



Global Grassroots

CONSCIOUS SOCIAL CHANGE FOR WOMEN



IMAGO DEI FUND - 2019 WINTER UPDATE

Through the Imago Dei Fund's generous support, Global Grassroots and our teams of women-led conscious social change agents are transforming communities.

By nurturing the innate gifts, capacities, and ideas of women in East Africa, we have addressed domestic violence, sexual exploitation, gender equity, child diarrhea and malnutrition all while simultaneously ensuring girls' education, providing economic and leadership opportunities for women, providing lifelong tools for inner and outer transformation, creating economic self-sufficiency, and generating ongoing resources to solve other pressing local issues.

This year marks Global Grassroots' 15th anniversary since our founding! Our Academy for Conscious Change represents a unique and proven model that creates measurable impact led by women and girls in their own communities. Integral to this model is our belief that we must invest in the development of our inner awareness to maximize our effectiveness as change leaders. Mindfulness is our primary tool for doing so. Why is this?

Mindfulness, a form of brain training, is defined as paying attention on purpose in the present moment, with curiosity and non-judgment. Research has shown these practices improve, among other things, our emotional wellbeing and interpersonal relations – both important to leadership and social change work:

Understand Change from the Inside Out: Mindfulness builds self-awareness, including noticing how we react to stress, fear and discomfort, or our judgments about others. Through examining and changing our own behavior, we start to understand what drives others, especially how they cope with change. We can then make more informed and compassionate decisions that enable transformation in others.

Develop More Effective Relationships: As we change ourselves, the quality of our relationships will also change. Research on mindfulness reveals that with practice, we enjoy an improved ability to express ourselves, handle conflict with less anger, and pay attention better. This allows us to connect more deeply and foster greater trust and respect, making it more likely we can work towards change as allies rather than opponents.

Invite More Innovation and Design for Impact and Sustainability: As we cultivate mindfulness, we become adept at setting aside ego and bias to inquire and listen. Instead of seeing failure, mindfulness also trains us to examine circumstances with curiosity so that we continually learn. We are less likely to think our way is the only viewpoint or create division and blame. We are driven by our passion for the issue not our personal gain. So, we are more likely to foster understanding across difference and honor the unique contributions of others. This inspires those around us to collaborate in pursuit of a common cause with meaning and impact, fueling innovation and long-term sustainability. This is Conscious Social Change.

Since 2004, we have trained more than 750 change agents in our Conscious Social Change methodology, who have gone on to design and launch nearly 200 social ventures, serving more than 175,000 people. Our 100 percent sustainability rate over 12 years among just our women-led water infrastructure ventures is unusual in our field. Some of our partners in the water sector attribute it to our investment in empowerment and mindfulness. We now want to understand more deeply the link between the inner journey of our participants and the social impact our women achieve.

Over the next nine months, Global Grassroots will be undertaking an intensive study of our programs and methodology in more depth. As we consider how to expand our impact and deepen our influence, we want to understand what is most essential and sharable about our work that can be a contribution to the larger sector in new ways. We will be reviewing over 12 years of data, surveying other international NGOs on their methods of measuring personal transformation, and conducting a literature review of the scientific and scholarly research on empowerment and agency, mindfulness, social-emotional intelligence, belonging, and wellbeing. We are committed to sharing what we find with radical transparency, and invite your partnership along the way in sharing your ideas, questions, and finding applications for these insights.

Our ultimate intention is to influence the larger field of social change in understanding the importance of cultivating these human qualities and their relationship to the sustainability and impact of social change solutions. We are grateful for your continued support along this journey, and look forward to the next 15 years of positive impact in the lives and communities of our conscious change agents around the world.

Warmly,



Gretchen Ki Steidle
Founder & President



Water Scarcity

Across Rwanda and Uganda, women and girls often walk an average 3.5 hours to a contaminated source daily to collect water. Women have less time to generate income. Girls miss part of the school day helping with collection and can fall behind, then drop out. Women are at risk of rape traveling to remote water sites, and the long duration can trigger domestic violence at home. The disabled and elderly who cannot collect water on their own are often sexually exploited by men who offer to deliver water for a “fee”, spreading HIV. At Global Grassroots we believe that women have the greatest insight into the needs affecting their communities. Unfortunately, they often have the least access to the training and resources to advance their own ideas. Water, in particular, affects so many aspects of women’s and girls’ lives, yet women have little to no opportunity to address these systemic problems in their community. **With your support, Global Grassroots is changing the lives of women and girls. Together, we have given women the chance to heal, learn, and lead—and these remarkable women have become great levers for social change in their communities.**



Women & Water

Charting New Territory

With generous support from the Imago Dei Fund, Global Grassroots has now advanced into some of the most underserved communities in both Rwanda and Northern Uganda.

In 2019, Global Grassroots expanded our reach into the Bumbogo Sector in Kigali, Rwanda which has the highest levels of malnutrition in the district. With a population of more than 41,000 people across 43 villages, the Rwandan water municipality was only reaching 18% of Bumbogo households, and for most families, water service was scarce and often contaminated. In October 2019, team ***Eternal Beauty*** overcame enormous obstacles and launched their first water venture impacting the lives of over 3000 people.

In Northern Uganda, water access is vastly different from that of Rwanda. Unlike Rwanda, there are no municipal pipelines in the area for communities to access. There are, however, approximately 60 defunct boreholes that have fallen into disrepair because villages have neither the training nor the financial resources to service them. Each borehole is designed to serve more than 300-600 people, resulting in approximately 18,000-36,000 people who no longer have access to clean, safe water. Many are left to collect water from contaminated streams and hand-dug wells.

In 2018, Global Grassroots supported the development and training of two women-led Ugandan teams *Life Changers* (Oloko Kwo) and *Dedicated Workers* (Aketo Koma). In 2019, both teams are celebrating the successful launch of their community water ventures. *See pages 6-11.*

In addition to launching three new water teams, five out of the seven women-led water teams we initiated in 2015-2017 in the Jali Sector of Rwanda are ready to expand and support an even broader base of families in need of clean, safe water. These expanded water ventures will reach an estimated additional 8054 direct beneficiaries. *See pages 14-17.*

“When women manage water, the lives of women and girls are forever changed.”



Community dramatization on the effects of water borne disease.

Life Changers

Gulu, Uganda

Life Changers (Oloko Kwo), one of two new teams in Northern Uganda, is a highly organized and unified team of 30 remarkable women living and working in Bobayo village in Gulu, Uganda. Having completed the Academy for Conscious Change intensive training in late 2018, *Life Changers* took ownership of an ailing borehole and launched their water venture in late October. This dedicated group is addressing and eradicating water-borne disease in their community by expanding access to clean, safe, and reliable water to 630 people in their village. *Life Changers* has already begun offering sanitation and hygiene training to 120 women, 80 men and 200 children. Through community sensitization

training they help their neighbors understand the devastating impacts of water-borne disease. We visited team *Life Changers* in April of 2019, where they performed a drama on the effects of water borne disease in their community. Their performance was touching and deeply impactful.

Life Changers' long term sustainability plan includes the sale of beautiful and practical baskets that are traditionally used to sort sorghum seed during harvest. To expand their craft market, they will be training 24 additional community members in basketry, and the profits from basket sales will fund future borehole repairs and provide school scholarships to children in their village.



Borehole repair, almost complete



Christening the new pump.



Dedication inscription.





Team Dedicated Worker's trauma-informed training.

Dedicated Workers

Gulu, Uganda

Dedicated Workers (Aketo Koma), is our second water team to launch in Uganda. *Dedicated Workers* initially completed their Academy for Conscious Change intensive training in 2013, and launched a social venture aimed at radically reducing the rate of domestic violence in their region. Working with over 250 people, *Dedicated Workers* succeeded in making Paibona Jugu village a safer place for women and children. They were so successful, that they expanded their reach to five nearby villages impacting the lives of 500 additional people.

In 2018, *Dedicated Workers* applied for a venture expansion grant to rehabilitate and operate a

borehole/water venture, which now serves 616 people from over 88 households. In addition to providing safe, clean, accessible water, *Dedicated Workers* is training 120 women and 89 men on the benefits of personal and family hygiene practices at home as well as safe and clean water collection at the water point.

Dedicated Workers is passionate about decreasing the incidence of water-borne diseases among women, men, and children by 60%. If their past success is any indication of their future achievements, we have all the faith in the world that *Dedicated Workers* will once again transform the lives of the families in their village.



Dedicated Workers management training.



Designing thier venture.



Freshly poured borehole foundation.



Community leader.



Young women who receive school scholarships.



Team Dedicated Workers collecting water from their repaired borehole.

Jali Team Expansions

In light of impending climate change impacts to frontline communities, Global Grassroots is answering an urgent call to find the most scalable and efficient ways to expand our reach and deepen our impact. We believe we will accomplish this best with a ripple effect and community-saturation impact model that is both wide and deep. Starting in September of 2019, and for the next 12-18 months, Global Grassroots is dedicating the majority of our programmatic focus on piloting and studying clustered place-based community impact.

As you know, in 2015-2017, Global Grassroots launched seven water ventures in the Jali sector of Rwanda—funded by The Coca-Cola Africa Foundation and significant partners. For the first time, we “clustered” our training of women leaders and investment in social purpose ventures in one particular region. Each women-led team graduated from our two-year Academy for Conscious Change program and are currently operating their own non-profits sustainably and independently, serving over 25,000 people with clean water. Through this unique opportunity, we learned that by clustering water teams in nearby villages, they shared their strengths and compounded the benefits of safe water access, fostering a cumulative regional effect greater than the sum of its parts. The impact our teams achieved with their first water ventures include:

- **An 80% decrease in reported loss of income** due to collecting water, from 76% to just under 15% of households.
- **An increase in men helping to collect water** from 8.5% of households to 42% of households.
- **A 69% decrease in children’s absence from school for water collection** from 77% to 24% of households (75% of whom are girls.)
- **A 96% decrease in weekly cases of diarrhea in children under five**, with 83% of households reporting zero cases.
- Compared to our baseline study, where more than 27% of women reported experiencing sexual violence related to water, **98% of respondents now feel safe collecting water** and none have experienced sexual violence related to water collection.

Within one year, Global Grassroots teams are often ready for expansion. We consider it a sign of success when teams expand their work, teach others the skills they learned from us or iteratively solve other issues in their community. Today, five of these seven Jali teams are ready to expand, which allows us to help them go the last mile on eliminating all of these issues from water-borne disease to gender based violence for good.

Clustering for Impact

To take advantage of this promising new “clustering” model, Global Grassroots will be concentrating the majority of our program resources within the Jali sector in Kigali, Rwanda. By concentrating on teams that know how to use our tools to design their next phase of growth, and leveraging the community strength and trust they have already built, we will maximize their impact, at the lowest cost, in the least amount of time. This, in turn, means exponential impact.

Primed and ready for additional capital investment, our Jali teams are looking to build infrastructure that will serve a wider community including the most vulnerable and underserved in their sector. Expansion proposals include improvements to offset disruptions in supply when municipal sources ration the water, larger storage tanks, and additional water sites. Some teams, recognized for their benevolent leadership, have been asked by village leaders to take over and repair other defunct water access points. In addition to expanding water infrastructure, teams are also solving other challenges within their communities, such as family planning and gender equity, while working creatively to go the last mile on major benchmarks like water-borne disease.

While revenue from the team’s water sales are already funding most of the team’s educational programs and services as well as ongoing maintenance and repair, teams often need another grant in order to invest in major infrastructure development to extend water access services. This includes laying pipelines, land purchases or fees for easements, building the brick housing required to protect access to metered water taps, storage tanks, permitting, etc. requiring investments from \$1,500 up to \$15,000. Remarkably, our teams have been so successful that many of them have team earnings to invest in their own expansion projects and have stepped forward as engaged financial partners. Based on the pressing need in neighboring villages, teams Vision (*see page 13-14*) and Hygiene and Culture (*see page 15-16*) have already completed their venture plans and have begun their expansion projects.





Team Vision's first water site. April 2019

Team Vision

Jali Sector Expansion Project

Team Vision launched their first water venture in 2017. Vision initially faced a tremendous obstacle when their water supply was diverted for the military base in the area. But this dynamic team persevered, and by engaging the community and local officials, they raised more than 425,000 RWF (US \$455) as well as the manpower needed to excavate a new pipeline. Now they successfully supply water to over 3200 people. While the team consistently worked on finding a solution to their water access problem, they never missed an opportunity to run their social change program. They boldly conducted classes on family planning for 180 couples, provided birth control resources to vulnerable women in their community and created a lending circle that grew to 193 women.

Recognized for their benevolent leadership, team Vision now manages two additional water sites. Due to water disruptions from the local municipality, 329 households (1316 individuals) go without regular clean water access. In September of 2019, team Vision was granted a venture expansion plan to add two 5000 liter water tanks. In early November, they started construction, and by mid-December, safe, clean water will be flowing.

With expanded income from water sales, they will be able to continue to offer training in financial literacy, vocational skills, and entrepreneurship by teaching women how to use their assets to generate income.





Hygiene & Culture, first water site, May 2017

Team Hygiene & Culture

Jali Sector Expansion Project

Team Hygiene & Culture launched their first water venture in 2016 which also initially faced water shortages due to military camp disruptions. They courageously joined forces and put their new skills as conscious social change agents to work and negotiated an agreement with the military camp for increased local water service. Before Hygiene & Culture's launch, households often spent 300 RWF per jerry can of water. Now those same households pay only 30 RWF, a tremendous savings. Women can use their savings to pay school fees or join a rapidly expanding lending circle, which now has 384 members. The team has also helped reduce malnutrition through the use of kitchen gardens.

Hygiene & Culture was recently offered a

second water site that had been poorly managed in a nearby community. In October, Hygiene & Culture was granted funds for a project expansion, which includes two water storage tanks at each of the two water sites. Water tanks will be used to offset municipal water disruptions and military camp water diversion. On November 20th, their water tanks were installed, giving 3,300 people access to clean, safe water. Additionally, Hygiene & Culture have designed and installed five kitchen gardens in five nearby villages, which serve as demonstration gardens for teaching, inspiring, and supporting over 50 home gardeners to impact the health of hundreds of children. In total, Hygiene & Culture is expected to reach 4834 people through their operations.



Tiered kitchen garden.



Container kitchen garden.



Water storage tanks.

Trauma Healing

For social change to be truly transformative, it depends on the inner and outer resources of the individuals who are leading it, including their capacity to foster trust, break-down barriers, bring their best selves to the work, and draw upon values such as compassion. In 2019, the Jali community expanded their mind-body trauma healing training from that which is already embedded in our Academy for Conscious Change training curriculum, to reach even more community members and support the ongoing wellbeing of our teams. Led by Gyslaine Uwitonze, our Rwanda Senior Program Officer, and Thacienne Nyiraneza, our Rwanda Program Associate, our teams and regional social health workers began gathering 2-4 times per month to practice and share our trauma healing method with community members.

Our chosen technique, Breath-Body-Mind (BBM) combines scientifically proven practices in movement, breathing, and meditation to relieve stress and/or trauma. BBM dramatically improves one's physical and mental well-being, rapidly reducing stress, anxiety, as well as other symptoms of post-traumatic stress. BBM represents over 40 years of medical research carried out by Dr. Richard Brown, a Professor of Clinical Psychiatry from Columbia University in New York, and Dr. Patricia Gerbarg, a Professor of Clinical Psychiatry at New York Medical College. Global Grassroots has utilized BBM with its change agents, who include genocide survivors, gender-based violence survivors, and refugees, since 2010.





Young Women's Academy

In 2019, Global Grassroots welcomed 24 remarkable young women from Rwanda, Uganda, South Sudan, and Kenya into our Young Women's Academy (YWA). These exceptional young leaders gathered for three sessions in January, March and July. Over the course of this intensive seven-month program, participants design and implement social change ventures in their home villages or refugee camps that address social issues important to them. In July, our entire cohort graduated, and in total, they impacted over 5000 direct beneficiaries and over 15,000 indirect beneficiaries through their grassroots social ventures across 24 communities.

Venture issues included:

- Girls' Education and School Drop-outs
- Early Marriage
- Malnutrition
- Gender Equality
- Unwanted Pregnancy
- Depression, Literacy, Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence

Below are a few profiles and impact reports from some of our remarkable young women.

ASIFIWE LOVING

NYAGATARE DISTRICT, RWANDA

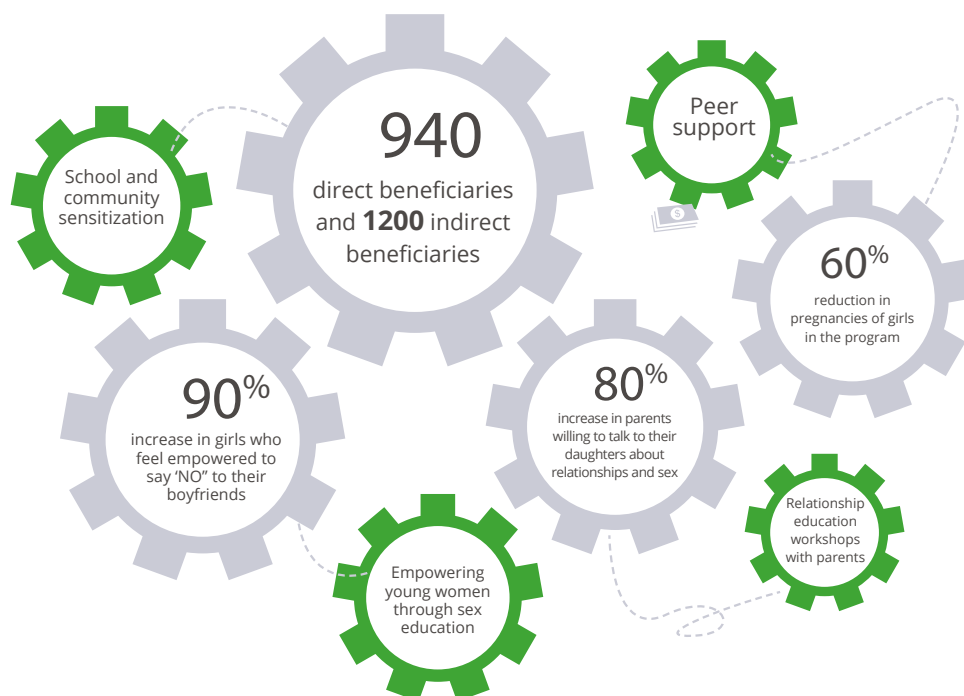
“Regardless of my fears, I learned that I have the potential and the strength to impact my community in positive ways.”



Reducing the Number of Teen Pregnancies

I fought against unwanted pregnancy in my community by working with girls 13 - 23 years old in the Nyagatare District, Rwanda. My mission was to lift up girl children through sensitizing girls with the goal of helping them remain in school. I learned that the most affected people are girls in primary school and secondary schools and I provided trainings to young girls, single mothers, and parents of vulnerable girls. I was able to directly impact

770 students through my school sensitization program and met directly with 20 families in my community. My project was so successful that I created an ongoing community club called Sisters of Tomorrow. I pledge to support my community during breaks from University. I learned many things about myself during this program, especially that I have the potential and strength to impact my community.



CHARITY BEATRICE

SOUTH SUDAN

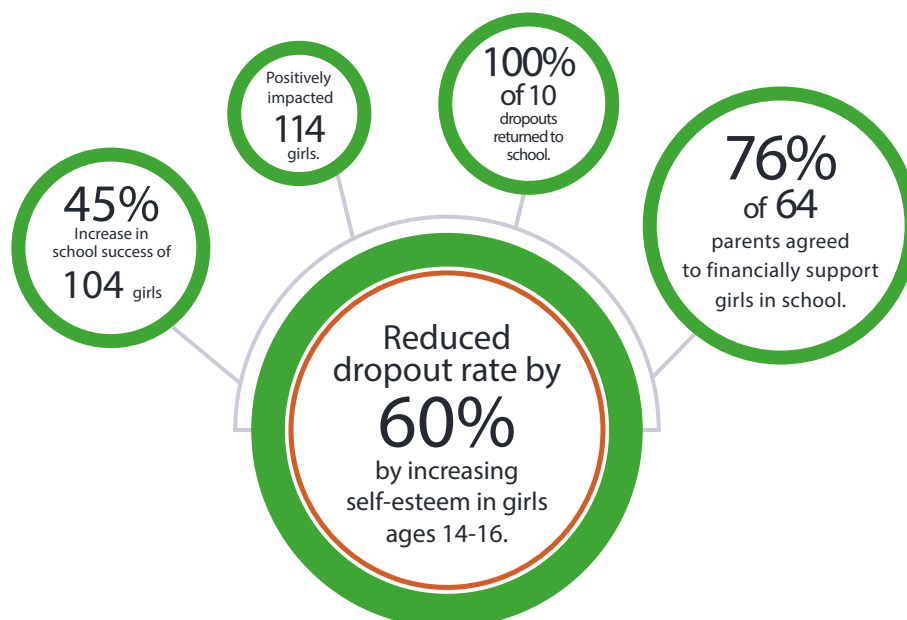
“Being a conscious social change agent has helped me grow personally, cultivate my self-awareness, and above all develop my skills as a truly impactful leader.”



Reducing the Number of School Dropouts

My vision is for all teenagers to value the importance of education for a sustainable and self-reliant future. My issue study found that girls ages 14-16 are most affected because of child labor, early marriages, lack of parental support, low self-esteem and bad peer influence. As a conscious social change agent, I offered self-esteem sensitization through teaching and art practice to 104 girls at the Ombachi Primary School. After sensitization, the teachers reported that class performance for girls is now better than the boys. Attendance is better and girls willingly and actively participate in class activities.

In my village, I worked with ten dropouts. Three went back to school and seven joined technical institutes. Because of the trust I built, I was invited to meet with parents to talk to them about girls education. Parents learned to support girls equally with boys. Because school fees were a problem, I taught 25 men and 39 women how to make soap to raise money for school fees. I will continue my work in the community after graduation from Global Grassroots and have created the Jackalz Nation youth group for the benefit of my community.



JOSIANE MUREKATETE

KIGALI, RWANDA

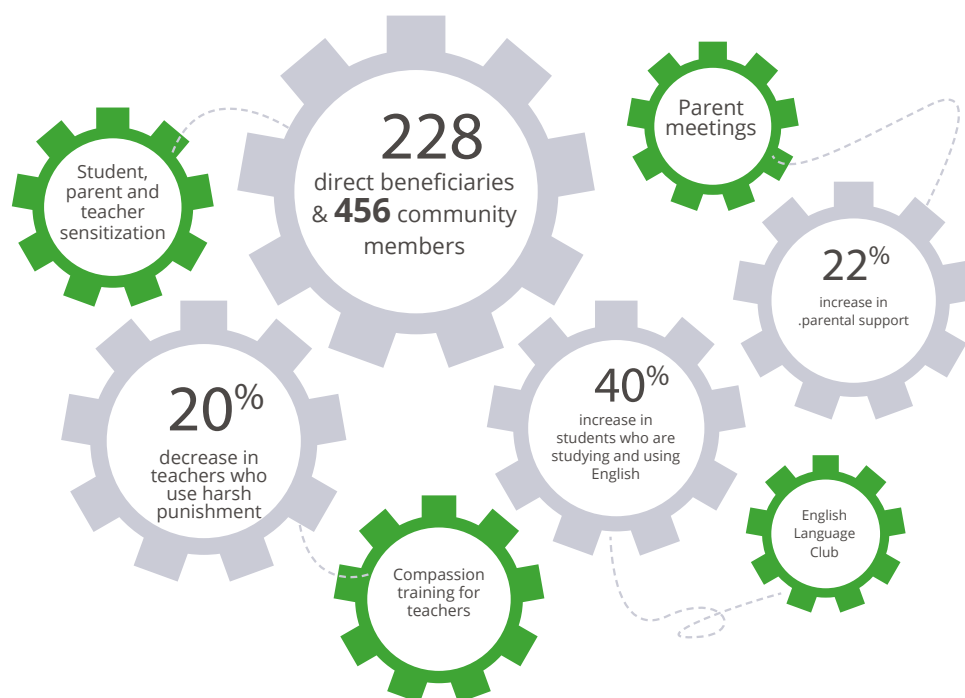
“As a conscious social change agent I learned that I am not living for my own sake alone, I am living for my whole community.”



Improving the Quality of Education

My mission is to improve the quality of education in Murundi sector where the local school has a performance grade of “F”. My goal was to increase student performance by sensitizing parents to the importance of education success while encouraging teachers to use compassion and encouragement when educating students. Many families in my community are cattle farmers and thought education was not necessary and teachers used harsh punishment to motivate students.

To reach my goals I formed an English club, hosted essay writing competitions, provided assistance in coaching slow learners, gave awards for kind teaching, and sensitized parents to make commitments to education. I am most proud of convincing parents to visit schools and get more involved in school activities including evaluating methodology of teaching. Through this journey I developed a heart of compassion that helps me to judge less and love more





Understanding & Sharing

In celebration of the 15 years since our founding—and our success running highly sustainable women-led programs in East Africa—**Global Grassroots is launching an in-depth study to help identify the most impactful and scalable aspects of our program.** An independent third party will help us explore the linkages between the inner work we facilitate and the social change outcomes and sustainability of our ventures. To what extent does the cultivation of human qualities such as confidence, empowerment, self-awareness, agency, wellbeing, courage, and compassion contribute to the sustainability and impact of social solutions? Does self-awareness foster a different leadership ethos that affects organizational function? Or are solutions themselves fundamentally different because they are designed with greater mindfulness, including how they diagnose issues, cultivate trust, and inspire transformation in others?

Through our proposed study, we will examine the personal experiences and societal outcomes among our more than 750 change agents and the 200 micro-NGOs they have initiated using our mindfulness-based design process. This represents 12 years of our current programs among change agents in four primary countries – Rwanda, Uganda, South Sudan and Kenya.



The outcomes from this study will help us determine how to best scale and share our work with others in the field.

Study outcomes may include:

1. **New Business Models for our Sustainability and Influence:** We aim to identify the key components of our model that are responsible for our success. This will help us identify what might be most sharable with others outside Global Grassroots through new strategies (dissemination, consulting, embedding our work with partner organizations, etc.) that can generate sources of revenue for our work with the vulnerable and deepen our contribution to the larger sector.
2. **Mentorship And Local Agency:** We imagine a model over-time, where the brightest leaders in our established teams emerge as grassroots mentors during the venture development and non-profit management phase for new teams. Our study will help us simplify our work to the most essential components for training others within our network of women change agents to be able to provide more on-the-ground support. We'd love to be able to start with this investment in our expansion ventures and then create avenues to test this larger mentorship model.
3. **Disseminating Learnings To The Sector:** From our survey of our work over the past 12 years, our literature review, and our survey of other NGOs, we hope to understand the impact of investing in women-led solutions over time. This will include further insights on the relationship between inner work and agency, and the ripple effects benefiting women and girls. Insights and tools from our study will serve to support the broader field in understanding the importance of and methods with which to invest in grassroots solutions and personal transformation. It will also help us identify new ways of partnering to share our expertise and encourage more women-led development. Drawing from these outputs, we will work to share our findings, including tools, best practices and guidelines to assist other professionals in measuring internal transformation in relevant publications, in social media, at global conferences, and among a broad network of funders, social entrepreneurs, NGOs, and grassroots communities globally.

Our ultimate intention is to influence the larger field of social change in understanding the importance and value of investing in the cultivation of human qualities such as self-awareness, agency and empowerment, in social change work. We believe this is particularly relevant to the success of women-led water infrastructure. We also hope to influence the international change sector in understanding the relationship of these human qualities to the social solution design process as well as the sustainability and impact of such social solutions.

We welcome your insights, questions, and ideas as we delve into our research over the next six months, and we look forward to keeping you updated. Please join us as thought partners. Drop us a line at info@globalgrassroots.org and let us know you'd like to learn more. Or join our monthly Conscious Change Circles for regular updates (see more below).



NURTURING AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Celebrating our Partners

When you look into the heart of Global Grassroots, there you will find our team members, beneficiaries, leaders, community champions, funders, donors, sector allies, and you. As you know, Global Grassroots has a deep commitment to wisdom-informed and community-led processes. One of the ways that we stay true to that commitment is to gather essential insights from our supportive partners. From the largest donor to the newest social change agent, the wisdom you share helps us create a more diverse and sustainable organization. In 2020, Global Grassroots will be creating a number of ways to encourage you to stay connected and engaged with our Global Grassroots community.

Conscious Change Circles: We would like to invite you to **join us for a monthly call on the 3rd Friday of every month starting January 17th at noon ET.** This one hour call led by Gretchen Steidle **will feature one of our contemplative practices, updates and stories from our field teams in Africa, conscious social change teachings and tools, and inspiring findings from our study.** And most importantly, time for reflective, wisdom, and feedback from community members like you. Keep an eye out for an email invitation that will include links to join the call.

Ambassador Trip to Rwanda: Join us June 23–30, 2020 for an **unforgettable and life-changing journey to Rwanda.** Experience the power and impact of grassroots women, deepen your understanding of Rwanda's history and culture, visit our remarkable teams, and discover your unique contribution. We would love for you (and your family) to join us on our Ambassador trip to Rwanda. Please email us for more information on fees and accommodations at info@globalgrassroots.org.

We are so grateful to the Imago Dei Fund for your continued support and for joining us in our mission to transform the lives of women and girls.

