b> FAH provides technical assistance to governments on primary and community health data systems, if needed.</p> <p><b>Augmenting government staffing:</b> FAH works at the country level by embedding teams directly into government ministries. FAH also collaborates with ministries of health in key countries through the Health Systems Accelerator Fellowship Program, a one-year programme for government professionals to fortify technical expertise and leadership within primary healthcare departments.</p>
<p><b>Hosting learning communities and building capacity</b></p> 	<p><b>Codifying a methodology:</b> FAH aspires to create a “roadmap” for primary and community health financing sustainability, which will be used by governments to strengthen their primary and community health systems.</p> <p><b>Capturing and disseminating learnings:</b> FAH has codified the Community Health Financing Assessment Toolkit, an evidence-based self-assessment tool to aid stakeholders in developing innovative and equitable financing strategies for community health. FAH is also building a global knowledge hub that elevates and amplifies primary and community health evidence, thought leadership and frontline stories.</p> <p><b>Hosting communities of practice:</b> FAH hosts communities of practice where governments can share learnings from their countries and learn from the experience of other health and finance leaders.</p> <p><b>Consulting, coaching and training:</b> FAH creates training and capacity-building programmes for government employees and health financing stakeholders. To date, FAH has trained more than 4,000 stakeholders.</p>

## Collective action activities (continued)

Capability	Activities
<p><b>Investing in systemic solutions</b></p> 	<p><b>Unlocking capital for stakeholders:</b> As the fiscal sponsor of the AFF fund, FAH builds the capacities of governments to unlock and use financing to strengthen their primary and community health systems.</p> <p><b>Developing financing solutions:</b> FAH designs innovative financing solutions (blended finance products, debt conversion agreements and pooled funds) to increase funding for primary and community health.</p>



### Case vignette: Euridice Njagi, Community health worker

#### **Euridice Njagi is a community health worker (CHW) in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.**

Every day, Ms. Njagi spends two hours visiting households. During these visits, she focuses on providing hygiene- and sanitation-related health education and advises expectant and new mothers on pre- and post-natal care, including nutrition and vaccinations. Ms. Njagi walks long distances in rugged terrains to reach households and is assigned 324 households, even though the recommended coverage for CHWs is 110 households. Despite these challenges,

Ms. Njagi is passionate about her work, especially nutrition. She has set up a workshop where she processes and packages local nutritious foods and sells them at affordable prices. She also teaches families about growing their own food in kitchen gardens and using this food for their families instead of buying refined foods. Euridice says, “Serving my community is the most fulfilling work I have done so far. It comes with challenges [but] I love my work and will keep doing my best for the community. Since we started serving, I have seen a lot of change; people are now healthier and happier.”<sup>6</sup>

6. Adapted from Wakhusama, W. (2022). *A story of Euridice Njagi, a community health volunteer from Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya*. Financing Alliance for Health. <https://financingalliance.org/a-story-of-euridice-njagi-a-community-health-volunteer-from-tharaka-nithi-county-kenya/>.

## Supporting infrastructure

### Governance and participation

FAH is governed by a global board and advisory council that spans five continents, ensuring broad international representation. FAH has also assembled a government advisory group composed of former African government officials to offer insights into policy and government engagement. FAH is led by a four-person executive committee, which includes the President and Chief Executive Officer, the Chief of Staff, the Head of Risks and Operations, and the Head of Strategy and Investments. Notably, 100% of the executive committee members are African and 75% are female, with 50% representing a younger demographic. This diverse leadership team aims to bring its wealth of experience and perspectives to the organization.

### Team culture and competencies

**Competencies:** At FAH, the competencies essential to success include: 1) strategic thinking (the ability to align team actions with FAH's mission and long-term goals); 2) collaboration and partnership building (working effectively with governments, funders and stakeholders to achieve shared objectives); 3) resilience and adaptability (navigating challenges and evolving strategies to remain impactful in dynamic environments); 4) data-driven decision-making (using evidence to drive results and demonstrate impact); and 5) cultural competence (valuing and incorporating diverse perspectives to ensure relevance and inclusivity in health solutions).

**Values:** These competencies are deeply aligned with the organization's core values, which include a culture of respect and trust; challenging and disrupting the status quo; curiosity, passion and effectiveness; and supporting the well-being of communities.

**Collaborative and adaptive learning:** FAH integrates collaborative and adaptive learning methods into its operations to ensure continuous improvement and alignment with its mission. They do this through data-driven decision-making, stakeholder engagement and feedback, and iterative programme design, as well as regular team check-ins, quarterly and annual strategic review, and workshops and retreats. Finally, they conduct surveys and focus groups and have centralized platforms for tracking progress against defined metrics, allowing visibility across teams.

### Enabling technology

FAH relies on several tech platforms to enhance efficiency, streamline operations and support its mission to strengthen community health systems. Key platforms include: Odoo, a comprehensive enterprise resource planning (ERP) system for operational processes; Microsoft Teams (collaboration and communication); PaySpace (for payroll and human resources management); and social media platforms (for public engagement and advocacy).

## Impact

FAH has worked closely with **22 national and sub-national governments in 16 countries.**  
FAH is currently working in **seven countries.**

### Money mobilized



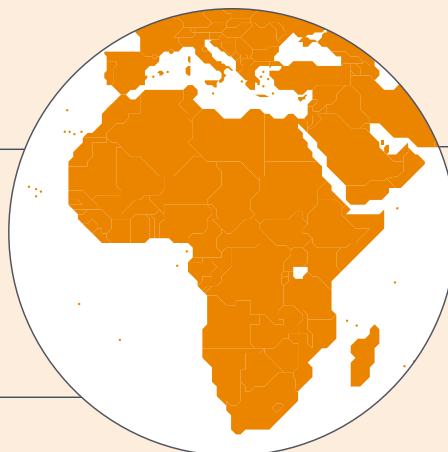
**\$38.5**

Domestic resources



**\$500 MILLION**

Ecosystem contribution



**+\$120  
MILLION**



### CHW opportunities

**450,000**

CHW's recognized in policy and practise



### Stakeholder upskilled

**4,200 STAKEHOLDERS**

upskilled on health financing across **90+ countries**



## CASE STORY

### Africa Frontline First (AFF)



Launched in 2022 as a collaborative partnership with Community Health Impact Coalition and Last Mile Health, AFF is FAH's "big and bold" idea towards closing the annual \$4.4 billion community health financing gap. By 2030, AFF will scale community health systems in 10 African countries by institutionalizing 200,000 community health workers and improving healthcare outcomes for 100 million people. Its first fund, the AFF Catalytic Fund, hosted by the Global Fund and supported by the Johnson & Johnson Foundation and the Skoll Foundation, will deploy \$100 million. The aim is to create a model that can be replicated to provide large-scale financing and momentum for community health across the African continent.

AFF advocates for CHWs as the key investment to deliver universal healthcare. Well-structured and integrated CHW programmes offer a 10:1 return on investment, but too few programmes are sufficiently supported and financed. Instead, CHWs face significant challenges due to insufficient pay and recognition of their work, lack of training and supervision, frequent stockouts of drugs and supplies, and lack of integration into the public health system.

AFF brings together governments, donors, implementers and technical allies to overcome these challenges, with the aim of financing and strengthening integrated community health service delivery. FAH conceived the idea for AFF and

provided its initial funding. Other partners in the initiative include: the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Presidential Center for Women and Development, the Community Health Impact Coalition and Last Mile Health. Implementation partners include BRAC, GAIA Global Health, Integrate Health, LivingGoods, Lwala Community Alliance, mothers2mothers, Muso, TIP Global Health, D-Tree and VillageReach.



**In 2016, the Liberian government launched the National Community Health Assistant Program [...] With proper supervision, adequate salaries and enough supplies to reach every household in their communities, CHWs were empowered to provide standardized, integrated primary healthcare services. The results speak for themselves. Liberia's 4,000 CHWs now deliver nearly 50% of all reported malaria treatments for children under five and consistently provide access to health services, even during the COVID-19 pandemic [...] The experience of these countries, as well as others, shows that supporting CHWs and integrating them into national health systems can save lives and create livelihoods. It should serve as a guide for expanding community health services across the continent.**

**Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Jean Kaseya<sup>7</sup>**



7. Sirleaf, E. J. and J. Kaseya. (2024). *Strengthening Africa's Community Health Programs*. Project Syndicate. <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/africa-community-health-programs-must-be-coordinated-integrated-by-ellen-j-sirleaf-and-jean-kaseya-2024-02>.

# MapBiomas

Producing free, open and interactive land use maps for tropical forests worldwide

<b>Year founded</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>Groups assembled</b>	<b>20+</b> geographic and thematic initiatives comprised of independent local organizations.
<b>Regions represented</b>	<b>16</b> countries Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Indonesia, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela) and territories (Amazonia, Bosque Atlantico, Chaco, Pampa)	<b>Organizations involved</b>	<b>100+</b> organizations are members of the MapBiomas network.
<b>Entity type</b>	MapBiomas is organized as a network with no official central legal entity.	<b>Constituents represented</b>	<b>500,000+</b> users access MapBiomas annually, including from governments, financial institutions, agricultural companies and NGOs.

## Background

Tropical forests are critical to maintaining climate equilibrium, biodiversity and food security for the planet. When performed in an unsustainable way, land use activities in these regions, such as agriculture, logging and mining, contribute to deforestation and vegetation loss, which leads to increases in global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and loss of biodiversity. Land use changes also affect water cycles, impacting rainfall and the risk of soil erosion and desertification, which can harm agriculture and local livelihoods.

Obtaining quick, precise and frequent data on land use changes is critical to making decisions and monitoring and enforcing land use goals and policies. Timely data is also crucial for identifying illegal activities and tracking key indicators of land health, such as fire scars, carbon stock, and degradation and regeneration of native vegetation. However, traditional centralized methods of mapping are expensive and slow, preventing the creation and updating of multiple maps that reveal land use changes over time.

MapBiomas was founded in 2015 as a collaborative initiative in Brazil to use advanced technology and data to monitor land use and cover changes across the country. By integrating satellite imagery, machine learning (ML), cloud computing and contributions from universities, civil society and technology start-ups, MapBiomas initiatives provide detailed, annual reports on deforestation, agricultural expansion and other transformations in natural landscapes. Its comprehensive datasets are crucial for understanding the impacts of human activities on ecosystems and provide an essential tool for policy-makers, researchers and environmental advocates.

**Headquartered:** MapBiomas is fully distributed with **no central headquarters**. The Executive Secretariat of the network is coordinated by the Brazilian branch.



## Number of employees

**500+ people** involved in the network. MapBiomas has no employees; rather, its work is conducted by a network of more than 400 co-creators at network-affiliated institutions.

## Budget range

**\$12-16**  
million

## Collective architecture

### Action level



MapBiomass supports **more than 20 initiatives** that are organized geographically (e.g. countries and bioregions) and thematically (e.g. fire, water, soil and vegetation).

### Network level



Initiatives are part of the **MapBiomass network**, which is an open collaborative of over 100 organizations committed to supporting each other's initiatives. A coordination committee formed by representatives of each country in the network decides the strategic directions of the network.

### Supporting level



MapBiomass is supported by a four-person **coordination team**, three organizations that serve as fiscal sponsors for the network, and several teams that work on the infrastructure and common platforms. The team of co-creators are decentralized and employed by network organizations.



## The collective pathway



**Vision:** MapBiomass envisions a world where knowledge about land use is open and accessible, contributing to conservation and the sustainable management of natural resources as a way to mitigate climate change and support climate change adaptation.



**Method:** MapBiomass exists to build the capacity of network members to produce maps that reveal land use transformations worldwide with precision, agility and quality. MapBiomass inspires the development of new initiatives through a six-step process: 1) mobilize a network of organizations who want to initiate MapBiomass in their country or territory; 2) learn by doing: the group learns how to produce maps by producing maps; 3) make the maps public immediately, without waiting for scientific publication so that users can have access; 4) promote the use of the maps; 5) evaluate the impact and ensure financial sustainability; and 6) multiply the process by helping other countries to replicate the process.



**Principles:** MapBiomass initiatives are committed to producing locally relevant maps that are free and open to everyone so they can make better decisions in a timely fashion. To ensure this process is not impeded by political and organizational agendas, MapBiomass initiatives do not conduct advocacy activities or become involved in policy discussions. To maintain this neutrality, MapBiomass



does not include partner logos in presentations, but rather focuses on presenting the data in a united way. MapBiomass initiatives also commit to publishing data as quickly as possible, rather than following the timelines for scientific publication. In turn, this multiplies publications with MapBiomass data – in 2024 alone, over 1,300 peer reviewed papers were published globally using MapBiomass data. All data and codes used are open source and can be accessed both in a dashboard for experts, and through application programming interfaces (APIs) and tools to download and reprocess.

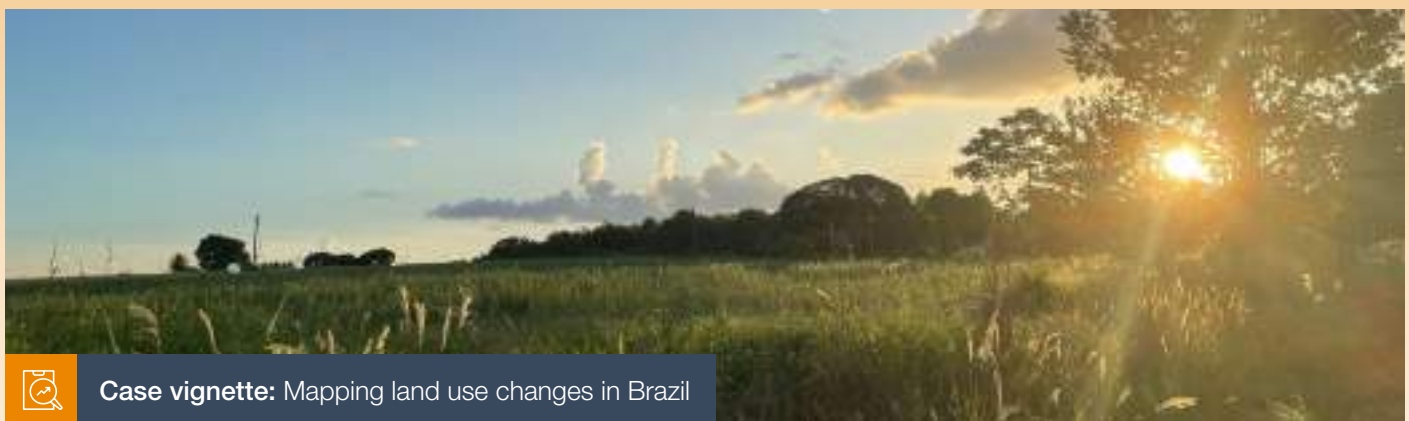


**Practices:** MapBiomass co-creators have developed dozens of methods for classifying land cover and use, including agriculture, mining, natural vegetation, pasture, water and urbanization. MapBiomass products are developed for land-use and land cover, deforestation alerts, secondary vegetation, water, fire, pasture quality, infrastructure, irrigation, mining and soil. A recent impact evaluation showed that the primary users of the MapBiomass platform apply the data to activities including public sector policy, land-use surveillance and monitoring, land-use planning, international trade agreements, supply chain monitoring, business opportunity identification and risk management, sustainable natural resource management, capacity building on land-use technology, public debate and exchange, and advancing scientific research.

Capability	Activities
<p><b>Building movements</b></p> 	<p><b>Creating a shared narrative:</b> MapBiomias creates a shared narrative that precise, timely and high-quality land use maps are feasible and freely available and should be done at a local level in each tropical country. This narrative creates passionate collaboration among co-creators and partners and high user satisfaction among the user base.</p> <p><b>Expanding the stakeholder base:</b> MapBiomias expands the stakeholder base in two ways: 1) assembling a wide range of co-creators (scientists, civil society and tech start-ups) to produce land use maps; and 2) growing a wide user base (governments, public prosecutors, businesses, banks, scientists and media) who are able to freely access and use the maps.</p> <p><b>Organizing field-level convenings:</b> MapBiomias organizes virtual and in-person releases of their annual maps, building a sense of anticipation and excitement about the data and the technology used to produce it.</p> <p><b>Celebrating impact:</b> The MapBiomias Awards are given annually to recognize and promote projects that use MapBiomias data to bring innovative solutions to conservation, sustainable management and the fight against climate change. It is open to students, researchers, teachers, consultants, NGOs, professionals from private companies and public managers.</p> <p><b>Engaging media and journalists:</b> The MapBiomias user base includes media outlets and journalists who are reporting on sustainable land management, conservation and climate change.</p>
<p><b>Strengthening data systems</b></p> 	<p><b>Creating shared definitions:</b> MapBiomias co-creators have assembled over 30 categories of land cover and use, which is instrumental in creating time series land-use maps. These categories enable granular analysis and AI ML for categorization of satellite images over time.</p> <p><b>Developing shared metrics:</b> MapBiomias is in the process of developing a robust monitoring and evaluation system which will assess the strength of the network and identify opportunities for improvement.</p> <p><b>Collecting, analysing and sharing data:</b> MapBiomias' platform uses publicly-available satellite imagery to collect high-resolution images of land cover and use over time. With AI tools, co-creators assemble and categorize these images. The result is highly detailed maps showing historical land use and changes over decades, covering every 30 by 30 metre area of the country. This makes it possible to produce several decades of maps in a single process.</p>
<p><b>Influencing institutions</b></p> 	<p><b>Supporting government data systems:</b> The MapBiomias team trains government teams to use MapBiomias' techniques and methods to improve government systems. In Bolivia, it leads to developing a government initiative for land cover and land use change monitoring. In Brazil, state governments are implementing systems to report environmental law enforcement.</p> <p><b>Augmenting government actions and effectiveness:</b> A recent evaluation revealed that 43% of MapBiomias users are within government departments and agencies. A total of 21% of users also reported that their primary use of MapBiomias was for public sector policies. The level of action to fight illegal deforestation grew in government agencies from 5% to 42% of deforested area between 2019 and 2023 (2019 started the operation of MapBiomias Deforestation Alert System).</p> <p><b>Shifting standards and expectations:</b> MapBiomias shows that it is possible to establish ambitious and continuous monitoring of land use with great detail and has helped to raise the bar on what is monitored and published by government institutions.</p>

## Collective action activities (continued)

Capability	Activities
<b>Hosting learning communities and building capacity</b> 	<p><b>Codifying a methodology:</b> MapBiomias' methodology for creating maps and publishing them for easy use is becoming best practice and the standard in many sectors and industries. All codes and methods of MapBiomias are openly accessible and free for all users.</p> <p><b>Capturing and disseminating learnings:</b> Everything that MapBiomias does is public and open. MapBiomias describes the evolution of methods and learnings through detailed algorithm theoretical basis documents (ATBDs), which describe MapBiomias's current processes as well as their journey to arrive at such processes.</p> <p><b>Consulting, coaching and training:</b> MapBiomias promotes and provides training for free to all public sector actors based on demand.</p>
<b>Investing in systemic solutions</b> 	<p><b>Sub-granting to network:</b> Each country member of the network has their own strategy for fundraising. MapBiomias does fundraise for the entire network through the secretariat, and a finance committee determines the allocation of funds for each of the different initiatives.</p> <p><b>Developing financing solutions:</b> MapBiomias does not sell any products or services and has no plans to do so. The model of being entirely free and open is key for adoption by users in public and private sectors (there is no excuse to not use the data). MapBiomias has recently developed an initiative to allow users to make donations to maintain the platform, but with no relationship with the access of data.</p>



### Case vignette: Mapping land use changes in Brazil

#### When MapBiomias released its annual report on deforestation (RAD) in May 2024, there was cause for both celebration and concern.

While the report showed an unprecedented decrease of 62%, it also showed an increase of 68% in the Cerrado biome. Brazil has six biomes; the two major biomes, the Amazon and Cerrado, account for 85% of the country's deforested areas. In 2023, the Cerrado overtook the Amazon in total area deforested, experiencing a 68% increase over 2022, largely driven by pasture and cropland expansion. Overall deforestation had dropped 11.6% in 2023 in Brazil. Tasso Azevedo, coordinator of MapBiomias, summarized: "The data shows the first drop in deforestation in Brazil since 2019, when the RAD began to be published. On the other hand, the face of deforestation is changing in Brazil, concentrating in biomes where savannah and grassland

formations predominate, and reducing in forest formations." MapBiomias has reported on every deforestation event in Brazil since 2019. During this period, the actions from environmental agencies increased from five to over 50% of the deforested area.

Since 2015, MapBiomias – a network of universities, NGOs and tech start-ups – has been mapping and monitoring land cover and land use changes with precision and speed that would have been unfeasible and prohibitively expensive in the past. Using the MapBiomias platform, it is now possible to quantify the complexity of land use changes in Brazil's biomes (and 13 other countries) over a 39-year period, from 1985 to 2023. With this level of detail and frequency, scientists, policy-makers, companies and government agencies can improve policy- and decision-making to promote sustainable land use in the tropics.<sup>8</sup>

8. Adapted from MapBiomias Brasil. (2024). *RAD 2023: Matopiba Overtakes the Amazon and Takes the Lead in Deforestation in Brazil*. <https://brasil.mapbiomas.org/en/2024/05/28/matopiba-passa-a-amazonia-e-assume-a-lideranca-do-desmatamento-no-brasil/>.

## Supporting infrastructure

### Governance and participation

MapBiomias is not a legal entity and therefore does not have any formal board; rather, strategic decisions in the network are taken by the coordination committee formed by representatives of each country in the network. Financial oversight is provided by one fiscal sponsor at the network level and by local fiscal sponsors in each country that steward funds received for the coordinating team, initiatives and projects. One of the unique and important aspects to MapBiomias' success is the network approach, which brings together many organizations with different agendas and even competing goals. The network has a secretariat, based in Brazil, and a coordination team, responsible for ensuring that every network partner and co-creator understands its role and participation commitment in initiatives and work on the expansion and consolidation of the network. Through this effort, organizations and collaborators have developed trusting relationships and a strong collaborative spirit that enables high-quality products and quick development timelines.

### Team culture and competencies

In each country and category, product development is decentralized and performed through a collaboration between local organizations. Each initiative sets ambitious time frames and deliverables for product development and delivery, and the coordination team works with them to facilitate the achievement of these goals. In a recent evaluation, 100% of collaborators

reported alignment with MapBiomias' purpose and 73% of collaborators described the workload as intense or very intense. This combination of purpose and passion makes MapBiomias a desirable place to collaborate (88% would recommend working at MapBiomias to colleagues) and drives the high quality and success of the network.

### Collaborative and adaptive learning

MapBiomias teams work in cells/working groups that develop different map themes (e.g. forest, mangrove, cropland) and each part of the platform (e.g. dashboards, website, etc.), and share all codes in the same environment (e.g. GitHub and Google Earth Engine). Groups meet regularly, with most holding meetings weekly. In the case of Brazil, for example, there is a call every Friday afternoon open to all team members to share experiences, advancements and determine next steps.

### Enabling technology

MapBiomias uses Google Earth Engine and Google Cloud Platform to access and process satellite imagery using ML and deep learning tools. To build the platforms for the distribution and public access of all data, several technologies are used, including Leaflet, Cybernet, Ruby on Rails and others. MapBiomias uses Github as the repository for code used by teams and to make it open to all users.

## Impact

According to a 2023 external evaluation of MapBiomias:<sup>9</sup>



The evaluation confirmed that decision-makers access MapBiomias products to improve the sustainable management of natural resources. These users also indicated that, for many biomes, MapBiomias is the most reliable source of information, and the tool has made evidence-based information much more readily available and accessible.



Many stakeholders felt more "positive" pressure to act and more reasons to do so once MapBiomias increased awareness on land-use issues. In total, eight of the 10 biggest banks in Brazil rely on MapBiomias; the three largest meatpackers and the two largest paper companies also access the platform to inform decisions.

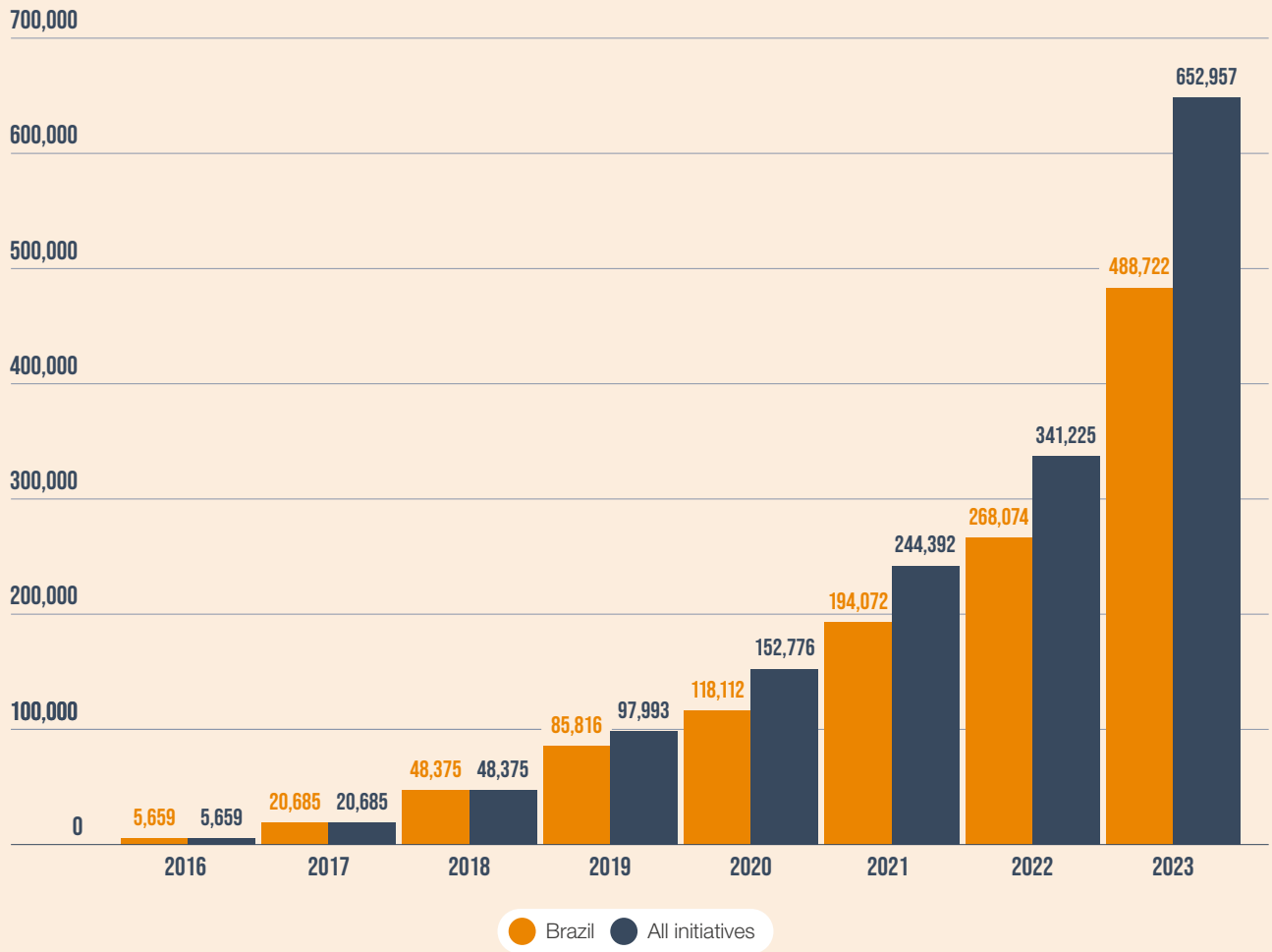


Many users suggested that without MapBiomias they would have faced difficulties in trying to achieve the same results within the same time frame or at all. MapBiomias has been mentioned as a time saver and more efficient analysis tool.

9. MapBiomias. (2023). *MapBiomias External Evaluation and Impact Assessment*. <https://brasil.mapbiomas.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2024/01/External-Evaluation-Report-MapBlmas-2019-2022.pdf>.

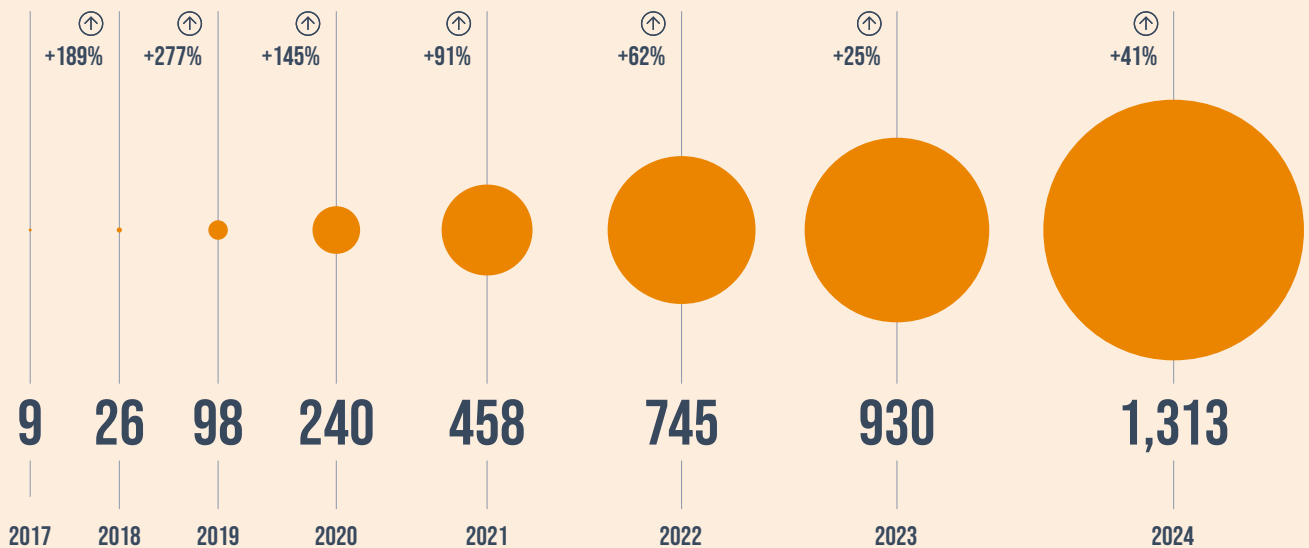
Impact (continued)

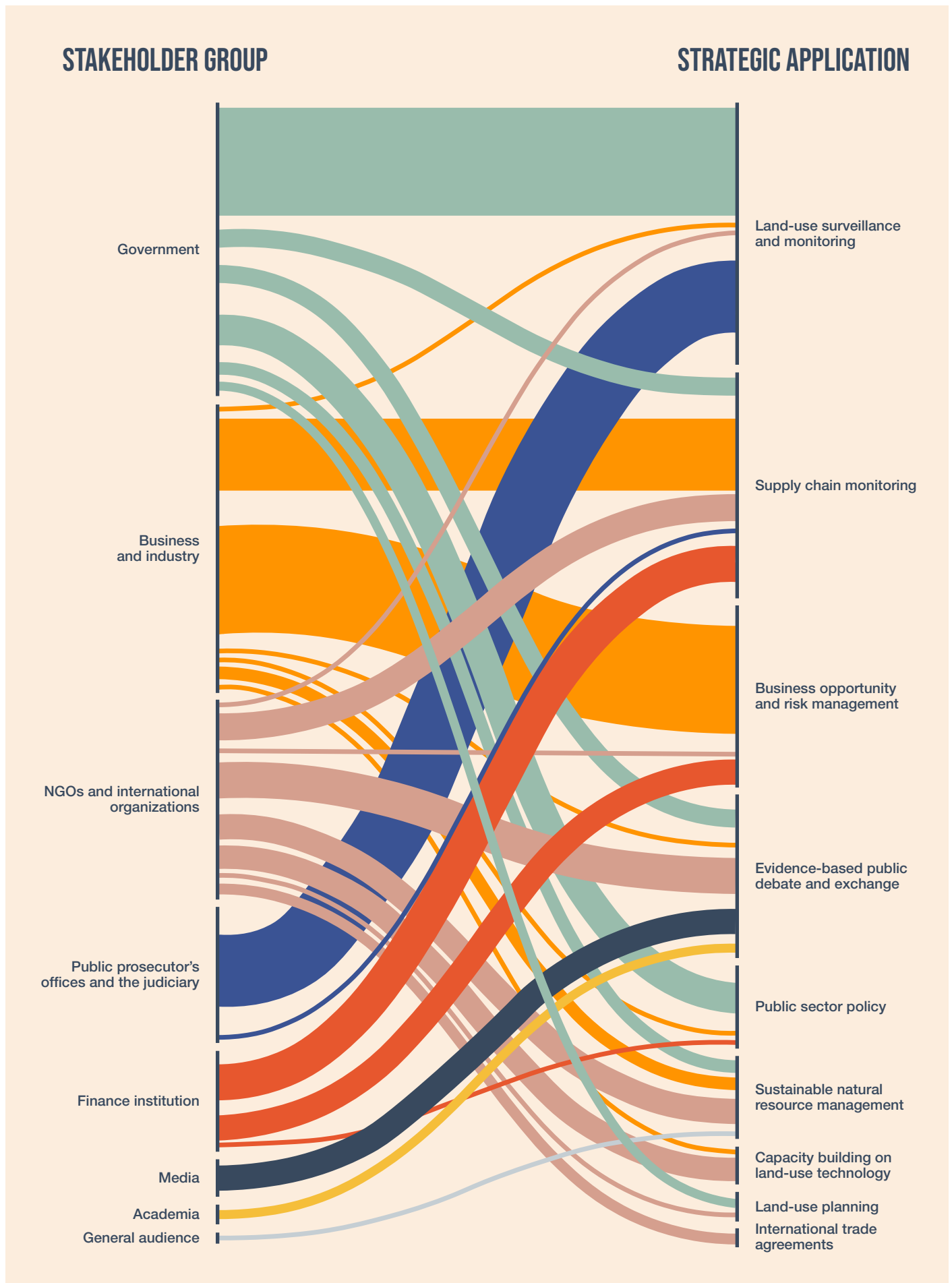
Total unique users of the MapBiomass platform per year between 2016-2023



Academic articles

published with MapBiomass data (2017-2024)





## Finance institutions using MapBiomias for credit decisions<sup>10</sup>



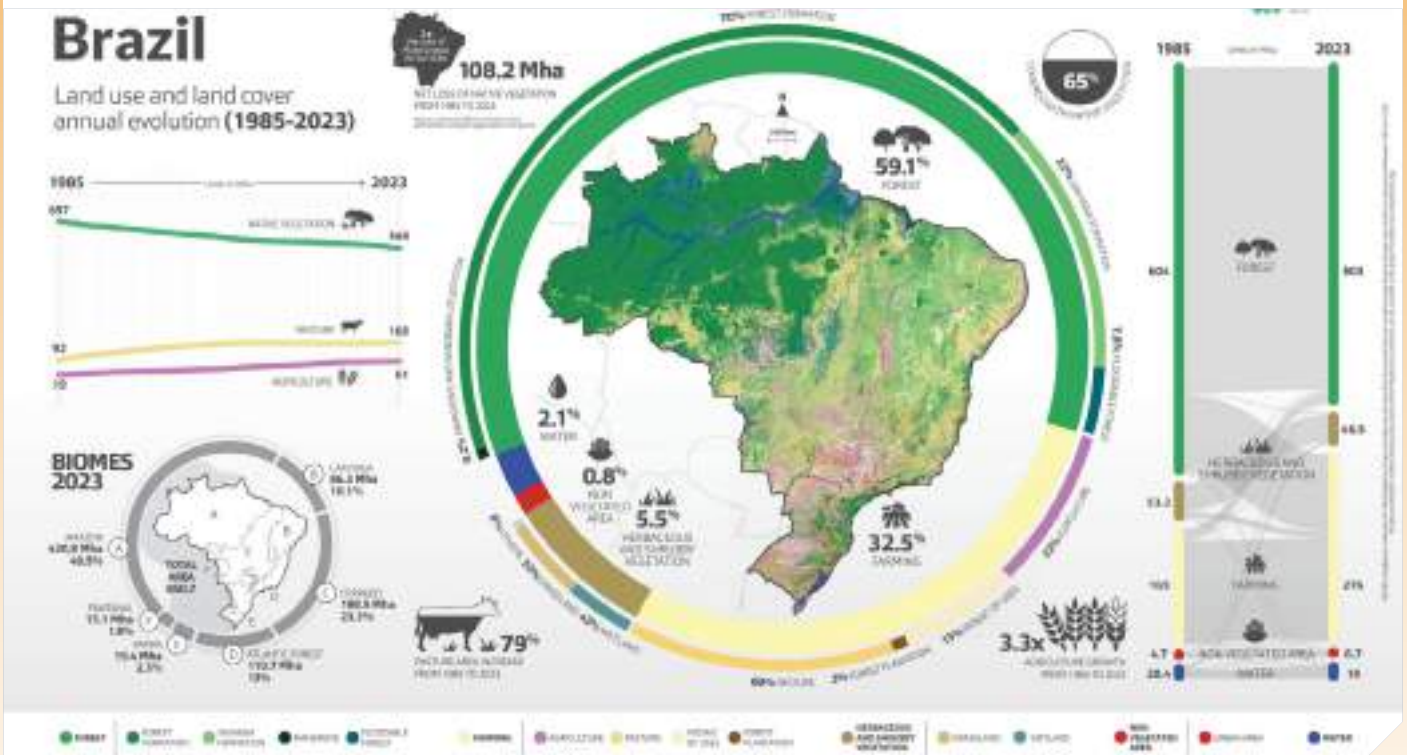
MapBiomias Alerta is an initiative built on the MapBiomias platform which validates and brings together deforestation and land degradation alerts from various detection services across all of Brazil's biomes. From 2019 to 2024, MapBiomias generated more than 450,000 alerts across Brazil. Importantly, the MapBiomias Alerta initiative publishes alerts for all native vegetation loss without assessing the legality or responsibility of the event.

In Brazil, banks are required to comply with environmental regulations when extending credit. To aid in this process, leading financial institutions in Brazil – including the Brazilian National Development Bank (BNDES), Banco do Brasil, Caixa Econômica Federal, Santander, Banco Itaú and Bradesco Bank – use MapBiomias Alerta, informing their risk

management processes by identifying deforestation events on farmers' land and blocking loans to landowners whose properties have exhibited illegal deforestation activity.

For example, BNDES has integrated with MapBiomias data to ensure that at-risk properties are identified before extending loans. Similarly, at Santander Bank, if a client's property shows evidence of deforestation for which the client is unable to provide proof of legal authorization, the bank requires the loan to be reimbursed.

In 2023 alone, over 18,000 credit applications have been denied due to the representation of deforestation with evidence of illegality identified in the MapBiomias Alerta platform.



10. Ibid.

# ProjectTogether

Creating a new “operating model” for social change

<b>Year founded</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>Groups assembled</b>	<b>10</b> thematic “missions” bring together stakeholders from government, public administration, corporates and civil society.
<b>Regions represented</b>	Germany, as well as a pilot initiative in Switzerland	<b>Organizations involved</b>	<b>3,000</b> organizations are involved in the ProjectTogether community.
<b>Entity type</b>	Non-profit organization	<b>Constituents represented</b>	<b>~100,000</b> people are or have been involved in one or more missions and the broader ProjectTogether community.

## Background

ProjectTogether started in 2015 as a grassroots social incubator, providing young social innovators with virtual coaching and social start-up bootcamps. In 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, ProjectTogether co-organized #WirVsVirus, mobilizing citizens, business and government to develop solutions for challenges arising from the pandemic. This virtual hackathon ran in March 2020, bringing together 28,361 citizens and generating 1,498 solutions in just 48 hours. ProjectTogether then organized a six-month implementation programme that supported 130 solutions out of the hackathon, of which, after six months, 25% had successfully finished, 50% were still up and running and 25% had stopped.

Building on this momentum, ProjectTogether launched a second initiative called UpdateDeutschland. Based on learnings from #WirVsVirus – in particular, that municipalities are key in driving change forward – this process included more than 60 mayors from across Germany. Rather than developing solutions from scratch (as in #WirVsVirus), UpdateDeutschland brought together more than 300 existing initiatives and matched them with mayors and municipalities in order to scale solutions from one region to other regions.

These two “missions” provided ProjectTogether with the basis for codifying a new “operating model” (or “HOW”) for mobilizing cross-sector alliances, bringing together hundreds of actors to address significant social challenges. However, these first initiatives addressed quite broad social themes. To hone their methodology further, ProjectTogether began to assume a more mission-oriented approach, defining common goals and then organizing hundreds of stakeholders from government/state, corporates and civil society behind these shared goals. Today, ProjectTogether has applied this approach to 10 themes – including shortage of skilled workers and green jobs, arrival processes for refugees and migrants, circular economy, regenerative agriculture and food systems, and more – while mobilizing more than 100,000 citizens in 2,500 organizations.

📍 **Headquartered:** Berlin, Germany



**Number of employees** **50**  
full-time

**Budget range** **€5.5** million  
ProjectTogether also manages €4.5 million in pooled funding for mission-generated collective action projects.

## Collective architecture

### Action level

**10 missions** unite hundreds of stakeholders across sectors to address pressing societal issues through the development of **collective action projects** – shared projects of various stakeholders working towards a goal that they could not achieve on their own.

### Network level


The **ProjectTogether community** brings together individuals from all missions as well as dedicated individuals from all areas of society – pioneers, experts, activists and visionaries – working collectively towards a more liveable future.


### Supporting level

The **ProjectTogether team** incubates and supports missions with dedicated “circles” of team members responsible for progressing missions through key model milestones. ProjectTogether also convenes key individuals who are not formally part of the organization – fellows, senior advisers, ambassadors and other key roles – to support missions and key projects with their expertise.




## The collective pathway

 **Vision:** ProjectTogether is convinced that society cannot solve the problems of today with the tools and methods of the past. They believe that society needs a new “HOW” to come together across sectors and hierarchies to develop and implement solutions to collective action problems of the present. While ProjectTogether’s missions are very diverse with regards to the mission topics, they are united by a common methodology and core principles that guide the work across missions. Overall, ProjectTogether’s mission also have a common vision of making Germany and Europe fairer, more resilient and more future-proof.

 **Method:** ProjectTogether emphasizes that democracies are being tested and must demonstrate that they can deliver results. ProjectTogether’s methodology is based on the idea that a new “HOW” is needed – a new “operating model” to work collaboratively to solve society’s most pressing challenges. Each mission uses the same operating model: 1) all relevant stakeholders unite behind a common mission; 2) people working on similar topics are brought together to identify areas of impact, levers that help address the mission’s challenge; 3) participants work to understand the problem in concrete terms; 4) solutions are bundled together; 5) collective action projects are

developed around challenges that none of the actors could solve alone; and 6) solutions are scaled and anchored with pooled resources and continuous learning. This model is updated periodically as part of the team’s continuous learning process.

 **Principles:** ProjectTogether’s methodology is underpinned by six key principles: 1) act with a mission in mind; 2) promote coordinated action; 3) build communities of trust; 4) form unusual alliances; 5) sense current possibilities and iteratively experiment to build on existing momentum; and 6) make sure that people feel empowered, included and needed.

 **Practices:** Missions conduct regular virtual “community calls” to assemble the entire mission community and provide updates on current activities and initiatives. Missions also circulate monthly newsletters to keep members aware of events and milestones. To sustain engagement, missions conduct in-person retreats each year, bringing mission members together to build trust and advance collective action projects, as well as an annual in-person or hybrid “festival” to bring together the larger stakeholder group.

Capability	Activities
<p><b>Building movements</b></p> 	<p><b>Creating a shared narrative:</b> ProjectTogether creates a shared narrative that a new “HOW” is needed to drive social change, assembling actors from across different sectors to enable collective action. Moreover, each mission creates a shared narrative around the mission’s challenge to mobilize and motivate hundreds of stakeholders.</p> <p><b>Expanding the stakeholder base:</b> ProjectTogether promotes an ethos of “unusual alliances”, bringing together actors who would not normally work together so that “bottom-up” solutions can be connected to established “top-down” structures. They also “mobilize for momentum” by monitoring the external environment and then channelling this energy into mobilizing more stakeholders to join together in missions.</p> <p><b>Organizing field-level convenings:</b> ProjectTogether intentionally creates an annual rhythm of meetings, celebrations and convenings that bring together the mission communities and the entire community for learning, connection and implementation of collective action projects.</p> <p><b>Celebrating key milestones:</b> ProjectTogether sets milestones across missions twice a year. These milestones are agreed upon with ProjectTogether’s external board of advisers and include key performance indicators (KPIs) such as the number of collective action projects created through ProjectTogether’s missions and the number of valuable connections between stakeholders formed. Within the missions, ProjectTogether shares regular updates and stories of change with the mission communities.</p>
<p><b>Strengthening data systems</b></p> 	<p><b>Creating shared definitions:</b> ProjectTogether has created a number of shared terms – such as missions and collective action projects – that reflect the structure and ethos of the organization.</p> <p><b>Developing shared metrics:</b> ProjectTogether encourages missions to develop metrics that make sense for their initiatives rather than standardizing metrics across projects and missions. Where possible, ProjectTogether does collect metrics related to the connectedness of missions, such as number of connections, strength of connections, strength of attachment to the mission and return on time invested.</p>
<p><b>Influencing institutions</b></p> 	<p><b>Re-envisioning the public sector:</b> ProjectTogether has a cross-mission initiative called Re:Form which is bringing together administrators in the German government across departmental boundaries, all federal levels and hierarchies. The aim is to connect civil servants who are changing and improving the bureaucratic state so they can learn from one another and instil culture change within public institutions. These civil servants work on implementing concrete experiments as well as an overall framework and vision for the state of tomorrow.</p> <p><b>Connecting civil society with government ministries:</b> ProjectTogether’s missions work with their respective government ministries in Germany. For the Welcome Alliance, ProjectTogether is working closely with the Ministry of the Interior, for example, on an inter-civil society and ministerial exchange, bringing together ministries and civil society organizations for bimonthly coordination meetings. This mission also works closely with other public institutions such as the Employment Agency and job centres.</p>
<p><b>Hosting learning communities and building capacity</b></p> 	<p><b>Codifying a methodology:</b> ProjectTogether codifies and continuously improves its “operating model” which is the methodology that guides mission development. Three to four times a year, the whole ProjectTogether team comes together for team retreats to cultivate cross-mission learning and exchange knowledge.</p> <p><b>Capturing and disseminating learnings:</b> ProjectTogether generates and disseminates learnings in a number of formats, including in-person and virtual events (fireside chats, panel discussions) and publications. ProjectTogether’s learning hub is a platform where practitioners learn from each other and share experiences and practices by building a common learning culture, learning practices and knowledge base. ProjectTogether also works with academia in real-time learning partnerships.</p> <p><b>Hosting communities of practice:</b> ProjectTogether hosts weekly peer learning sessions for mission leads as well as biweekly learning sessions for the whole team, often including external partners. In these learning sessions, the team shares experiences and examples while practicing important skills together (e.g. through role plays) or inviting guests and experts for inspiration and idea generation.</p>

## Collective action activities (continued)

Capability	Activities
<p><b>Hosting learning communities and building capacity</b> (continued)</p>	<p><b>Consulting, coaching and training:</b> ProjectTogether provides consulting, coaching and training to mission partners, and is also currently working with two international partners to enable them to build missions using the ProjectTogether method and approach. Consulting and coaching (encouraging a bold “can-do” attitude) are an integral part of these collaborations.</p> <p><b>Holding a physical community space:</b> ProjectTogether has a physical space in central Berlin where community members and other impact organizations are able to co-work and convene. ProjectTogether believes in the power of physical meetings and connections.</p>
<p><b>Investing in systemic solutions</b></p> 	<p><b>Shared administration for missions:</b> Missions are included under the legal structure of ProjectTogether, yet each mission has its own group of funders. ProjectTogether also has core funding that enables the organization to seed new missions, respond to critical events and momentum, and conduct cross-mission activities such as community building. On rare occasions, ProjectTogether has used core funding to supplement mission budgets.</p> <p><b>Developing financing solutions:</b> ProjectTogether pools funding from the private and public sector behind different missions to fund and support collective action projects that arise out of missions. In 2024, ProjectTogether pooled €4.5 million in these funds, including the United For Democracy Fund, The Farm-Food-Climate Companion Fund and the Welcome Alliance Fund. Through these philanthropic pooled funds, ProjectTogether tests out news ways of funding.</p>



### Case vignette: Careers shape the future

**"Careers Shape the Future" is an example of a collective action project (CAP) initiated by ANU-Hessen in collaboration with the educational organizations of the Hessian and Saxon economies as part of ProjectTogether's 10,000 Tage mission.**

At 53 locations in Hessen and Saxony, career orientation facilitators were trained to provide students and participants with practical insights into professions aligned with sustainable development. Participants first engage with modular teaching materials to explore the fundamentals of climate change and its implications for career opportunities. These materials, carefully designed to reach diverse audiences, are reviewed for linguistic and anti-discrimination sensitivity to ensure

inclusivity. Facilitators then collaborate with local chambers of commerce, employers and employment agencies to connect participants with sustainability-focused industries through real-world projects. “It is especially important that the topic of sustainable development and its significance for the working world reaches socially disadvantaged individuals as well – regardless of their age, gender identity, background or language proficiency. Shaping the climate transition is a task for society as a whole, which can only succeed if everyone is included,” says Jonathan Funke, Mission Lead of 10,000 Tage. With a network of 2,700 facilitators across nationwide locations, the initiative has the potential to reach up to 500,000 participants annually when it scales across all 16 German federal states.

## Supporting infrastructure

### Governance and participation

ProjectTogether is governed by a core leadership circle, which guides the strategic direction for the organization. Mission decision-making is almost completely decentralized with mission leads (usually co-leads) and cross-functional teams responsible for specific milestones and initiatives. Alignment between missions happens through the learning hub, weekly meetings and quarterly team retreats. ProjectTogether also has an external advisory board which meets twice a year, setting six-month milestones for the team. The advisory board has a number of smaller sub-groups for specific topics which meet more frequently to guide specific workstreams.

### Team culture and competencies

ProjectTogether has documented its team culture to set a strong intention for the way it works. The team is organized in “circles”, which are responsible for missions and operational functions. Within these circles, team members assume standardized roles according to their interests and skill sets. The team has a rhythm of shared experiences and rituals to provide ample opportunity for cross-learning. Specific meeting formats include the weekly “all hands” and biweekly “all brains” meetings which ensure cross-pollination and alignment across circles. ProjectTogether also organizes “team days” three times per year and biannual celebrations for team- and trust-building.

### Collaborative and adaptive learning

ProjectTogether has a strong culture of continuous and adaptive learning across its missions and operations. On a weekly basis, mission leads meet to discuss what they are learning, share challenges and make requests for support. The team conducts an annual review of its methodology, updating it to be in line with recent learnings from missions. In some cases, this process results in a complete “makeover” of the methodology, while in other cases, the result is just “tweaks”. ProjectTogether also recognizes that collaborative work naturally results in tensions: the organization sees these tensions as opportunities and regularly creates open space for discussions and dialogue.

### Enabling technology

ProjectTogether has attempted to use digital community tools (both off-the-shelf and internally developed); however, these attempts have been unsuccessful. Instead, ProjectTogether finds that simple tools for connecting – e.g. Signal, Whatsapp and Slack – are more useful for missions. ProjectTogether also uses software for connecting and partnership management, such as MailerLite (newsletter distribution), Tally (form/survey distribution), Hubspot (customer relationship management), Zoom (meetings and webinars) and cloud-based document sharing infrastructure. Finally, ProjectTogether uses “no code/low code” solutions to connect existing solutions to each other to digitally support and automate processes and mission needs.

## Impact



**3,000+**

organizations from all areas of society integrated



**100,000**

people in processes involved



**10+**

missions carried out



**€20 million+**

funding for missions and philanthropic funds secured



**80**

ministries, state governments and municipalities involved



**7**

official partnerships with the federal government and ministries

Currently, **five missions** are active with the following actors involved:



Leander von Thien

### 10,000 Days

Connects over 270 partners behind the common mission of attracting people to climate jobs and closing the gap in skilled workforce. The mission has incubated over 30 collective action projects and funded 14 of those collective action projects with €1.5 million, supported 1,100 job seekers with career orientation and continuing education. If all the projects achieve their full potential, a total of 250,000 skilled workers can be added by 2030.



Leander von Thien

### Circular Futures

Connects over 300 partners towards creating a waste-free future and circular economy. The mission helped create "mehrweg.einfach.machen", a project that promotes reusable containers. This project tested ways to encourage the use of multi-use containers at 800 points of sale across Germany, collecting 2.1 million data points in the process. They also held an event with 130,000 visitors, using only reusable to-go containers.



Marlene Charlotte Limburg

### Re:Form

An alliance that develops new ideas and drives implementation towards a modern government and public state reform. Re:Form brings together hundreds of members of public administration – across hierarchies and federal levels. The alliance has already had an impact in putting the topic on public agenda and driving new ideas forward.



### Welcome Alliance

Connects over 500 partners towards creating a modern immigration system for Germany. The mission has incubated 25 collective action projects, distributed €4.4 million (cross-sector) initiatives to improve arrival and participation processes of refugees and migrants, and supported over 120 projects and individuals.



### Farm-Food-Climate initiative

Connects over 250 partners to make the agricultural and food transition towards ecologically friendly approaches. The mission has incubated 20 collective action projects, distributed €600,000 towards transformation projects and convened over 1,000 participants at physical events.

## CASE STORY

### The Welcome Alliance mission



In February 2022, four days after Russia's full-scale invasion into Ukraine, the ProjectTogether team decided to use its convening power and brought together 80 participants in a virtual meeting. This was the start of the Alliance4Ukraine which, only a few weeks later, had grown to a network of 450 organizations from civil society, business and public sector. After two weeks, the team realized that pooling funds would also be crucial in quickly supporting civil society initiatives, leading to the establishment of the **Alliance4Ukraine** fund. This fund pooled money from over 25 funders (foundations, corporates, private wealth owners) and supported more than 80 projects with a record-breaking two-week application to disbursement funding turnaround through the end of the year.

Over time, with the arrival of over 1 million people from Ukraine to Germany, the mission recognized the broader challenge of integrating a growing refugee population into the social fabric of the country. In 2023, the mission changed its name to **Welcome Alliance** and expanded its remit to creating humane, needs-oriented, and sustainable integration and participation processes for all newly arrived people in Germany.

Today, the Welcome Alliance provides a network where citizens, civil society organizations, and state and economic actors can come together to strengthen services and support to new arrivals in Germany. With the methodologies and approaches created by ProjectTogether, people from different sectors meet and take joint action. Areas of action include education and the labour market, political participation, housing, information and counselling, encounter and engagement, and mental health.

One example of a CAP that is supported through the Welcome Alliance is a digital matching platform for refugees with private hosts, called "Helfende Wände". Together with the private company Wunderflats, the Ministry of the Interior, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees as well as civil society organizations such as the International Psychosocial Organisation (IPSO), this platform was established to mobilize and build a central point of contact for civil society reserve in terms of private accommodation and actively matches refugees with private flats and rooms every day. Thousands of refugees have already found accommodation through the platform.

Another example of a CAP is Patenmatch, a platform that supports the matching of volunteers and refugees with

hundreds of tandem partnership and mentoring organizations in Germany. The platform is offered in nine languages and has supported thousands of matches. Matching a local and a refugee is a scientifically proven, very effective method to support the arrival and participation process.

The Alliance4Ukraine fund also evolved into the Welcome Alliance fund which is a public-private funding initiative led by the Welcome Alliance in collaboration with the German Federal Ministry of the Interior and supporters from the business sector, private foundations and individual philanthropists. To date, the Alliance4Ukraine Fund and Welcome Alliance Fund have pooled a total of €3.5 million in private and €1 million in public money. The Welcome Alliance fund provides a tailored and efficient funding mechanism for migration and integration projects, combining public and private resources to be deployed flexibly and effectively to specific projects in a faster, less bureaucratic and more effective manner. This approach strengthens resilient structures in migration and integration. To maximize flexibility, the fund currently tests five different types of funding mechanisms, such as prize money and scholarships for private individuals. It is the first public-private fund of its kind and a pilot to test how public money can be spent in a non-bureaucratic, fast and crisis-appropriate way.

A public-private advisory board, comprising 12 experts from various sectors and fields of expertise related to migration and integration, including lived experience, meets bimonthly to issue funding recommendations. This diverse board explores innovative approaches to forward-looking funding and cross-sector collaboration. The Welcome Alliance is also represented by a group of ambassadors who advise the team and network partners on concrete implementation projects. Ambassadors have themselves experienced the challenges of arriving in Germany, and through their personal and professional backgrounds, they provide valuable and important advice for the Welcome Alliance's work. If the pilot project is successful, this model could be adapted to address other societal crises and challenges, serving as a key component of a collaborative state-civil society interface.

In 2024, the fund supported **41 projects, events and individuals** with over **€1.7 million** from public and private sources. This financial backing strengthened initiatives to promote integration and participation for refugees and migrants.



# Shikshagraha

Mobilizing a people's education movement dedicated to improving 1 million public schools in India

<b>Year founded</b>	Mantra4Change was founded in 2013 and ShikshaLokam was founded in 2017. Collective action began through the Punjab Education Collective in 2019 (a state-wide collective), then Shikshagraha in 2023 (a nationwide collective).	<b>Groups assembled</b>	<b>3</b> missions engaging system leaders, social entrepreneurs, young people and women leaders in communities (state, district and community level sub-collectives)
<b>Regions represented</b>	India (nationwide)	<b>Organizations involved</b>	<b>~75</b> organizations are currently represented in the collectives.
<b>Entity type</b>	Shikshagraha is not a legal entity; it is a movement with many registered and non-registered organizations participating.	<b>Constituents represented</b>	<b>40</b> million children and 300,000 education leaders across 100 districts by 2027

## Background

The ethos of Shikshagraha began in 2013, when Mantra4Change was founded and ran a pilot project to improve seven schools in the southern Indian city of Bangalore. With learnings from this initial set of partner schools over five years, the programme's design and approach to working with public education system administration and school leaders was codified and expanded to several states. At the same time, a second organization, ShikshaLokam, was founded in 2017 to accelerate school leadership development at population scale in India. Modelled on Societal Thinking<sup>11</sup> – a method to catalyse exponential change – ShikshaLokam was simultaneously focused on building an ecosystem for co-creation with other education non-profit organizations in the country.

In 2019, the two organizations joined with two additional organizations – Sanjhi Sikhiya and Samarthyaa – to form a collective with the aim of creating a state-wide school improvement initiative in Punjab, a state in the north-west of India. A 2017 study of Punjab's education system had revealed that only 36% of Grade 3 students were able to read at the grade level below, while 50% of students in Grade 5 could not comprehend basic math operations. This challenging situation called for a novel approach.

The four organizations approached the Department of School Education in Punjab without ready-made plans; instead, they brought curiosity and a willingness to learn and co-create with the government. The government leaders showed a positive attitude and a willingness to embark on a learning journey. After a period of in-depth observing and listening, the collective developed a list of over 25 simple but powerful “plus one” ideas for “micro-improvements” – ideas that build on what already exists in schools and classrooms. The government gave the collective the go-ahead to pursue the entire list of ideas and urged them to empower existing school leaders and teachers to pursue the improvements rather than add layers of bureaucracy and administration.

Fast forward to today: this initial collective, named the Punjab Education Collective, has implemented micro-improvements in 19,000 schools, educating 2 million students. In four years, these micro-improvements have lifted Punjab's state results from the lower half of all 28 states to now ranking first in both the Performance Grading Index (PGI) and the National Achievement Survey (NAS) for the entire country. Encouraged by this extraordinary impact, two more state-wide collectives were set up in 2022. While these organizations learned the nuances of collective action rapidly, they soon realized their individual efforts would be unable to catalyse the full transformation of the public school system required to serve India's children with scale and speed. Thus, in November 2023, the team launched an even larger collective: a nationwide movement called Shikshagraha, designed to reach 1 million public schools, impacting over 150 million school-age children in India.

**Headquartered:**  
Bangalore,  
Karnataka, India



## Number of employees

Shikshagraha has no employees. Its efforts are led by the network of partner organizations and co-builders.

## Budget range

**\$20-25**  
million

11. Hans, A. (2022). *ShikshaLokam: Building beyond*. Societal Thinking. <https://societalthinking.org/blog/shikshalokam-impact/>.

## Collective architecture

### Action level



**Collectives** are multistakeholder partnerships committed to improving the student learning experience in school districts. They encompass missions, which are district and community sub-collectives implementing contextual micro-improvements in schools.

### Network level



These collectives are united in the **Shikshagraha Movement**, providing a common method and set of principles for improving student learning experiences.

### Supporting level



Mantra4Change and ShikshaLokam serve as **co-builders** of the movement. They convene the stakeholders (including district-level governments), co-create with collectives, support rollout, and enable standardized reporting and institutionalization of programmes. The movement also has a collective governance structure with a leadership team composed of members from partner organizations.



## The collective pathway



**Vision:** Shikshagraha envisions an India where every child completes their education (Grades K to 12) in a community-led, locally empowered, continuously improving public school system that values and enhances their potential.



**Method:** Shikshagraha's "roadmap" for change is co-created with relevant stakeholders ensuring that 1) decision-making is decentralized so that districts can manage and improve their schools autonomously; 2) the agency of principals, teachers, and local leaders is restored such that they drive change independently and consistently; and 3) NGOs, government, educators and communities are unified to work collaboratively for sustainable impact. Partners in Shikshagraha collectives start by co-designing programmes with the government actors and institutions at the state or district levels to drive school improvement. This co-design process is informed by an in-depth study of the geography (current challenges, aspirations, influencing factors, among other factors). A joint programme management unit (PMU) is set up, consisting of representatives from the NGOs and the Public Education Department. The PMU then works with relevant government institutions to train teacher mentors and/or supervisors to design, lead and support micro-improvements in schools and classrooms. They are supported by the PMU through expert-led sessions and workshops, technology-enabled digital learning and school improvement projects, and peer learning circles. This method leads to improvement in school leaders' practices, school environment, teaching-learning practices and community engagement.



**Principles:** Shikshagraha's approach is built on four guiding principles: 1) collective action as a catalyst: drive scalable impact through hyperlocal partnerships, uniting civil society, NGOs, educators and government. Change happens when all stakeholders come together, with communities leading the way; 2) decentralization as a cornerstone: recognizing India's diversity, Shikshagraha advocates for local, context-specific solutions by establishing nested tiers of decision-making. Decentralized solutions ensure relevance and responsiveness to each unique community's needs; 3) agency at the heart of transformation: empower local communities and school leaders to drive their own educational futures. When individuals take ownership, change becomes tangible and sustainable; and 4) continuous improvement as a mindset: embrace a mindset focused on steady growth, celebrating each incremental step towards greater equity in education. These principles are supported by four key movement values: agency, collaboration, grit and accessibility.



**Practices:** All of the movement's practices are focused on improving school performance and children's learning experiences. Shikshagraha has a growing list of micro-improvements co-created with district leaders. These include practices such as parent-teacher meetings, reading hours during the school day, reading "melas" (state-wide reading campaigns) and project-based learning. District and school leaders choose and/or co-create the practices they would like to implement and share data across a national digital platform while they implement them in schools.

## Collective action activities

Capability	Activities
<b>Building movements</b> 	<p><b>Creating a shared narrative:</b> Shikshagraha is creating a shared narrative that collective action and micro-improvements at the school and classroom level can create a resurgence of education equity in India.</p> <p><b>Expanding the stakeholder base:</b> Shikshagraha ensures that collectives are composed of multiple stakeholders, including civil society, government, business and communities, to improve school environments and outcomes.</p> <p><b>Organizing field-level convenings:</b> Shikshagraha hosts dialogues around education equity across the country (Shiksha Samvaad for education enablers; Shiksha Chaupal for grassroots education leaders). These dialogues culminate in the annual convening, InvokED, which brings together education leaders across the country.</p> <p><b>Celebrating key milestones:</b> Shikshagraha emphasizes an ethos of “small wins” that unpacks school improvements into “micro improvements” and encourages schools to celebrate when these small milestones are achieved.</p> <p><b>Shaping cultural capital:</b> Shikshagraha has a movement “anthem” in which children sing and dance to music videos.</p>
<b>Hosting learning communities and building capacity</b> 	<p><b>Codifying a methodology:</b> Shikshagraha has codified its “micro-improvements” approach so that each district can implement the methodology through the collectives.</p> <p><b>Capturing and disseminating learnings:</b> Shikshagraha captures the learnings of collectives in case studies, playbooks, impact reports, short stories, blog posts and videos.</p> <p><b>Hosting communities of practice:</b> Shikshagraha builds peer learning communities for each collective in order to cross-pollinate learnings across schools and classrooms.</p> <p><b>Consulting, coaching and training:</b> Districts and schools are supported by network partners, including anchor partners (providing training and support to state-level leaders) and momentum partners (providing grassroots support to schools and communities).</p>
<b>Strengthening data systems</b> 	<p><b>Creating shared definitions:</b> Shikshagraha and the collective partners use common terms and definitions to describe principles, roles, approaches and activities. This unique terminology helps create alignment across districts and partners.</p> <p><b>Developing shared metrics:</b> Shikshagraha has a shared set of metrics to measure collectives’ impact. These metrics are shared at the network, systems, school and student levels.</p> <p><b>Collecting, analysing and sharing data:</b> Shikshagraha is in the process of developing a public dashboard which will collect and share a common set of metrics for collectives.</p>
<b>Influencing institutions</b> 	<p><b>Developing policy recommendations:</b> Shikshagraha works closely at the national government level to influence policies related to education leadership and decentralization. At the state and district levels, Shikshagraha aligns policy and state priorities with movement principles and enables budget and resource allocations for school leadership programmes.</p> <p><b>Support to public institutions:</b> Shikshagraha works within the existing public school system, with anchor partners and grassroots partners providing different levels of support to national, state, district and schools.</p>
<b>Investing in systemic solutions</b> 	<p><b>Sub-granting to collectives:</b> As co-builders, Mantra4Change and ShikshaLokam are creating a collective pool of funding for Shikshagraha to enable programmes, research, advocacy and convening, with a focus on long-term, multi-year funding to enable strong partnerships.</p>



### Case vignette: Increasing belonging in Tamil Nadu schools

**In the Nagapattinam district of Tamil Nadu, social inequality is a deeply rooted problem which affects students' sense of belongingness.**

This issue leads to irregular attendance and persistent absenteeism in government schools. With the support of the Vidhya Vidhai Foundation, a Shikshagraha “momentum partner” in the state, the district co-created a micro-improvement project to set up a “house system” and promote inclusive practices and increase attendance. In the district’s 181 public schools, students and teachers were divided into four houses, and leaders and class captains were selected for each house. The leaders then facilitated

meetings to set objectives and develop a scoring system for houses achieving core responsibilities, such as maintaining discipline, keeping classrooms clean and managing the notice board. Every two weeks, head teachers met with house leaders and class captains to discuss participation and progress. Over five months, increased interaction among students and rewards for attendance led to an improved sense of belongingness, with stronger peer relationships leading to fewer dropouts. Overall, the participating schools reported an average increase in student attendance by 7.5%. Seeing its impact, this initiative is now being implemented in all of the over 37,500 public schools across the state by the Tamil Nadu State Education Department.

## Supporting infrastructure

### Governance and participation

Shikshagraha is not registered as a legal entity. It has a three-tiered leadership structure. It is governed by a leadership group that includes representatives from partner organizations to ensure shared governance and accountability. There is a strategic leadership team which steers strategic vision, ensures financial oversight and makes key policy decisions, as well as an advisory board, which brings industry expertise, insights and guidance. This collaborative structure is key to driving long-term sustainability and maximizing the impact of initiatives.

### Team culture and competencies

Shikshagraha creates an ecosystem of support and learning for districts and schools, with a number of different roles for partner organizations and individuals. Institutional roles include co-builders, strategic partners, anchor partners, momentum partners and collaborators. Individual roles include advisors, ambassadors and mentors.

**Competencies:** Shikshagraha has developed a list of verbs to describe the set of skills and activities they seek in team members and partners, including: “amplify” (spreading the

word about the movement), “convene” (bringing together stakeholders across different sectors), “implement” (executing programmes and interventions), “design” (creating innovative solutions, frameworks and tools), “orchestrate” (coordinate and align efforts towards common objectives), “enable” (provide support, resources and capacity building), “connect” (establishing connections and partnerships between different actors in the system), “mentor” (guiding and supporting others in the movement), and “build narrative” (craft and share powerful stories that inspire others to join).

**Values:** The initial set of partner organizations of Shikshagraha came together to identify shared values upon which the movement would be built. Those values are: 1) agency (the ability to solve problems independently); 2) collaboration (working together to succeed); 3) grit (continuing to make things happen; and 4) open to all (being accessible to everyone without barriers).

### Collaborative and adaptive learning

Shikshagraha embeds continuous and adaptive learning into all of its work, both with partner organizations and more broadly with all stakeholders that are part of collectives. Team members from partner organizations meet regularly on community of practice (CoP) calls or during Shiksha Samvaad meetings to discuss what they are learning and to adapt methods and practices accordingly. With stakeholders in collectives, the

concept of continuous improvement is integral to the approach of “micro-improvements” – implementing “plus one” changes that capitalize on existing strengths and then adapting them based on emergent learnings.

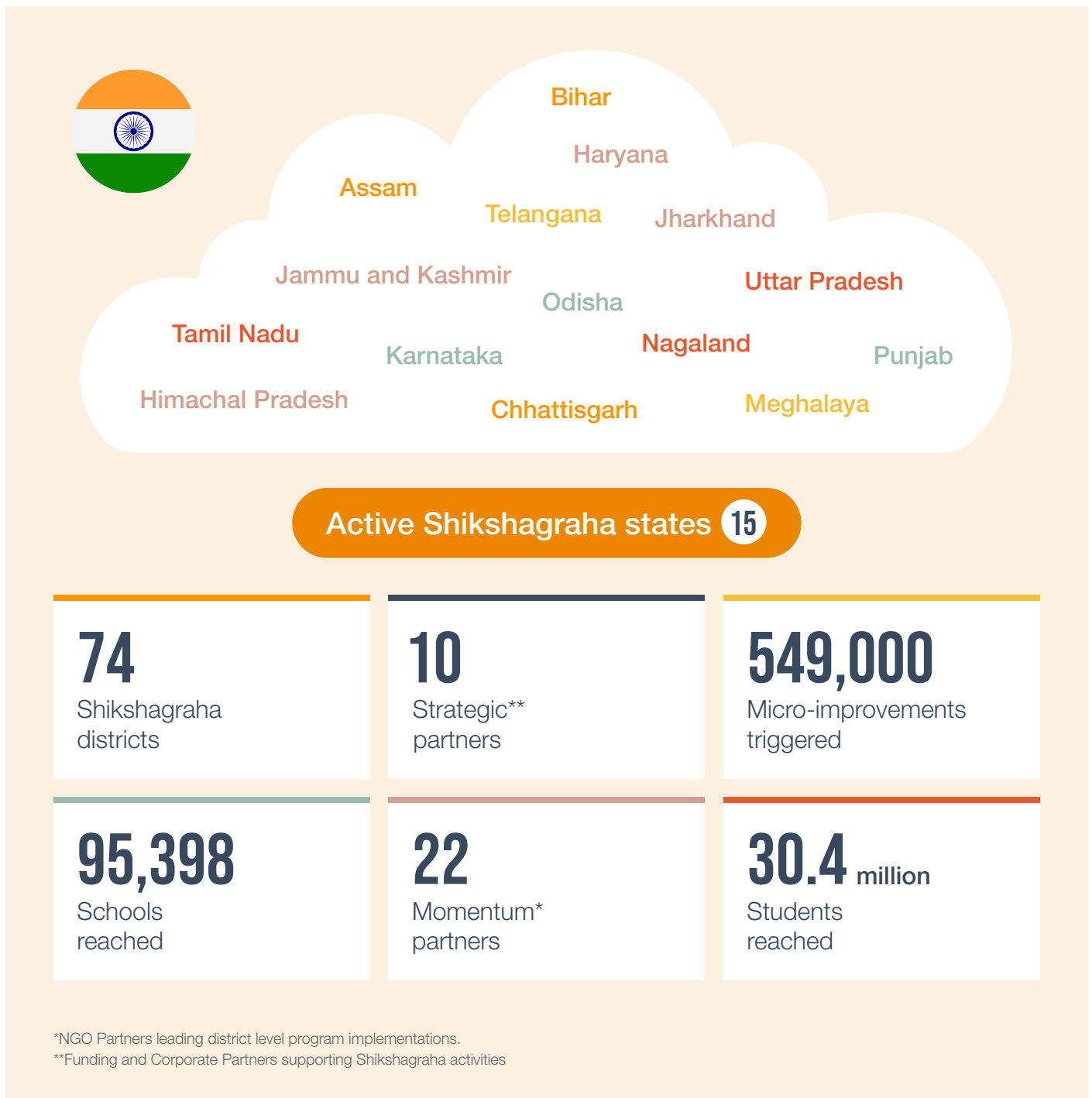
### Enabling technology

Shikshagraha’s micro-improvement approach is enabled on the Ministry of Education-hosted government platform, Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA), which was

co-built by ShikshaLokam. This platform provides leaders and teachers the ability to access and discover common information, micro-improvements, including step-by-step guides, resources and tools. Another hosted application offering similar capabilities is also made available to the community-based hyperlocal partner ecosystem. Shikshagraha will also support the development of other technology solutions based on programme needs to support learning, assessments and mentoring. Finally, a public dashboard will be released that will capture, consolidate and share common metrics across the collectives.

## Impact

Prior to the Shikshagraha movement, the partnering organizations inspired **over 1 million micro-improvements in 30% of India’s public schools**. With the launch of the movement in 2023, Shikshagraha has further enabled need-based, local partnerships in 74 districts across 15 states in India.



\*NGO Partners leading district level program implementations.

\*\*Funding and Corporate Partners supporting Shikshagraha activities

As the movement develops, Shikshagraha will be measuring its impact on four levels. At the network level, they will measure the number of partners and the volume of their interactions. At the **systems level**, they will measure the number of districts impacted, the number of organizations onboarded, the number of convenings organized and the number of tools and knowledge assets developed. At the **school level**, they will measure

increased average attendance, percentage of students achieving grade-level reading outcomes and percentage of students able to perform grade level mathematical operations. At the **student level**, they will measure percentage of students showing improvement on national exams, percentage improvement in attendance and percentage improvement in enrolment.

## CASE STORY

### A reading mela in Shri Muktsar Sahib District, Punjab

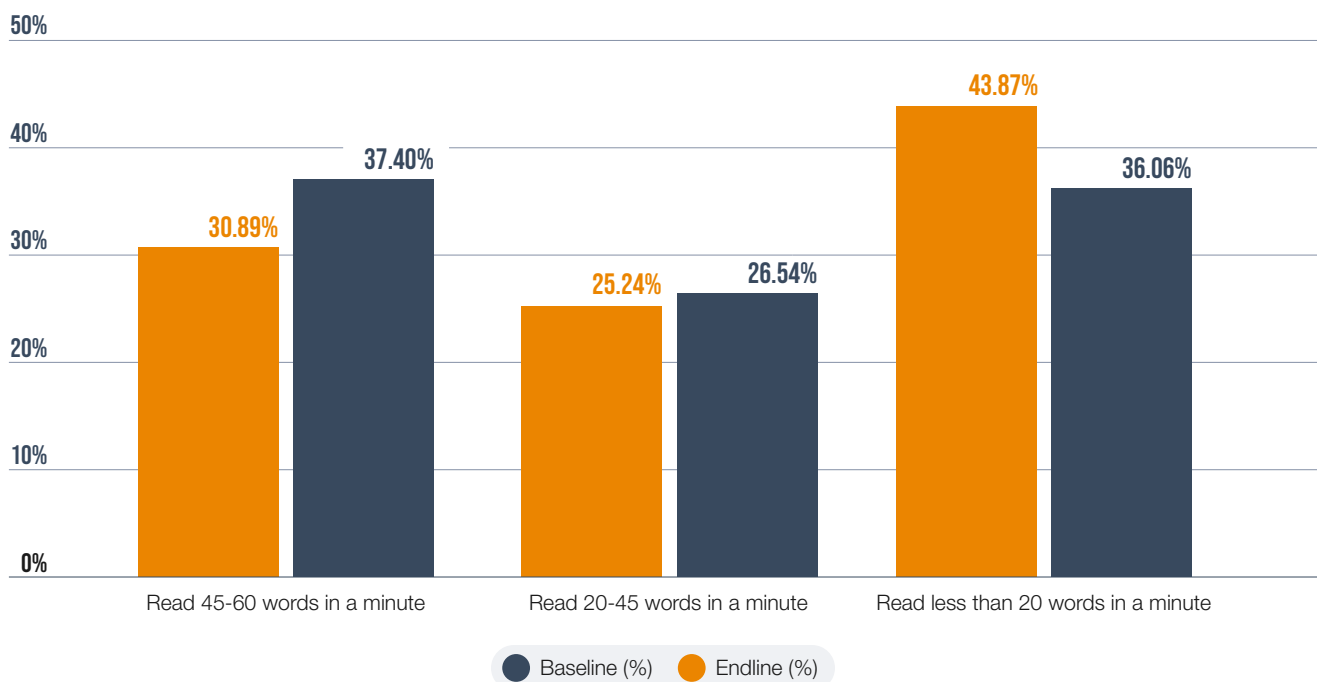


Although India has a strong culture of reading, issues like unequal access to books that are contextually relevant for different communities negatively affect reading outcomes. In an effort to overcome these disparities, the Indian National Department of Education launched a campaign to improve foundational literacy across the country in 2021.

Building on the concept of micro-improvements, in 2022, the Punjab Education Collective (PEC) launched a project focused on improving foundational reading skills in the Shri Muktsar Sahib district of Punjab. Shri Muktsar Sahib is one of 10 low performing districts (LPD), according to the National Achievement Survey (NAS). Together with district administrators, PEC designed a “reading mela”, a festival of reading in which teachers, students, families and communities join together to celebrate reading. During this festival, head teachers created spaces for students to showcase their reading while engaging parents and other community members to celebrate student reading achievements.

The project covered 326 primary schools with a total 40,710 students. To roll out the project, PEC created a step-by-step guide which was hosted on the national digital platform, DIKSHA, which enables all head teachers to access common materials. Head teachers were also provided with activities and resource materials that were focused on the project. At the same time, district and block leaders provided mentoring support to schools hosting the festivals.

Schools implemented the project for a three-week period. A total of 70% of head teachers initiated the project and 52% successfully submitted the project. The project resulted in significant reading improvements from the pre-project baseline. Key observations from head teachers included: 1) students developed an interest in reading different books along with confidence skills to express themselves; 2) teachers became more conscious of children’s learning needs; 3) teachers worked as teams to make the project successful; and 4) parents and community members became active participants in student reading activities. Based on the success of the project, reading melas are now spreading to different geographies enabled by Shikshagraha partners.



Source: Adapted from Mantra. (2022). *Reading Campaign: A Case Study of Micro Improvement Project in Punjab*. <https://www.mantra4change.org/reading-campaign-a-case-study-of-micro-improvement-project-in-punjab/>.



## COLLECTIVE ACTION CASE STUDY

# StreetNet International

Strengthening the rights of street vendors, market vendors, hawkers and cross-border traders, who are the backbone of local economies

**Year founded****2002****Regions represented****55** countries in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe**Entity type**

Non-profit organization

**Groups assembled****62** membership-based affiliate organizations, which have at least 500 individual members**Organizations involved**

Affiliate organizations are national, regional and city-based alliances, as well as trade unions, composed of many membership-based organizations and individuals

**Constituents represented****916,015** members who are street/market vendors, informal traders, cross-border traders and hawkers

## Background

Street vendors play a significant role in the worldwide economy, providing essential goods and services at affordable prices, particularly in the Global South. However, in many cities, street vending remains unregulated, leading to legal uncertainties and the constant threat of displacement. As informal economy workers, street vendors face numerous challenges, such as inadequate infrastructure, violence and harassment from authorities, risk of eviction and unfair taxation. Despite these obstacles, street vendors are vital to local economies, providing flexible employment opportunities and stimulating urban trade.

StreetNet International was founded on 14 November 2002 when 13 membership organizations came together in Durban, South Africa, to establish an autonomous and democratic alliance representing street vendors, hawkers and cross-border traders around the world. StreetNet was inspired by the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), which began organizing informal women workers in India in the 1970s. With SEWA as a model, StreetNet developed a structure that prioritized women's leadership, maintained political neutrality at a central level and sustained itself financially.

In just over two decades, the organization has grown to incorporate 62 affiliate members in 55 countries on four continents, representing 916,015 informal economy workers in the commerce sector worldwide. StreetNet also collaborates with other informal workers' organizations, including WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing). Today, StreetNet has strengthened the leadership and organizing skills of its member organizations while successfully advocating for policies that recognize and protect street vendors at local and national levels worldwide.

**Headquartered:**  
Durban, South Africa

**Number of employees****11**

full-time

**4**

consultants

**Budget range**

Approximately

**\$1.3**

million

## Collective architecture

### Action level

StreetNet brings together **62 affiliate organizations**. These are membership-based organizations with at least 500 members and include national unions, national federations and city-based associations and alliances. Most of StreetNet's membership (70%) is composed of women, and the organization is deeply committed to women's leadership and gender justice.


### Network level

Each affiliate organization elects representatives to the **International Congress**, the governing body for StreetNet. Every four years, the congress elects the 15 members of the **International Council**, that meets annually, to act as leadership for the alliance. A subset of the council, the **Executive Committee**, meets quarterly and consists of the President, the Vice-President, the Secretary and the Treasurer (office-bearers), as well as two Member Auditors. The congress also appoints **Regional Focal Points** and **Sub-Committees** to support the organization with advocacy work and specific functions, such as human resources and workers' education.


### Supporting level


StreetNet is supported by an **operational team**, which is led by the International Coordinator and consists of staff members.

## The collective pathway

 **Vision:** StreetNet envisions a future where street and market vendors and hawkers selling goods and services are legally recognized workers, empowered, democratically organized, living with dignity and enjoying decent work.

 **Method:** StreetNet's organizational structures are designed to represent the interests and concerns of nearly one million members across the globe. These structures create a "bottom-up" inverted hierarchy and consist of four decision-making bodies: 1) the International Congress is the largest body, meeting every four years and consisting of 1-10 delegates from each affiliate organization based on the number of members, 2) the International Council is elected by the congressional delegates and provides direction and oversight for the organization between congress sessions, 3) the Executive Committee, a subset of the council members, then meets quarterly to carry out the strategic plan, and 4) Regional Focal Points, which facilitate horizontal communication in the region among the affiliates and focus on advocacy platforms for demands. Through these structures, StreetNet has developed a list of key demands for which they advocate at the national, regional and global levels. These demands include: recognition as workers, inclusive social dialogue, decent working conditions, extension of social protection and a just transition to formality.

 **Principles:** StreetNet adopted its constitution in 2002 and has made four amendments in subsequent years. In the document, StreetNet outlines several key principles, including 1) the types of organizations that are eligible for membership (member-based organizations with more than 500 members, encouraged to merge at the national level), 2) the aims and objectives of the organization (a strong emphasis on promoting the leadership and interests of women, youth and low-income members), 3) the structures making up the organization (a 50% quota for women's leadership), and 4) a fee structure to ensure that StreetNet is financially independent and sustainable.

 **Practices:** StreetNet's constitution outlines the orders, procedures and terms of reference for conducting meetings, electing officers and forming special structures such as Regional Focal Point organizations, the Youth Committee and the Worker Education Committee. These procedures represent the values and interests of the organization, in particular, that the voices of women, youth and low-income members are elevated in deliberation and decision-making. For example, the presiding officer of a meeting is called upon to: 1) encourage less self-confident delegates, particularly women, youth and those disadvantaged through language, disability or lower levels of formal education, to express their views freely in the meeting, and 2) discourage the domination of meetings by individuals. Through these practices, StreetNet ensures that the members' activities are consistent with the principles that they seek to promote.

Capability	Activities
<p><b>Building movements</b></p> 	<p><b>Creating a shared narrative:</b> StreetNet exists to create a new global narrative that recognizes street vendors, market vendors, hawkers and cross-border traders as the “backbone of local economies”, bringing essential goods to communities and making city life more affordable and convenient.</p> <p><b>Identifying a common agenda:</b> Prior to establishing StreetNet, the founders held three preparatory workshops from 2000-2002 (Lima, Peru; Patna, India; and Accra, Ghana) in order to establish the structure of the organization. The purpose of these workshops was to identify and build new types of structures to meet the needs of informal traders.</p> <p><b>Expanding the stakeholder base:</b> Since inception, StreetNet has focused on elevating Global South and women’s leadership in the international labour and trade union movement. StreetNet also encourages the development and coalescing of membership organizations representing street vendors at the national level, to gain power and shared voice.</p> <p><b>Centring lived experience:</b> StreetNet has always prioritized women’s leadership, since, globally, most street vendors are women. StreetNet ensures that women hold an equal voice in the organization through at least a 50% quota of female leadership in the organization.</p> <p><b>Organising field-level convenings:</b> StreetNet’s International Congress meets at least every four years to formulate its policies and strategic plans. StreetNet also participates in high-level global meetings, alongside other global networks focused on the informal economy, particularly the United Nations’ International Labour Organization (ILO), where it has participated every year since 2004.</p> <p><b>Celebrating key milestones:</b> Each year on 14 November, networks of informal economy workers around the world celebrate the International Day of Street Vendors, which also commemorates the day that StreetNet was founded.</p>
<p><b>Strengthening data systems</b></p> 	<p><b>Developing shared metrics:</b> StreetNet collects annual survey data from affiliate organizations, which it uses to assess the needs and priorities of the constituency. Over the years, this data collection effort has grown to include more detailed data about the activities of street vendors, which the organization plans to use in future for capacity building and training.</p> <p><b>Collecting, sharing and analysing data:</b> The Street Vendors’ Barometer is an initiative launched by StreetNet International in collaboration with the Global Labour Institute. This project focuses on data collection and research to empower street and market vendors by providing them with valuable insights into their working conditions and economic contributions. By gathering and analysing data, the barometer aims to highlight the significance of street vendors in local economies and advocate for their labour and human rights.</p>
<p><b>Influencing institutions</b></p> 	<p><b>Conducting advocacy campaigns:</b> StreetNet supports its affiliated organizations in their daily work of advocacy to influence governments at all levels (local, national and international). Their advocacy campaigns focus on legitimizing the contribution of street vending to countries’ economies, decriminalizing street vendors’ activities, ensuring decent work and gaining access to social protection and labour rights.</p> <p><b>Educating on legal literacy:</b> StreetNet does not initiate legal action, but rather provides legal literacy training, building the capacity of affiliate organizations to understand and use legal instruments that exist at international and regional levels. StreetNet also refers affiliates to other network organizations, such as WIEGO, that have legal advisors on staff to assist with legal action efforts.</p> <p><b>Working with government and multilateral institutions:</b> StreetNet was the first global organization specific to an informal economy sector to be accredited by the ILO. Since 2004, StreetNet has participated in ILO annual meetings to incorporate informal labour concerns and needs into the global agenda.</p> <p><b>Collaborating with networks:</b> StreetNet partners with global networks of informal economy workers, such as WIEGO, International Domestic Workers’ Federation (IDWF) and HomeNet International, to amplify influence and global recognition of the informal labour sector.</p>

## Collective action activities (continued)

Capability	Activities
<p><b>Hosting learning communities and building capacity</b></p> 	<p><b>Conducting research and hosting resource libraries:</b> StreetNet conducts and commissions research, reports and position papers to document the current status of informal economy workers and showcase effective policy and advocacy strategies for organizations, trade unions and governments. StreetNet catalogues and disseminates this information in an online resource library hosted on its website.</p> <p><b>Providing leadership training and support:</b> StreetNet conducts leadership training for newly-appointed office holders, which builds the capacity of street vendors to hold positions of global leadership in future. StreetNet also hosts monthly “Discussion Clubs”, hosting speakers with expertise and diverse perspectives in the informal economy. All affiliate organizations are invited and the virtual sessions are offered in the four working languages of the alliance. These sessions also offer StreetNet the opportunity to identify emerging leaders among the membership.</p> <p><b>Conducting training and capacity building:</b> Workers’ education is one of StreetNet’s core activities. StreetNet develops and delivers courses in negotiation skills, strategic communication, crowdfunding, right to the city, cross-border trade and organizing. StreetNet also has a partnership with the International Federation of Workers Education Association (IFWEA) to develop online courses on the online platform Online Labour Academy (OLA). StreetNet also partners with WIEGO to develop courses accessible on the Rise digital platform.</p>
<p><b>Investing in systemic solutions</b></p> 	<p><b>Sub-granting to collectives:</b> Over the last two years, with financial resources from donors, StreetNet has provided small subgrants for affiliate organization activities. In these instances, StreetNet opens up an application process for grants with a criteria list for organizations to apply. Aside from providing resources, this process also allows affiliate organizations to develop their fundraising and grant application skills. StreetNet also uses its platform to conduct crowdsourcing campaigns during times of crisis, such as the war in Ukraine and flooding in Bangladesh and Malawi.</p>



### Case vignette: Rising to a position of leadership in the informal economy

**Albertina Carlota Simango is the Vice-President of the Association for the Informal Economy (AEIMO) in Mozambique, which represents 15,000 members, mostly street traders.**

Albertina has been an informal economy vendor for over 30 years, rising to her position of leadership by looking out for her fellow vendors and understanding their needs, while also challenging the idea that only men can be in positions of leadership. She explains, “The life of an informal economy vendor is very complicated. It is hard, you need a lot of strength, courage and a lot of determination. When we started selling, each of us would leave the house, look for a stall, buy it and start vending. We didn’t have anyone to defend our goals or us as workers. We had no organization to lead us. We suffered a lot. We were persecuted, chased away. We would enter the market, we cooked in fear, we didn’t know if we’d finish in time to sell without the municipality showing up.”

Through the efforts of AEIMO, as well as the international solidarity of global alliances such as StreetNet, informal economy vendors in Mozambique have organized diligently to gain legitimacy and secure their rights from municipal governments. These improved conditions and protections have enabled street vendors to better provide for their families, save money and secure better lives for their children. Albertina says, “Because of our strength, our courage, today the municipality is like our brother. Everything is already organized ... Now we are at ease in the market. If the municipality comes, it’s to discuss, to exchange experiences, to know how the activity is going – it’s not chasing us anymore. The municipality first comes to discuss with our organization, AEIMO, then we discuss with the vendors, raise awareness and all ends well. It helped us to save some money, build our homes, educate our kids ... I’m very proud to be an informal economy worker.”

**Source:** Adapted from: StreetNet International. (2024, 31 October). *Albertina’s Impact Story: Empowering women and breaking the poverty cycle in Mozambique*. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvM3WON\\_qms](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvM3WON_qms)

## Supporting infrastructure

### Governance and participation

StreetNet operates with a democratic and participatory governance structure that ensures representation and decision-making power for affiliate organizations and the members that they represent. The International Congress is the primary governance body, meeting every four years where elected representatives from each affiliate organization set strategic priorities and elect the International Council. The International Council is composed of 15 office bearers, overseeing the implementation of policies and programmes between congresses. The council is represented by a subset of its members in the Executive Committee, which manages the organization's day-to-day affairs and ensures alignment with StreetNet's mission and Annual Workplan. Finally, StreetNet has Regional Focal Points and Sub-Committees to represent geographic and demographic member groups as well as set priorities for key programme areas. StreetNet also plans to establish the Youth Committee in 2027 during the next International Congress. StreetNet emphasizes female leadership, requiring at least 50% representation of women in all governance structures. This inclusive and decentralized approach enables grassroots organizations to have a direct influence on policies, promoting strong collective leadership and ensuring that the voices of street vendors and informal traders are heard and represented at all levels.

### Team culture and competencies

**Competencies:** StreetNet hosts leadership training for newly elected International Council members, which emphasizes the policies, values and procedures of the organization. This training is essential for leaders' participation in StreetNet's structure and also prepares them for positions of global leadership in the future. For staff members, StreetNet seeks individuals who understand the labour movement and the informal economy and are accustomed to working within a diverse and multicultural environment. Generally, staff members speak at least one language in addition to English since StreetNet operates with four

official working languages. StreetNet also prioritizes candidates who are open minded, patient and possess a willingness to learn quickly. Staff members are supported, trained and assessed in five key areas: 1) coordination and facilitation skills, 2) providing quantitative support to the affiliates, 3) lobbying and advocacy, 4) research and information-gathering, and 5) coordination of StreetNet regionally and/or according to the thematic areas.

**Values:** StreetNet International has adopted a set of clear values that guide its organizational work and activities and its global partnerships. These values include democracy, solidarity, collective decision-making processes, accountability and transparency, gender justice, unity, diversity and inclusion, and professionalism, including integrity, honesty, confidentiality and credibility.

### Collaborative and adaptive learning

StreetNet recognizes that collaborative and adaptive learning is essential to its work. The labour movement and informal economy are demanding sectors, so the team works to build resilience and awareness for members so that they can operate effectively.

### Enabling technology

StreetNet's work has been international and remote-based since its inception, which has required the strategic use of technology. Even prior to 2020, StreetNet was using virtual meeting platforms to conduct meetings and trainings, with translation services offered in four languages. For communications, each region picks what is best for its members, with WhatsApp as a preferred platform. StreetNet uses Google Suite for its day-to-day needs, including annual data collection. StreetNet also uses MailChimp for newsletter distribution. Finally, StreetNet uses a wide range of social media tools, including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube and TikTok, to create awareness and community-building.



### StreetNet by the numbers:

# 62

affiliate organizations in 55 countries representing 916,015 individual members (2025)

# 70%

women members; 22% youth members (2023)

# 87%

of affiliate organizations attempting to or holding dialogue with public authorities and governments (2023)



- **Ensuring the needs of street vendors, market vendors, hawkers and cross-border traders on the global agenda:** Through StreetNet's efforts, street vendors and other informal economy workers have become better organized, more united and increasingly influential on the international stage, ensuring that their needs and demands are recognized in labour and economic policy discussions. This growing unity has led to concrete advancements in legal recognition, social protections and inclusive economic policies, marking a significant shift in how informal work is perceived and valued globally.
- **Integration with the international labour movement and trade unions:** StreetNet has achieved significant success in collaborating with international trade unions to advance the rights of informal traders. By forging partnerships with organizations like the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and national labour federations, StreetNet has helped integrate informal economy workers into broader labour movements. These collaborations have led to stronger advocacy for social protection, fair working conditions and policy recognition at both national and global levels.
- **Unifying informal workers at the national level, transforming fragmented and competing organizations into stronger, more cohesive bodies:** While StreetNet does not directly organize workers (but rather provides trainings on organizing for

its affiliates), it has been instrumental in persuading local groups to merge into national associations and federations, enhancing their collective influence and bargaining power. By increasing collaboration and reducing division among informal worker organizations, StreetNet has strengthened its ability to advocate for labour rights, social protections and policy reforms.

- **Establishing the International Day of Street Vendors:** The International Day of Street Vendors, celebrated on 14 November, has become a powerful platform for raising awareness about the struggles and contributions of street vendors worldwide. Initiated by StreetNet, street vendors use this occasion to organize marches, public campaigns and policy dialogues, pressuring governments to acknowledge their economic role and implement supportive regulations. The annual observance has strengthened solidarity among informal economy workers, amplified their collective voice and advanced their fight for dignity, rights and economic inclusion.
- **Building the capacity of affiliate organizations:** StreetNet has played a key role in capacity building for its affiliate organizations, strengthening their ability to advocate for street vendors' rights effectively. Through training programmes, leadership development and strategic guidance, StreetNet has helped local groups improve organizing skills, policy engagement and negotiation tactics.

## CASE STORY

# African Regional Platform of Demands on Social Protection Initiative (in collaboration with WIEGO)



Since 2022, StreetNet has collaborated with WIEGO to develop research, training and projects and advocate for social protection in Africa that is inclusive of informal economy workers. This project culminated in the African Regional Platform of Demands on Social Protection, a policy framework launched in 2023 in Lagos, Nigeria with stakeholders to outline key demands, including access to affordable healthcare, pensions, maternity benefits and protections against income insecurity. These social protection measures have been designed to be accessible, sustainable and tailored to the realities of informal work.

- **Expanding access to social protection through inclusion in national systems:** Overall, the project is dedicated to expanding access to social protection for informal economy workers across the continent. Recognizing that street vendors and other informal economy workers often lack essential protections like health insurance, pensions and maternity benefits, the project advocates for policies that include them in national social security systems.
- **Strengthening the capacity of organizations to engage with governments:** A major focus is strengthening the capacity of informal worker organizations to engage in policy advocacy and negotiations with governments. Activities include training programmes on social protection rights, workshops on policy analysis and strategic

meetings with policy-makers to push for inclusive reforms. The project also conducts research on existing social protection schemes and their accessibility for informal economy workers, helping to identify gaps and propose practical solutions specific to the needs of street vendors.

- **Gaining a seat at the table for informal economy worker representatives:** A key outcome of the initiative has been the successful inclusion of informal worker representatives in national and regional policy discussions on social protection. For example, in countries like Ghana and Senegal, the project has supported informal worker federations in advocating for more affordable health insurance schemes, leading to increased enrolment of street vendors in national programmes. In Kenya and Tanzania, dialogues between informal economy worker organizations and government agencies have resulted in commitments to explore pension and savings schemes suited for informally-employed workers.

By building alliances with governments, trade unions and civil society groups, the project ensures that social protection measures are both accessible and sustainable. Through its advocacy, training and research efforts, the project has significantly advanced the recognition of informal economy workers as legitimate stakeholders in social protection systems, paving the way for greater economic security and social inclusion.



COLLECTIVE ACTION CASE STUDY

# StriveTogether

Building civic infrastructure to put more young people on the path to economic mobility

<b>Year founded</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>Groups assembled</b>	<b>~70</b> place-based partnerships
<b>Regions represented</b>	US (29 states)	<b>Organizations involved</b>	<b>7,000</b> (estimated) organizations are assembled in these partnerships
<b>Entity type</b>	Non-profit organization	<b>Constituents represented</b>	<b>14</b> million young people collectively reached by partnerships across the US

## Background

In 2006, a group of local leaders in Cincinnati, Ohio, came together to discuss a new college readiness programme. At a pivotal moment, one of the participants, a county coroner, stood up and said, “As long as we remain programme-rich and systems-poor, we will not get more kids into college. And what’s more, I’m going to keep seeing dead kids on my table.” This stark statement revealed the truth: children need more than a single, isolated programme. They need a system that is working in a single direction, with every stakeholder focused on successful outcomes for children and families.

These leaders decided to forge a new path, creating a multistakeholder partnership to bring together businesses, non-profits, justice and education systems, and philanthropists to change outcomes for children and families in the city. They partnered with three school districts in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky to build this new approach to improving specific outcomes for children from “cradle to career”, meaning from birth to employment. Importantly, they chose not to start new initiatives but rather expand local practices that were getting better results for youth.

StriveTogether’s approach borrowed heavily from continuous improvement methodologies employed in health systems, applying them to economic and education outcomes with a collaborative lens. From inception, there was a strong focus on using data to ensure continuous learning and application. In just five years, the approach began to show tangible results on key outcomes, including kindergarten preparedness, fourth grade reading and math scores, and high school graduation rates.

The impact of their work drew attention from communities across the country, who joined the movement to scale the approach throughout the US. To support this momentum, in 2011, the national StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network was founded. In 2013, StriveTogether worked together with network members to codify the collaborative methodology in the StriveTogether Theory of Action™, which has been rigorously evaluated to show its efficacy. Today, StriveTogether brings together 70 partnerships in 29 states to implement this approach and support each other on the journey.

**Headquartered:**  
Cincinnati, Ohio, US



**Number of employees** **50**  
full-time

**Budget range** **\$25-30**  
million

## Collective architecture

### Action level

StriveTogether supports approximately 70 place-based partnerships, which are multistakeholder partnerships committed to eliminating structural inequities to produce better outcomes in a defined geographic area. Each partnership is supported by a **backbone organization** that provides coordination, data stewardship, policy advocacy and other activities to help achieve community goals.

### Network level


These place-based partnerships come together in the **StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network** to make connections, learn best practices, access resources and be part of a powerful movement for change.


### Supporting level


StriveTogether's **team of employees** codifies the methodology, supports the network, builds the capacity of place-based partnerships and advocates for national policies.




## The collective pathway

 **Vision:** StriveTogether envisions a country where every child succeeds in school and in life, regardless of race, ethnicity or circumstance. StriveTogether expands economic mobility for children by improving cradle-to-career outcomes.

 **Method:** StriveTogether supports “place-based partnerships”: initiatives that connect non-profit organizations, businesses, schools, philanthropy and more. Place-based partnerships engage local communities and tap into the unique strengths of the place. Place-based partnerships join the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network to build the civic infrastructure that enables communities to get better results for every child. Communities work through a series of five stages, called gateways, as they seek to transform systems to better serve children and youth. Each gateway has benchmarks for building civic infrastructure, closing disparities and improving outcomes for every child.

 **Principles:** StriveTogether provides progressive milestones rather than a prescription for change. Each partnership commits to developing four pillars for their collaboration: 1) shared community vision (a diverse group of people in a geographic area agree on collective changes to produce equitable cradle-to-career outcomes); 2) evidence-based decision-making (data is rigorously collected, analysed, shared and used to take action); 3) collaborative action (partners collectively adopt the tools and processes and build the necessary knowledge and skills to make changes); and 4) investment and sustainability (partnerships have cultural, financial and social assets to support their collaboration over time).

 **Practices:** Place-based partnerships use quantitative and qualitative data to uncover the root causes of inequitable and depressed outcomes for children and families. Partnerships then identify practices to address those root causes. These practices are not necessarily new programmes, but rather systems approaches and policies that enable opportunities for sustained transformation. The goal is to identify successful local practices and then scale them to achieve broader policy change.

## Collective action activities

Capability	Activities
<b>Building movements</b> 	<p><b>Creating a shared narrative:</b> StriveTogether creates a shared national narrative about the civic infrastructure needed to ensure equitable outcomes for children and families.</p> <p><b>Expanding the stakeholder base:</b> StriveTogether’s place-based partnerships commit to bringing together multiple stakeholders, including the public sector, when building their initiatives.</p> <p><b>Organizing field-level convenings:</b> StriveTogether’s Cradle to Career Network gathers each year in person at its annual convening. They also host policy summits and outcomes-focused convenings.</p> <p><b>Centring lived experience:</b> StriveTogether’s place-based partnerships centre community voices in their work through a variety of community engagement strategies, including youth and community member leadership representation, gathering feedback and insights from community voices, and more. This ensures that solutions are guided by children and families.</p> <p><b>Celebrating key milestones:</b> StriveTogether’s network members set measurable goals and then celebrate when they achieve progress attaining these goals. Place-based partnerships work to achieve population-level results as well as close opportunity gaps for specific demographic groups.</p>
<b>Strengthening data systems</b> 	<p><b>Creating shared definitions:</b> StriveTogether creates common definitions that drive data collection and sharing, including key milestones on the cradle-to-career journey as well as civic infrastructure as a key concept.</p> <p><b>Developing shared metrics:</b> StriveTogether has built a framework of metrics across seven key milestones on the cradle-to-career continuum. Importantly, StriveTogether place-based partnerships commit to disaggregating data by race, ethnicity, gender, income, language and special education status.</p> <p><b>Collecting, analysing and sharing data:</b> StriveTogether hosts dashboards that show real-time progress by place-based partnerships against their goals. Through StriveTogether’s civic infrastructure assessment, network members share their progress with the network annually.</p>
<b>Hosting learning communities and building capacity</b> 	<p><b>Codifying a methodology:</b> The StriveTogether Theory of Action™ is a proven framework for building civic infrastructure and transforming the systems that shape opportunities for children and families.</p> <p><b>Capturing and disseminating learnings:</b> StriveTogether captures the learnings of partnerships in case studies, blog posts and videos. They also host a free and open training hub which provides virtual training and tools.</p> <p><b>Hosting communities of practice:</b> StriveTogether believes that peer learning drives progress, which it calls the “network effect”. Network members are eligible to join communities of practice that are specific to their stage of development and their leadership roles. Members also connect through webinars, virtual communities and events.</p> <p><b>Consulting, coaching and training:</b> StriveTogether provides dedicated network advisers and navigators, who develop tailored success plans and associated training to help partnerships develop strategies, improve sustainability and achieve more equitable outcomes.</p>
<b>Influencing institutions</b> 	<p><b>Developing policy recommendations:</b> StriveTogether taps into its network to advocate for policies that advance cradle-to-career outcomes and close disparity gaps for youth across the country. StriveTogether is also in the process of developing advocacy capacity building for place-based partnerships to progress their own policy work locally.</p> <p><b>Supporting government departments:</b> In some cases, StriveTogether supports staffing within school systems, such as for shared data roles. In a few instances, place-based partnerships are situated in local governments because they are seen as central to municipal and state systems.</p>

## Collective action activities (continued)

Capability	Activities
<b>Investing in systemic solutions</b> 	<b>Sub-granting to collectives:</b> StriveTogether provides strategic investments in place-based partnerships and backbone organizations to catalyse activities and outcomes.  <b>Developing financing solutions:</b> StriveTogether has partnered with the Children's Funding Project to support fiscal mapping and local tax levies to better support child and youth programming, as well as Maycomb Capital's Community Outcomes Fund to develop an outcomes rate card for innovative financing structures that support early childhood education.



### Case vignette: A spotlight on Mission Promise Neighborhood

**Marvin immigrated with his sister from Honduras when he was 12 years old. He was the first in his family to go to college.**

In the Mission District of San Francisco where he and his sister lived, he was able to access services from Mission Economic Development Association (MEDA), an organization that is part of the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network. He says:



**When I was in high school, I was able to connect with Mission Promise through College Connect, which is a college programme that helps high school students get into college. I graduated from UC Berkeley back in 2022. I got two bachelor's degrees, one in legal studies and one in sociology. I was able to find a lot of resources in the neighbourhood, and that's how I was able to thrive and continue with pursuing my goals. I don't think I would be where I am now without that support.**

**Marvin Matamoros**, Mission Promise Neighborhood<sup>12</sup>



12. Adapted from StriveTogether. (2023). *Nested Civic Infrastructure: Mission Promise Neighbourhood spotlight (Full Length)*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17eYhHHlycc>.

## Supporting infrastructure

### Governance and participation

StriveTogether is governed by a 13-member board of directors, which the President and Chief Executive Officer report to. The board of directors shares a commitment to StriveTogether's mission and brings a diverse background to support and lead StriveTogether's work. Three current board members are members of the Cradle to Career Network, providing key insight into the work in communities while other members bring expertise in philanthropy, education, policy work and more. More than half of the current board members are people of colour.

### Team culture and competencies

StriveTogether's team members are leaders committed to building an equitable future. They come from diverse backgrounds and sector areas, including education, policy, non-profit organizations and communications. Team members who exhibit curiosity, a systems mindset, and a solutions focus are hired – fundamentally, it is more important that team members show an eagerness to learn and solve rather than applying preconceived views or expertise. StriveTogether's team also bring skills in convening (strengthening connections and identifying peer learning opportunities), coaching (building the capacity of communities committed to change), codifying (identifying insights from the network and bringing them into the work), investing (matching

communities to strategic investments) and influencing (advocating for policies that leverage the learnings from the network).

### Collaborative and adaptive learning

StriveTogether's methodology is built upon Results Count®, a continuous improvement framework developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation as a way to help leaders, organizations and groups move from intention to action for children and families. This methodology focuses on four key skills: 1) defining and differentiating populations, 2) using trend lines to understand the factors that are contributing to disparities, 3) using factor analysis to inform the development of strategies to improve outcomes and 4) using performance measures to track progress towards improved outcomes. Ultimately, these skills are used to enable leaders to align the contributions of many different actors towards a common set of results.

### Enabling technology

Technology is key for StriveTogether to manage network relationships and enable partners and stakeholders to understand the data that is captured and shared by place-based partnerships. StriveTogether uses Salesforce for network member information and data collection and both Tableau and Power BI for data visualization.



## Impact

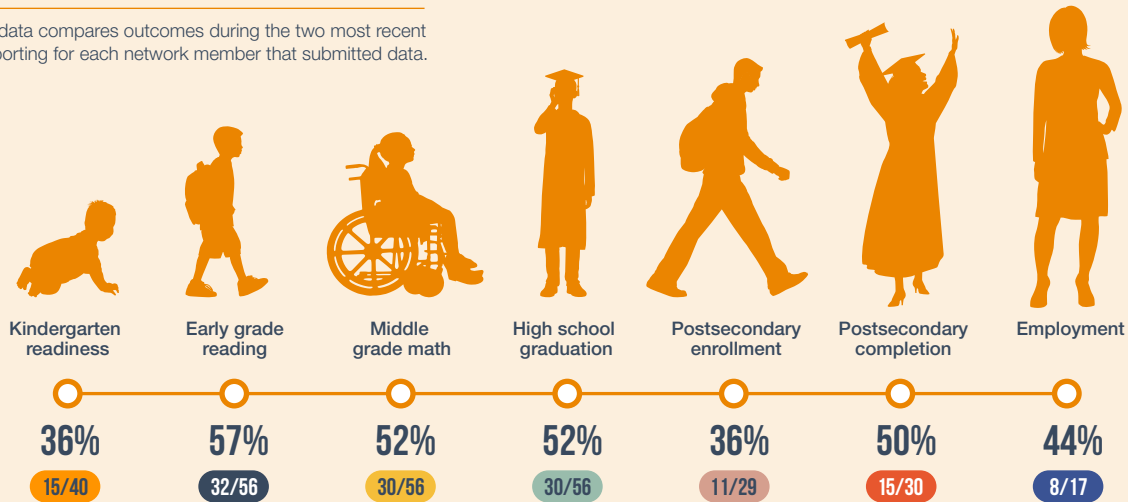
StriveTogether measures its impact through seven population-level outcomes: kindergarten readiness, early grade reading, middle grade math, high school graduation, postsecondary enrolment, postsecondary completion and employment.

### Outputs and outcomes

#### Improvements in cradle-to-career outcomes

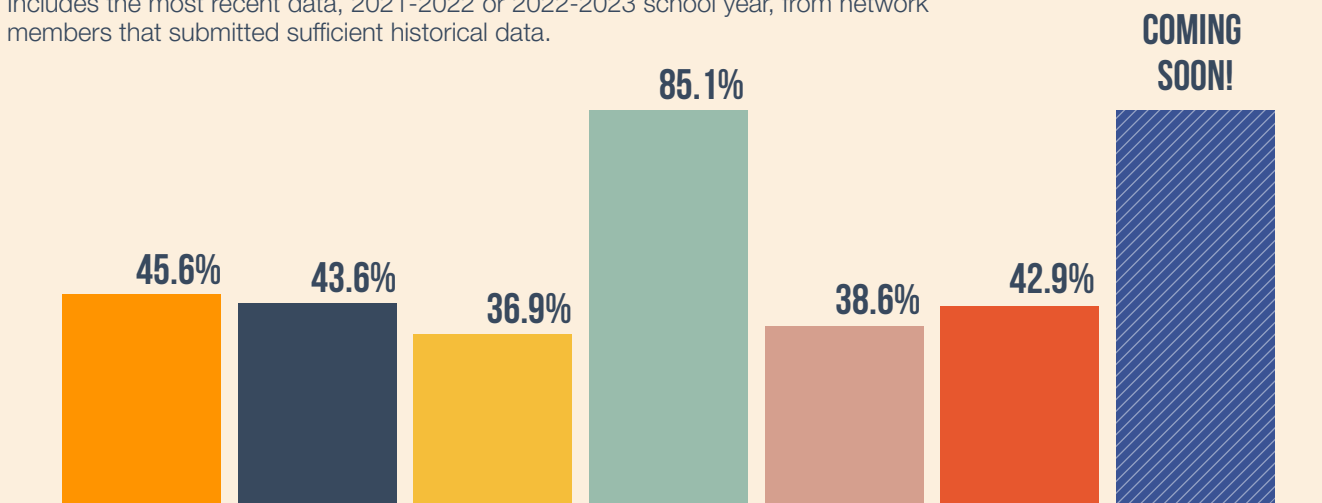
In the last two years, six of seven outcomes were improved by at least 40% of network members.

**Note:** This data compares outcomes during the two most recent years of reporting for each network member that submitted data.



#### Youth meeting milestones across Cradle to Career Network communities

Includes the most recent data, 2021-2022 or 2022-2023 school year, from network members that submitted sufficient historical data.



#### Evaluation results

Over a three-year period (2015-2017), external evaluator Equal Measure surveyed more than 4,000 partners and community members in 14 communities to understand how civic infrastructure develops over time, and whether or not there is an association between improvements in civic infrastructure and positive improvements in key indicators for cradle-to-career outcomes. The evaluation revealed that civic infrastructure develops in similar ways across different communities, and that implementation of the StriveTogether Theory of Action contributes to positive outcomes for children and youth.

#### Policy wins

**Additionally, more than 60% of network members identified policy wins:**

**41 network members** played a part in policy wins

**\$1.4 billion public dollars** added to communities and across states since 2021

**8.5 million students** impacted across StriveTogether network member communities

## E3 Alliance in Central Texas



E3 Alliance is a place-based partnership hosting a multistakeholder collaboration of more than 200 business, community and government leaders in Central Texas. The alliance serves more than 600,000 students in 15 school districts and eight institutions of higher education, E3 was founded in 2006 and joined the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network in 2011. Since joining the network, E3 has employed StriveTogether’s expertise to improve outcomes and advocate for impactful policies.

### Kindergarten readiness

In 2015, Central Texas experienced a sudden and dramatic decline in kindergarten readiness due to state and federal budget cuts that removed critical services for families with young children. E3 Alliance staff members performed in-depth research to understand the root causes of the readiness decline and identified the need for a much broader integration of medical professionals into their work with families. Since this was a brand-new stakeholder group for E3, they worked closely with StriveTogether to develop workshops to bring these new perspectives fully into their programmes. Using the learnings from these workshops, E3 Alliance deployed an action team to implement a variety of initiatives across Central Texas, including “pre-K prescriptions” to families of preschool-age children and district-wide dedicated phone lines for pre-kindergarten enrolment.

The results were clearly impactful: districts participating in the effort saw a 7% increase in enrolment for two consecutive years after the initial pilot year. Moreover, the best practices from the programme are now included in a state toolkit for pre-kindergarten enrolment. Today, the work with health professionals has been taken over by a healthcare foundation, ensuring the programme’s sustainability for the future.<sup>13</sup>

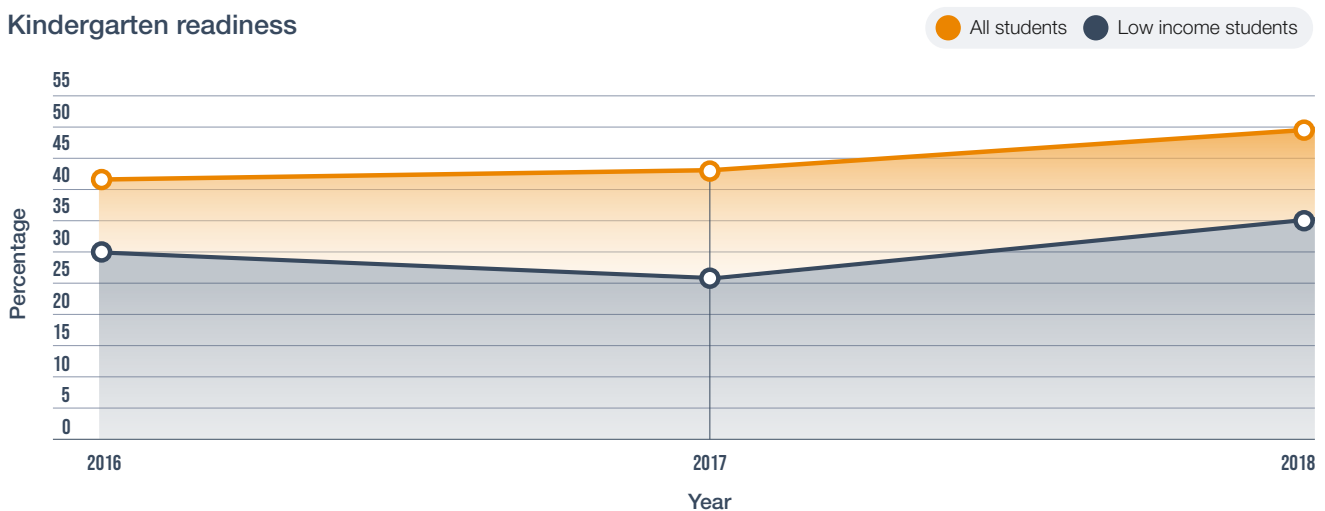
### Middle grade mathematic proficiency

National mathematic proficiency has suffered dramatically since the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, mathematic proficiency dropped 5% for fourth grade students and 7% for eighth grade students compared to 2019 levels. These declines have also increased opportunity gaps across racial and ethnic groups. Importantly, middle grade mathematic success is a strong predictor of later life outcomes, such as high school graduation, income, educational attainment, teenage pregnancy and incarceration.

E3 Alliance has been working to address these steep declines through an evidence-based policy approach which has shown significant success in increasing the completion of advanced math courses, particularly for Black students. The new policy uses an “opt-out” approach, automatically enrolling qualifying middle grade students in advanced mathematics instead of letting students choose to “opt-in”. This approach shifts cultural perceptions around mathematics and ultimately enrolls more students in classes that put them on a path to complete higher mathematics courses in high school.

This policy shift significantly increased completion of advanced mathematics courses and contributed to a 91% reduction in the gap between Black and white students completing eighth-grade Algebra I. It also led to a six-fold increase in emergent bilingual students completing Algebra I. Furthermore, in 2023, E3’s advocacy at the state level contributed to the adoption of Senate Bill 2124, which implements this policy statewide. This policy change is now benefiting communities across Texas, providing an example of systems change informed by evidence-based interventions.<sup>14</sup>

### Kindergarten readiness



13. Adapted from StriveTogether. (n.d.). *E3 Alliance: Setting Up Kids for Success in Central Texas*. <https://www.strivetogether.org/our-impact/case-studies/e3-alliance/>.

14. Adapted from Martínez, N. C. (2024). *Middle Grade Math: Spotlight on Texas Cradle to Career Network Members*. StriveTogether. <https://www.strivetogether.org/middle-grade-math-spotlight-on-texas-cradle-to-career-network-members/>.

COLLECTIVE ACTION CASE STUDY

# Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement

Ending poverty in all of its forms

<b>Year founded</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>Groups assembled</b>	<b>180</b> local collaboratives working across 500 municipalities
<b>Regions represented</b>	Primary focus is Canada with relationships in the US, the United Kingdom, Europe, New Zealand and Australia	<b>Organizations involved</b>	<b>39,000</b> changemakers from thousands of organizations across the world (with a majority in Canada)
<b>Entity type</b>	Non-profit organization	<b>Constituents represented</b>	Local collaboratives are working in communities representing approximately 60% of people living in Canada (24 million of 40 million citizens).

## Background

Tamarack began in the 1990s as a series of conversations between two non-profit leaders – Paul Born and Alan Broadbent – reflecting on how to bring together multiple stakeholders across a city to combat poverty. In 2002, this idea spread nationally as community leaders from cities across Canada came together to launch a campaign called Vibrant Communities. From this gathering, 13 cities committed to embarking on a 10-year journey to explore a collaborative, cross-sector approach to poverty reduction.

To support the novel social change approach, Tamarack created Vibrant Communities (now Networks for Change) to support the network of place-based collaboratives, and a Learning Centre (now Skills for Change) to document the effort and disseminate learnings to the broader community. In 2012, the results from Vibrant Communities showed that the effort had exceeded their goals: more than 250,000 people experienced benefits and 15% reported a durable reduction in poverty levels. Based on this evidence, the network began to grow rapidly and, starting in 2015, a series of annual Poverty Summits raised the profile of poverty reduction in Canada.

Over the next decade, Tamarack applied its proven approach to three additional issue areas: belonging, climate transitions and youth futures, while continuing to build the network to end poverty. Each of these issue areas has grown into a network of local collaboratives bringing together different sectors and individuals impacted by their areas of work to implement large-scale change initiatives in their cities. A total of 37,000 changemakers around the world use Tamarack’s resources, consulting and coaching services to build the skills to collaborate on community-driven outcomes.

**Headquartered:**  
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada



**Number of employees** **42**  
full time

**Budget range** **\$8-12**  
million (Canadian dollars)

## Collective architecture

### Action level



**Tamarack supports 180 local collaboratives** that bring together multi-sectoral partners and lived experience experts to develop and lead place-based, multi-strategy community plans. Additionally, **changemakers** from across the world build capacity in five interconnected practice areas to contribute to community- and systems-level impact.

### Network level



Local collaboratives are supported through four issue-based **Networks for Change** in Canada and the US: Communities Ending Poverty, Communities Building Belonging, Communities Building Youth Futures and Community Climate Transitions.





### Supporting level




Tamarack has a **team of employees** who explore, organize, sense-make and codify, and amplify and advocate in support of the local collaboratives and networks for change.



## The collective pathway

-  **Vision:** Tamarack is dedicated to ending poverty in all its forms. Tamarack supports individuals and communities to change systems to end poverty, create sustainable and equitable climate transitions, inspire a sense of belonging and community, and improve opportunities with and for youth.
-  **Method:** Tamarack supports four Networks for Change which unite local collaboratives working towards equitable outcomes at a whole-community scale. Local collaboratives draw upon Tamarack's expertise in five key skills areas to drive change collectively: 1) collaborative governance, 2) community engagement, 3) shared leadership, 4) community innovation and 5) participatory learning and evaluation. With Tamarack's coaching, tools and consultation, changemakers and collaboratives develop their own localized, unique approaches. Tamarack finds that local collaboratives generally move through four development stages: 1) building readiness, 2) mobilizing for community-wide action, 3) implementing and adapting, and 4) sustaining and renewing.
-  **Principles:** Communities and changemakers connected to Tamarack are guided by seven key principles. Collaboratives work to: 1) be accountable to a shared, measurable, population-level impact and equity gap in a defined geography; 2) work towards a shared outcome target within a specific time frame; 3) include diverse perspectives; 4) align a diversity of human, financial and other contributions towards the shared outcome; 5) centre those with lived experience of the outcome; 6) build understanding of the histories behind and root causes of prioritized equity gaps; and 7) start with community leadership and other community assets.<sup>15</sup>
-  **Practices:** Tamarack encourages a set of practices in each of the five areas previously listed, such as creating and holding accountability to partnership agreements, mapping the landscape, naming a community-defined goal, creating a measurement framework, developing a collaborative governance structure that supports the framework, publishing a community plan and reporting back on it to the broad community. However, each community is unique, and Tamarack's model is to share evidence and patterns rather than be prescriptive. At the same time, Tamarack connects and convenes communities regularly as a network to share learning, commiserate and support one another, amplify each other's work and organize towards levers of change that are national or regional in nature.

15. As recorded in Tamarack Institute. (2024). *Community-Driven, Place-Based Change*. <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/articles/community-driven-place-based-change>.

Capability	Activities
<p><b>Building movements</b></p> 	<p><b>Creating a shared narrative:</b> Tamarack is creating a shared conversation in Canada about ending poverty in all its forms and the importance of community belonging.</p> <p><b>Expanding the stakeholder base:</b> Local collaboratives commit to bringing together a diverse stakeholder base, including the public sector, when building their initiatives.</p> <p><b>Centring lived experience:</b> Tamarack’s approaches are underpinned by a deep commitment to including those with lived experience. Local collaboratives commit to including partners with lived experience in their initiatives.</p> <p><b>Organizing field-level convenings:</b> Tamarack hosts an annual gathering and biweekly webinars to inspire commitment to change at scale. Regional field-level convenings focus on public policy priorities. Tamarack frequently engages key partners and governments to understand issues, track trends, surface priorities and identify the implications for the field.</p> <p><b>Celebrating key milestones:</b> Tamarack celebrates the completion of community plans, as well as key milestones and impacts. Tamarack is in the process of determining how to credential competencies within the five practice areas for individuals.</p> <p><b>Engaging media and journalists:</b> Tamarack engages the media as a tactic in all aspects of their work, especially in their amplifying and advocating work. Tamarack’s approaches and evidence base have been featured in the New York Times, the National Observer and Future of Good, among others.</p>
<p><b>Hosting learning communities and building capacity</b></p> 	<p><b>Codifying a methodology:</b> Tamarack’s Community Pathways Journey Map depicts how communities develop core competencies across the five skill areas and through the four phases of development. The Journey Map enables Tamarack to connect communities with coaches, resources, tools and peer learning cohorts appropriate to their stage of development and learning needs.</p> <p><b>Capturing and disseminating learnings:</b> Tamarack draws on its work with changemakers and collaboratives to advance evidence-based methodologies and strategies in each of the five skills areas. Tamarack curates an online library to disseminate case studies, tools, guides, and articles to members and non-members.</p> <p><b>Hosting communities of practice:</b> Tamarack hosts communities of practice to share learnings and evidence and organize across people and places. Tamarack also hosts workshops as places to develop skills and community.</p> <p><b>Consulting, coaching and training:</b> Tamarack offers coaching and one-on-one support to network members. Tamarack also hosts numerous online courses, webinars, and on-site training to local collaboratives.</p>
<p><b>Strengthening data systems</b></p> 	<p><b>Creating shared definitions:</b> Tamarack and the network communities are building shared language and understanding around their roles as field catalysts and the systems changes to which they contribute.</p> <p><b>Developing shared metrics:</b> As part of its strategic planning, the team identifies priorities, as well as activities and metrics to drive these priorities forward. Tamarack’s overall goal is to contribute to Canada’s poverty rate being 5% or less, which equates to 2 million additional people exiting conditions of poverty.</p> <p><b>Collecting, analysing and sharing data:</b> Tamarack conducts annual network member check-ins using written surveys and phone calls. Staff and members then analyse the data, sense-make and pattern, identify learning for continuous improvement, and recognize opportunities for action. Tamarack reports on progress and impact through an annual report, local reports and external evaluation reports.</p>

## Collective action activities (continued)

Capability	Activities
<b>Influencing institutions</b> 	<p><b>Developing policy recommendations:</b> Tamarack has a public policy advisory group made up of network members, which sets policy priorities and actions. Tamarack is currently advocating for policies on community belonging, basic income and financial security, a Northern Territorial Youth and Community Strategy, and for governments to better partner with place-based collaboratives.</p> <p><b>Augmenting government staffing:</b> Approximately half of the convening organizations in Tamarack's local collaboratives are local governments. Tamarack supports federal, provincial and local government departments directly by facilitating planning, evaluation and community engagement processes, and providing capability-building support to government grantees.</p>
<b>Investing in systemic solutions</b> 	<p><b>Sub-granting to collectives:</b> Tamarack invests in local collaboratives for specific projects and initiatives. Since 2020, Tamarack has invested CAD \$27 million in communities for operational support and for nearly 350 community innovation projects.</p> <p><b>Developing financing solutions:</b> Tamarack is exploring the role they might play in bringing social finance and impact investing products to communities. Tamarack is looking at the feasibility of using outcome-based financing to fund milestones on the community journey map and building readiness in collaboratives to absorb financing.</p>



### Case vignette: The Roving Campus



#### Launched in 2020, the Roving Campus is an education innovation created by three local teachers in the Canadian province of Manitoba.

With support from local collaborative Portage La Prairie Community Building Youth Futures, the Roving Campus provides an alternative high school environment for young people who are not succeeding in the traditional school environment. The school runs over five days: three days are dedicated to essential outcomes and certifications, and two days are reserved for planning, coaching and one-on-one instruction. Free transport, meals, gym clothes and assistance

with obtaining identity documents are also provided through the programme. Students spend about one-third of their time out of the classroom, doing hands-on learning and field trips. The programme also includes vocational certifications and resume skills. Although the first year was challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the programme has proven its resilience and effectiveness, with an average attendance increase of 40% over traditional school. The alternative school has also showcased the power of partnerships, with numerous community partners throughout Manitoba contributing to the programme. In recent years, the Roving Campus has transitioned into a programme of the school division to ensure its sustainability.<sup>16</sup>

16. Adapted from case study: Cheuy, S., Koran, S., Woods, A. (2021). *Portage La Prairie: Roving Campus Re-Engages Students*.

## Supporting infrastructure

### Governance and participation

Tamarack is governed by a 12-member board of directors that strives to be representative of the communities it serves. On a strategic level, Tamarack aims to be member-driven when developing its offerings and when setting and advancing public policy priorities. Their 2030 plan and more recent Equity and Indigenization Framework and Action Plan were shaped over 18-month periods by hundreds of surveys, focus groups and interviews with network, team and board members. Annually, Tamarack's member survey shapes its operating plan.

### Team culture and competencies

Tamarack maintains a Skills for Change team and a Networks for Change team. The Skills for Change team are practitioners in the five key skills areas for community change (described above), while the Networks for Change team builds deep relationships with community collaboratives to understand their context and connect them to people and resources that will accelerate their progress towards equitable outcomes.

**Values:** Tamarack's current strategy articulates values of connection, place, strength and optimism, equity and justice, courage and learning, and action and impact which guides all aspects of the team's work.

**Competencies:** Tamarack's team competencies include: 1) exploring (engaging key partners to understand issues and identify the implications for place-based work); 2) organizing (prototyping models, facilitating funding and amplifying knowledge); 3) sense-making and codifying (codifying place-based approaches and disseminating options and rationales for collective action); and 4) amplifying and advocating (making local work visible and advocating for systems and policy change). Individual competencies include maintaining a systems-level perspective, navigating complexity, centring relationships and connections, holding hope, strength and optimism, and practicing awareness of self as an agent of change.

**Collaborative and adaptive learning:** Continuous learning and adaptation is directly linked to Tamarack's strategic plan and priorities. Tamarack scans and engages with many fields of practice for new and innovative solutions to solve complex problems. Drawing from the fields of practice and place-based network, Tamarack contributes new tools and resources that are designed to advance the work of changemakers.

### Enabling technology

Since the first 13 Trail Builder communities, Tamarack has relied on technology platforms to share learnings, support partnerships and enable access to peers across Canada. Today, Tamarack uses its website as an online learning platform as well as online meeting tools to provide virtual coaching access, webinars, workshops, publications (tools, guides, case studies), and regular communities of practice calls.



# 1 MILLION

## households

have risen out of poverty since 2001 aided by Tamarack.

# 500

## municipalities

have been engaged by Tamarack as part of 180 collaboratives working across Canada.

### Networks for change impact



#### The Communities Ending Poverty (CEP) network

Currently has over 80 member community collaboratives working across more than 400 municipalities in Canada.



#### The Communities Building Youth Futures (CBYP) network

Has worked across 20 small, medium, Indigenous, rural and remote communities, and engaged more than 63,000 youth, 6,000 local leaders, 1,784 government representatives and 2,379 youth-serving organizations since 2020.



#### The Communities Building Belonging (CBB) network

Is currently supporting 45 collaboratives working across Canada to make community essential and increase the sense of belonging for individuals.



#### The Community Climate Transitions (CCT) network

Has been recognized by the Government of Canada in its Voluntary National Review<sup>17</sup> for localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Canada. They are currently supporting 43 local collaboratives to move forward actions for climate mitigation and adaptation that centre equity.

### Policy impact



#### Living wages

Tamarack worked alongside the CEP network to facilitate a national dialogue about living wages in Canada, leading to the development of standalone Living Wage network. They shared the learnings from several local living wage prototypes and collaborated to create a national methodology for calculating living wages. This work has contributed to policy wins such as relief benefits during COVID-19 and increases to minimum wages across Canada based on living wage information and campaigns.



#### Community belonging

Tamarack is currently advocating for a national plan to integrate community belonging into discussions about national economics and quality of life. Tamarack is working with communities to establish a blueprint for this strategy as well as advocating to governments for how this effort could address

the epidemic of loneliness and social isolation that is impacting individuals, communities and society at large.



#### Poverty reduction strategy

Tamarack partnered with the Government of Canada and its Networks for Change to convene 33 Community Conversations to inform Canada's first poverty reduction strategy.<sup>18</sup> Canada's poverty reduction strategy created an official poverty line for the country, created a National Advisory Council on Poverty, developed a measurement and tracking system for the plan, and set important targets for poverty reduction (reduce poverty by 50% by 2030, as an example). Tamarack continues to work with the government and communities to localize the poverty reductions strategy and to translate knowledge between communities and the federal government.

17. Government of Canada. (2023). *2023 Voluntary National Review Spotlight: Partners and stakeholders actions to localize the SDGs*.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/agenda-2030/voluntary-national-review/2023-report/annex-a.html>.

18. Government of Canada. (2022). *Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy – What we heard about poverty so far*.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/reports/what-we-heard.html>.

CASE STORY

Living SJ local collaborative



St John has a population of nearly 75,000 people and is known for its beautiful architecture, stunning landscapes and maritime heritage. The city serves as a vital economic centre for New Brunswick, a province on Canada's Atlantic coast. However, despite its beauty and heritage, in the late 1990s, the city was experiencing higher-than-average rates of poverty.

In 1999, 100 local business leaders assembled to tackle the roots of poverty in their community. They began with a data collection exercise to understand the root causes of poverty and realized that "lifetime" poverty – as opposed to situational or short-term poverty – required concentrated attention. This led them to focus on supporting the most vulnerable families by strengthening their health, education and employment pathways.

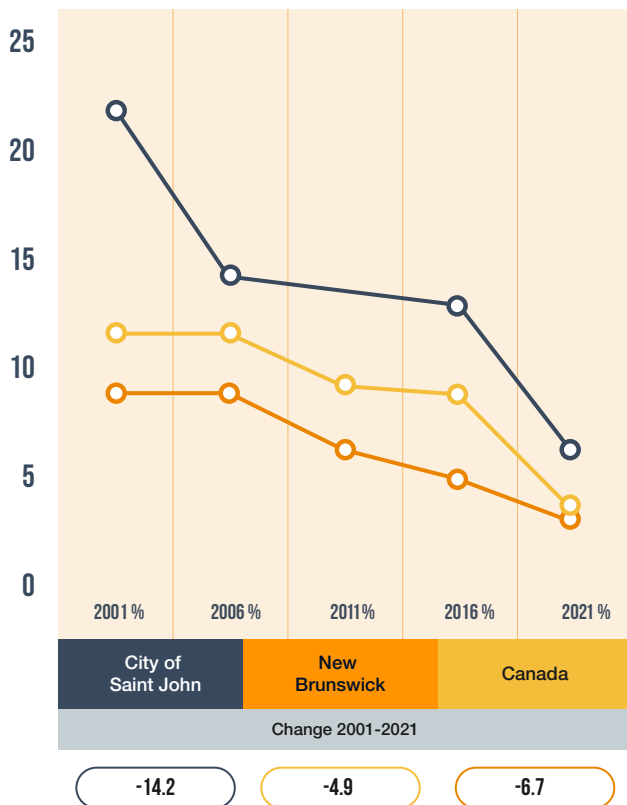
The collaborative joined Tamarack's Vibrant Communities Network in 2003, led by four founding organizations,

each representing a different stakeholder group (civil society, people with lived experience, business and government). Over a 10-year period, this group developed a poverty reduction strategy, conducted research to understand the roots of poverty in the community, and strengthened the infrastructure of the five neighbourhoods with the greatest needs. Based on a decade of growing together, this collaborative grew further and evolved into a new entity called Living SJ.

Today, these efforts have borne fruit: high school graduation rates have increased from 50% to 70% in the focus neighbourhoods and the number of social assistance cases decreased by 17% over the 2010-2017 study period. Overall, the poverty rate in the city has reduced at a more significant rate than poverty reductions provincially and nationally. In 2020, Living SJ concluded its activities and transitioned to a regional initiative led by the New Brunswick province.

The poverty rate in the city of Saint John has dropped over the twenty-year period

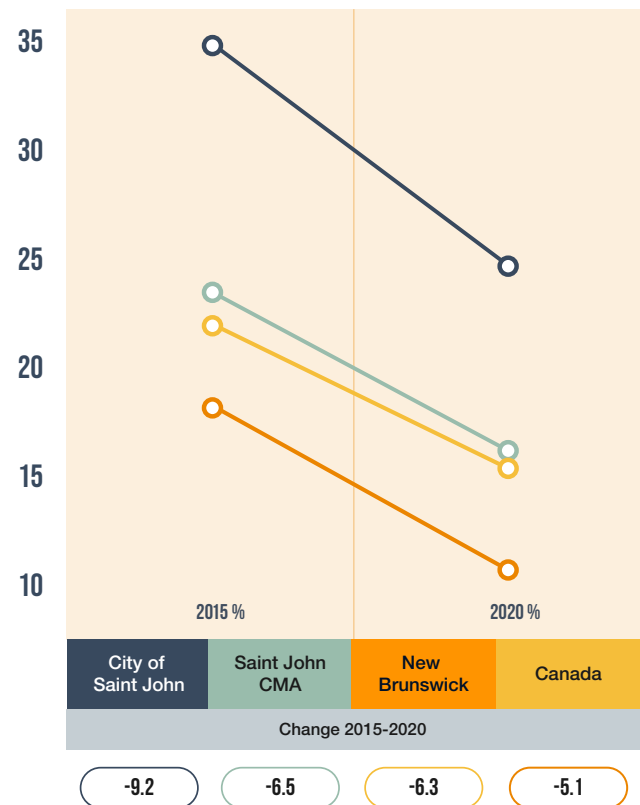
% of population living below the poverty line



Source: Statistics Canada Census Measure: Low Income Cut-Off, After Tax (LICO-AT). The statistics were compiled by BCAPL with help from local partners, Human Development Council and Community Foundation.

The poverty rate among children has declined between 2015 and 2020

% of children (0 to 17 years of age) living below the poverty line



Source: Statistics Canada Census Measure – Low Income Measure-After Tax (LIM-AT)



COLLECTIVE ACTION CASE STUDY

# The vartaLeap Coalition

Nurturing inside-out youth leadership

<b>Year founded</b>	<b>2019</b>
<b>Regions represented</b>	India (nationwide)
<b>Entity type</b>	vartaLeap is not a legal entity; it is a coalition with many registered organizations and individuals participating.
<b>Groups assembled</b>	<b>8</b> "vartaLabs" (collaborative efforts addressing specific themes)

<b>Organizations involved</b>	<b>150+</b> members including institutional members (organizations) and individual members (leaders from different sectors, including government and multilateral agencies)
<b>Constituents represented</b>	<b>~150,000</b> young people are engaged through deeply transformative leadership experiences each year (conservative estimate)

### Background

India has one of the largest youth populations in the world, with nearly 65% of its population (543 million people) under the age of 35, making it a vibrant and dynamic demographic force. This youthful population is characterized by a blend of aspirations, creativity and potential, driving the country's economic, social and technological transformation. With a literacy rate steadily improving and increasing access to education and digital connectivity, Indian youth are playing pivotal roles in innovation, entrepreneurship and global platforms. However, challenges such as unemployment, skill gaps and access to quality education persist. There is a need for greater inclusion and harmony, requiring strategic investments and policies to harness this demographic dividend effectively.

Yet, key institutions – including government, civil society and the corporate sector – are grappling with how to engage this growing population, particularly given generational differences and increasing access to information and technology. According to vartaLeap, "In India, young people are far more opinionated, empowered, evaluative and aspirational. At the same time, young people are also confronted by a diversity of narratives on ideology, identity and social issues, through which they have to navigate to find their own sense of purpose and belonging."

The vartaLeap Coalition was formed in 2019 to enable an evolved understanding and strategy for youth leadership and development in India. The coalition initially started with 40 organizations and has now grown to 150+ members. Initially a community of practice of youth-centric organizations, the coalition has evolved into a cross-sectoral ecosystem. Together, the coalition aims to build vibrant and empowered spaces that nurture the leadership potential of young people to transform themselves and society. Building on Gandhi's mobilization of youth during the Indian independence movement, vartaLeap aims to understand young people as more than just assets, consumers and workers, and rather as individuals in society whose well-being is linked to that of the community around them. This strategy of bridging the self to society in the form of an evolving continuum of youth work creates the conditions and spaces where youth can multiply their own potential.

**Headquartered:**  
New Delhi, National Capital Territory, India



**Number of employees** **17**

**Budget range** Approximately **\$1** million (2024-2025 projected)

## Collective architecture

### Action level



Members are part of eight **vartaLabs** where they collaboratively design, pilot and implement collective projects and youth-centric journeys. The issues these labs are organized around have been chosen by members and currently include well-being, gender equality, climate action and constitutional values.

### Network level

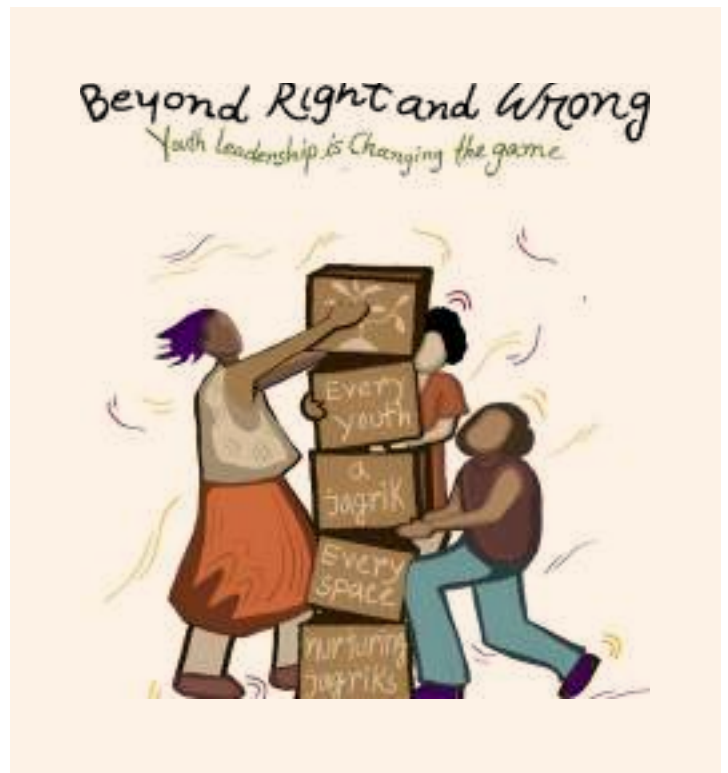


The **vartaLeap Coalition** brings together all of the members. At this level, there are two permanent working groups: the “bonding and learning” working group creates numerous spaces for members to connect and learn with each other, and the “narrative” working group strengthens the collective narratives of youth-centric development that underpin the coalition’s work.

### Supporting level



The **facilitariat** is a full-time coordinating and convening team led by members of ComMutiny – The Youth Collective, a member organization. The facilitariat is guided by the **vartaKarta**, the governing body of the coalition.



## The collective pathway

**Vision:** The vartaLeap Coalition envisions “every youth a Jagrik, and every space nurturing Jagriks.”<sup>19</sup> Jagrik is a derivative and an expansion of two Hindi words, “Jagruk” and “Nagrik”, that describes a self-awakened and proactive citizen who also awakens the same spirit in others.

**Method:** To achieve this vision, vartaLeap is “collectivizing” to create a shared vision that transcends sectoral divides and creates new norms for youth development. They are developing a robust coalition of diverse stakeholders to nurture co-creation, co-learning and collaboration. Their mission includes: 1) building spaces that nurture Jagriks across geographies (place-based and contextually relevant) and institutions in government, civil society and the private sector; 2) designing and running powerful collaborative learning and leadership “Jagriks’ Journeys” with the resources necessary to create impact at scale (and with “soul”); and 3) making “every youth a Jagrik and every space nurturing Jagriks” part of the mainstream narrative through research, public outreach and media engagement.

**Principles:** The vartaLeap Coalition has developed a charter outlining their principles, goals and commitments towards mainstreaming youth-centric development by nurturing a collaborative ecosystem informed by shared values. Each member joining the coalition agrees to align with this charter and endorse the vision and mission of the coalition. This charter serves as a guiding framework for aggregating, accelerating and amplifying their work to achieve their vision, “every youth a Jagrik, every space nurturing Jagriks”. Other key principles include: the 5th Space,<sup>20</sup> which is the creation of a space where young people relate to society, separate from the four traditional youth spaces (family, friends, career and leisure). vartaLeap positions this space as both contributing to the self-transformation of youth while also transforming society and believes that a thriving 5th Space is a critical element for

well-rounded youth development. Youth-centric design and facilitation principles called FLOWING,<sup>21</sup> are principles that vartaLeap members partners have developed over time to overcome typical failures in youth development. These practices include: 1) honouring the feelings of youth; 2) leading in partnership with adults; 3) emphasizing personal and societal ownership; 4) encouraging a willingness to take risks; 5) ensuring inclusion for all; 6) recognizing the importance of the present alongside the future; and 7) grounding actions in learning through experience and reflection.

**Practices:** vartaLeap has developed key practice areas which guide the work of members in the coalition. There are three “A”s that define vartaLeap’s strategies: “aggregating” refers to members bringing together cross-sectoral stakeholders into a robust coalition with representation and active participation from media, donor, corporate, UN agencies, as well as civil society organizations. “Amplifying” entails shifting norms and promoting youth-centric development through narrative building. Finally, “accelerating” involves designing, piloting and “scouling”<sup>22</sup> (scaling with soul) youth-centric experiences to address current psycho-social needs of young people. These principles are applied across the focus themes of climate change, gender, well-being, livelihoods and entrepreneurship, and constitutional literacy.

The second practice area, the Seeing, Doing, Being framework,<sup>23</sup> is used as a guide to design the collective structure and processes of the coalition. “Seeing” refers to how the coalition visualizes a thriving community together, “Being” is the relationships and impact that are developed through the process of building connections and learning together, and “Doing” is the collaborative programming, narrative building and fundraising that the coalition members perform together.



19. The term was coined by ComMutiny in 2016 as part of the game designed on Constitutional Literacy, “Samvidhan LIVE! Be a Jagrik”.




20. First conceptualized by Pravah and ComMutiny and published in the book Ocean in a Drop, 2014, Sage Publications.

21. First framed at a vartaLeap convening, 2019.

22. Scouling” was first framed during the formation of ComMutiny, in 2008, as a strategy by Pravah for scaling with soul.



23. First framed at vartaLeap in 2021.

## Collective action activities

Capability	Activities
<p><b>Building movements</b></p> 	<p><b>Creating a shared narrative:</b> vartaLeap’s primary shared narrative is the vision statement, “every youth a Jagrik, and every space nurturing Jagriks”, which was co-created with all members in the early stages of the coalition. Theme-based narratives are also co-created with relevant group members and socialized with the larger coalition. These common messages drive the campaigns and guide all communication and design for a designated period of time.</p> <p><b>Expanding the stakeholder base:</b> vartaLeap works towards constantly expanding the membership base, supported by the facilitariat, which guides the entry and exit of members; diversity is a key driver of these decisions. Beyond membership, vartaLeap engages allies through its amplification and acceleration strategies to become supporters of the mission and ecosystem in different ways.</p> <p><b>Organizing field-level convenings:</b> Every year, vartaLeap organizes a coalition-wide, in-person “treat” that is facilitated and hosted by members. Typically, 60% of members participate in this two- to three-day immersion.</p> <p><b>Centring lived experience:</b> vartaLeap member convenings are designed to build on the lived experiences of youth members. Generative practices for co-creation and co-designing are followed to maximize the “collective wisdom” of the group.</p> <p><b>Celebrating key milestones:</b> vartaLeap recognizes members and accomplishments through events and WhatsApp engagement. For example, in 2022, vartaLeap hosted a virtual celebration called “India’s Got Leadership Talent” for the exemplary COVID-19 response by ecosystem members.</p>
<p><b>Strengthening data systems</b></p> 	<p><b>Developing shared metrics:</b> vartaLeap uses the common frameworks and principles that they have developed for each lab to benchmark their work. Internal feedback processes include membership surveys that offer metrics on the strength of engagement.</p> <p><b>Creating shared definitions:</b> vartaLeap members co-create unique terms, concepts and narrative framings, such as Jagrik, FLOWING principles, “Nourishing Now” principles,<sup>24</sup> and Saath Nirbhar. This language is adopted organically by members of the coalition and was derived from the culture of vartaLeap’s facilitariat organization, Pravah and ComMutiny – The Youth Collective, which was founded in 2009.</p> <p><b>Collecting, analysing and sharing data:</b> vartaLeap aggregates and disseminates data from commonly run programmes, including outreach numbers and pre and post shifts in the learning and leadership of young people going through Jagrik Journeys. vartaLeap also conducts analysis, learning and insights from across the coalition.</p>
<p><b>Influencing institutions</b></p> 	<p><b>Developing policy recommendations:</b> A working group of the vartaLeap Coalition has provided inputs to the National Youth Policy, Government of India. Additionally, the Youth Duties and Rights Draft Declaration provided inspiration for many members to integrate into their organizational and programme policies.</p> <p><b>Performing government and multilateral capacity building:</b> Many of vartaLeap’s members are directly involved with government as advisers, co-creators of curricula and programme implementation partners. vartaLeap built the capacity of government staff by engaging with government youth programmes and participating in United Nations’ agency partnerships.</p>

24. ComMutiny. (n.d.). *About Nourishing Now*. <https://commutiny.in/about-nourishing-now>.

## Collective action activities (continued)

Capability	Activities
<p><b>Hosting learning communities and building capacity</b></p> 	<p><b>Running pilot projects:</b> vartaLabs co-create interventions and journeys as pilot programmes and then take them to scale. Examples include: Samjho Toh - The Samvidhan LIVE Dialogues;<sup>25</sup> Gender Jagrik: Questioning Masculinity;<sup>26</sup> Youth Leaders in Climate Action (initiatives on rewilding and renewables to inspire climate positive communities); and Togetherness Table.<sup>27</sup></p> <p><b>Codifying a methodology:</b> vartaLeap has codified the youth-centric FLOWING principles for its design processes. Also, where possible and relevant, gamification is used to increase and sustain engagement.</p> <p><b>Capturing and disseminating learnings:</b> vartaLeap makes extensive use of WhatsApp communities, as well as LinkedIn, to capture and disseminate learnings to the membership and beyond. In addition, vartaLeap presents its messages on national and global platforms, as well as digital platforms. vartaLeap also creates short films and videos to amplify and accelerate their learnings and approach, which are available on YouTube (The 5th Space).<sup>28</sup> The collection includes more than 200 film and media products created by ComMutiny – The Youth Collective, the host organization of vartaLeap.</p> <p><b>Hosting communities of practice:</b> For the public, vartaLeap hosts numerous online and offline convenings, capacity building initiatives and platforms for co-creation. For its membership, vartaLeap hosts bonding nights (themed gatherings), learning days (online and offline cross-learning sessions), informal regional level meetups, narrative building events and Khoj Yatras (one-on-one member visits).</p> <p><b>Consulting, coaching and training:</b> vartaLeap is a key learning partner to the collective ecosystem in India. It has strategic alignments with cutting-edge consulting firms such as Vyaktitva, Adaptatva to offer courses and capacity building on collectivization and coalition building in the country to foundations, civil society organizations and higher education institutions.</p>
<p><b>Investing in systemic solutions</b></p> 	<p><b>Developing public goods:</b> vartaLeap's learning resources are available to members of the coalition as public goods that can be adopted and adapted to augment their programming and interventions with young people. Its frameworks and principles are publicly available, and its curricula and games can be made available to non-members on receiving expressions of interest.</p> <p><b>Co-fundraising for initiatives:</b> The facilitariat works to raise resources for both internal and external initiatives. Coalition members also engage in collaborative fundraising by building common narratives of shared programmes and approaching donors in a consortia, where possible.</p>



25. A journey co-designed and run by members since 2019 to combat polarization among youth.

26. A programme co-conceptualized by members of the Gender Jagrik Lab in 2020 to shift norms around gender-based violence and women's leadership.

27. An intergenerational, gamified experience first designed in 2019 to create dialogues in families and communities, later adapted as a well-being initiative to develop feelings literacy.

28. YouTube. (n.d.). *The 5th Space*. <https://www.youtube.com/user/the5thspace>.



**In the summer of 2021, the COVID-19 Delta wave spread across India, causing a sharp surge in cases and quickly becoming a crisis that overwhelmed the healthcare system.**

Driven by the highly transmissible Delta variant, daily infections peaked at over 400,000, resulting in severe shortages of hospital beds, oxygen and medicines. At this time, the vartaLeap community was relatively nascent, but slowly, what began as an ad-hoc crisis response initiative grew into a systematic effort with reach across India. Given the nature of the crisis, the vartaLeap community's diversity became its strength. Donors and well-resourced organizations contributed generously in order to reach grassroots communities, while frontline organizations quickly disseminated food and health packages. Throughout the effort, a small core group of strategic advisers, donors and practitioners guided the initiative overall.

Although the immediate health and hunger crisis was paramount at the time, vartaLeap also began to collectively think ahead towards recovery and resilience. This led to the

development of holistic initiatives on preventative well-being to address the hopelessness, helplessness, isolation and anxiety that people were feeling, especially young people and youth workers. This initiative became a game changer, with 80 intergenerational vartaLeap members coming together to co-create two gamified interventions to nurture individual and collective well-being collaborative projects to address community needs. These projects included 1) Togetherness Table – a unique experience that creates a safe space to build “feelings literacy” by opening up dialogues in intergenerational settings, and 2) Q-ki Plutury Power – an online game show for intergenerational teams to explore, co-create and amplify collective well-being. Throughout, vartaLeap members celebrated the passionate and purposeful work of Jagriks and youth workers on the frontlines. This widespread relief and recovery campaign came to be called “Saath Nirbhar” (a Hindi term meaning “interdependent”) and reached more than 650,000 people with critical medical services, food security and well-being interventions in a matter of months. Saath Nirbhar has been recognized as one of India's top 50 last mile responders by the World Economic Forum.<sup>29</sup>

## Supporting infrastructure

### Governance and participation

Members engage with the vartaLeap Coalition through purpose-driven groups. These include the thematic vartaLab groups (climate action, constitutional values, gender equality and well-being) and the working groups (bonding and learning, narrative, and programming and fundraising). The General Body of Members provides overall direction for the coalition, while the vartaKarta (the advisory board) develops strategies and supports the purpose-driven groups. Finally, the facilitariat and core working group (through host organizations, ComMutiny – The Youth Collective and members who have opted in) executes the strategies.

### Team culture and competencies

**Competencies:** The facilitariat team works to create an enabling space for members of the coalition, as well as each other. Relational competencies are important and are built through processes and systems. Design and facilitation skills are also crucial for the coalition. The facilitariat conducts 360-degree feedback processes and bi-annual team retreats for team building, capacity building, and performance review and enhancement.

**Values:** In its charter, the vartaLeap coalition embraces a co-created set of values, including: 1) embody love for ourselves and others; 2) ensure freedom and equity for everyone; 3) practice justice and ecological integrity for ourselves and everyone; 4) celebrate fraternity and inclusion of all identities and empathy for all thoughts and perspectives; 5) bring creativity and fun in what it does and the experiences it co-creates; 6) be authentic in thought and action; and 7) collaborate in vartaLeap's approach.

### Collaborative and adaptive learning

The coalition aspires to always work collaboratively with members, mobilizing individual strengths and competencies. vartaLeap pilots are executed and operationalized through hub organizations with strong implementation skills. The design and co-creation of these pilots are built by members who bring implementation expertise, but also those who bring youth-centric design experience or thematic expertise. Many vartaLeap members come from the Changelooms ecosystem (a learning and leadership journey for young social entrepreneurs facilitated by Pravah and ComMutiny – The Youth Collective) that predates vartaLeap and are accustomed to using design and facilitation processes such as Big Ticket Design and Ocean in a Drop youth development grounding. These processes are, therefore, organically embedded into the larger coalition through ongoing programmes. vartaLeap's work is iterative, building on previous experiences and designs and creating spaces to review, reflect and pivot when needed, while also allowing for significant contextualization and adaptation.

29. World Economic Forum. (n.d.). Saath Nirbhar - vartaLeap Coalition and ComMutiny. <https://widgets.weforum.org/lastmiletotop50india/saath-nirbhar-vartaleap-coalition-and-commutiny/>.

## Impact relief and recovery



In an overwhelming expression of interconnectedness and camaraderie, the ComMutiny-vartaLeap ecosystem ventured head first into relief and recovery work during the second wave of COVID-19. The network became a space where resources were raised, accessed and distributed. The members who had a strong presence in the grassroots became the last mile responders by reaching hundreds of marginalized communities. Responding to the dire circumstances, especially in April and May, the Coalition supported these communities in accessing emergency health services, by distributing ration kits, cooked meals, etc and with time, creating innovative journeys centered on building collective societal wellbeing for resilient communities.



### Communities

Migrant Labourers, Sex Workers, Persons from the LGBTQI+ community, Tea Garden Workers, Tribals, Dalits, Adolescent Girls, People with Disabilities, Senior Citizens, Artisans, Religious Minorities, Women and Children

### Impact

**620,000** people  
**65+** locations  
**17** states

### Support Raised

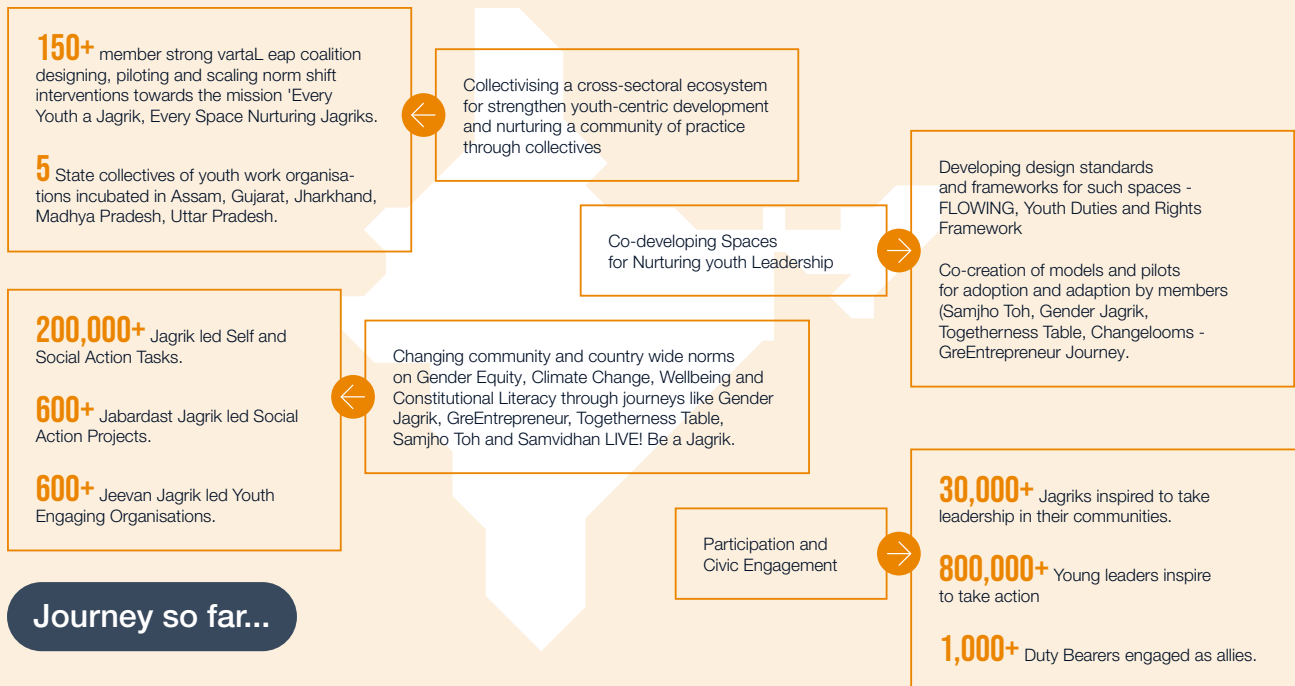
#### Relief:

Cash: **₹5.9 MILLION** (Indian rupees)  
 In kind: **₹26.3 MILLION**

#### Recovery:

**₹8.3 MILLION** for well-being journeys

## Catalysing youth participation



## The “Gender Jagrik” vartaLab



“Gender Jagrik” is a leadership journey with men and boys aiming to shift narratives about masculinity, reduce gender-based violence and significantly improve positive life indicators for women (e.g. school enrolment, freedom of movement, decision-making, sexual and reproductive rights, relationships and more).

This vartaLab was conceived in 2020, when a group of vartaLeap members with deep gender work and youth programming experience came together with the intention of co-creating a youth-centric innovation on gender. The members included organizations such as Breakthrough, ComMutiny, Indo Global Social Service Society, Mittika, People for Change, Pravah, The YP Foundation, Talash, YES Foundation, as well as dedicated individuals. Over six months, the vartaLab convened regularly and arrived at the idea of working with men and boys to challenge gender norms and question current concepts of masculinity. They also decided to design the innovation to “scale with soul” through the use of lay facilitators. Furthermore, they determined that the intervention needed to be grounded in their lived realities, since past experiences showed that curriculum-based training had limited impact once men and boys returned to their social contexts.

Based on these requirements, the group designed an initiative to impact gender norms (including those relating to masculinity) by identifying “inspired insiders” – young men and boys aged 15-29 years old who are motivated to change the unequal distribution of power and privilege in their immediate circle and communities. These young men and boys are aware of the gender-based injustice, violence and discrimination in their communities and hold the potential to influence others and drive norm change.

The intervention is built around a series of dialogue circles to help young men and boys switch their feeling of **guilt** (stemming from being complicit in perpetuating gender inequality, either through their actions or silence) to a feeling of **ownership** for the situation. This switch inspires them to take empathetic actions to address key situations. These “inspired insiders” then go on to facilitate similar circles with others in their communities and collaborate with girls and women on action projects to slowly start shifting norms.

The vartaLab members collaboratively designed the intervention and four member organizations are piloting it in their respective locations. The lab championed the pilot, acting as advisers and mentors to the implementing

organizations. This process enabled non-gender-focused organizations to implement the programme and recognize that working with young men and boys could be a key imperative in their own work. Attitude shifts were measured among the young men and boys as well as in their communities. Positive shifts of up to 80% were observed on matters like gender roles, mobility of women and career choices.

One positive story involves Naushad, who is 23 and has attended approximately eight sessions of Gender Jagrik. He is a plumber but wants to change his line of work and step into a government job. Naushad is a married man. His wife, Maalsa, and all of the women in his family follow “parda” and are usually very quiet and reserved even in their own homes. If the women of the house talk to someone from the other gender apart from their husbands or fathers, it is looked down upon. One day, Maalsa wasn’t feeling well and fainted while Naushad was away at work. His brother was at home but didn’t feel able to offer to help because of her “parda”.

Thankfully, Naushad made it home in time and rushed his wife to the doctor. After this incident, Naushad told everyone at home that no “parda” is bigger than someone’s health. He also assured his wife and everyone at home that, step by step, these things will gradually change and that as a family, they must all engage in more conversations. This seemingly little step was a game-changer.



**There has been a significant shift in Naushad’s behaviour since he became a part of this intervention, I felt this the moment he stood by me when everyone was against me.**

**Maalsa Parveen, Naushad’s wife**

The Gender Jagrik “Inspired Insider initiative” has since gained traction and is now active in five locations, engaging over 1,200 young men and boys. Notably, three of the organizations implementing the initiative had never previously run gender-focused programmes. The vartaLab now serves as an advisory group that adds depth and quality to the intervention, while co-envisioning a large-scale public initiative to build and disseminate narratives on gender-equal norms.





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91-93 route de la Capite  
CH-1223 Cologny/Geneva  
Switzerland

Tel.: +41 (0) 22 869 1212

[socialinnovators@weforum.org](mailto:socialinnovators@weforum.org)  
[www.schwabfound.org](http://www.schwabfound.org)

