

ROOTS OF CHANGE

**HOW SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS ADVANCE
SYSTEMS CHANGE IN AFRICA**





ASHOKA EVERYONE A CHANGEMAKER™

ROOTS OF CHANGE REPORT





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The BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt promotes responsible leadership and inspires leaders worldwide to work towards a peaceful, just, and sustainable future. Through its activities, it aims to advance the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda. It does this by inspiring leaders to take their social and political commitment to the next level, across communities, cultures, and countries. Further, to drive positive change, it connects leaders through its global BMW Foundation Responsible Leaders Network. Finally, it invests in impactful organizations while encouraging leaders to embrace venture philanthropy and impact investing as effective tools for social change.



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MAKING MORE HEALTH

Making More Health was born in 2010 as a result of a long-standing partnership between Boehringer Ingelheim¹ and Ashoka. The partnership bridges social and business outcomes with the aim to create a shared value for all: for society, social entrepreneurs, our local and international partners, and our employees. To date, Making More Health has built a large network of 120 Ashoka Fellows working in the health sector, has engaged over 11,000 employees, and impacted the lives of 12 million people.

 **ILLUMINATE**

ILLUMINATE

Illuminate is an international and collaborative network that supports the emergence of systems change practice to advance the well-being of people and the planet. The network works to promote a world in which people are deeply connected to each other and the living planet, are awake to possibilities for change, and are able to embrace complexity to design systemic solutions to global challenges.

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PREFACE

Despite significant progress in the alleviation of poverty and in promoting health and education, recent reports indicate that the international community seems far from achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030². Which is why, in the 2022 SDG report, the United Nations Secretary General has called for bold action. Time is running out and humankind is confronted with an urgent need to find, support, and fund transformative solutions at a far greater pace than ever,

knowing that:

- Over 445 million people still live in extreme poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa alone, on less than USD 1.90 per day.
- More than 60 percent³ of Africa's population is under the age of 25 years. While young people represent an important asset for the continent's socio-economic development, a high youth unemployment rate, reaching above 60 percent⁴ in some African countries, is a barrier for young people to achieve meaningful livelihoods.
- Expectedly, climate change will have severe consequences on the African continent, causing droughts and resource scarcity which could well result in social conflicts. Seven of the 10 countries⁵ that are most vulnerable to climate change are in Africa.

These pressing challenges are extremely complex and deeply intertwined. To accelerate the achievement of the SDGs, systemic approaches are needed to ensure that the root causes of these disturbing problems —rather than the symptoms— are addressed. This is done by altering, shifting, and transforming structures, customs, mindsets, power dynamics, and rules through collaboration across a di-

verse set of actors with the intent of achieving lasting improvement at the local, national, and global levels. While the complex, long-term nature of systems change can cause uncertainty and upheaval during the change process, it is well worth it and leads to more sustainable change. Historical examples of successful systems change range from the abolition of slavery in the United States to campaigns that have resulted in women's right to vote.

From among those working to develop such solutions, the work of social entrepreneurs stands out. Since social entrepreneurship involves taking risks and venturing in uncharted territory, not all social entrepreneurs always succeed in scaling-up their efforts. However, their entrepreneurial spirit, creativity, risk-taking, and persistence set them apart.

It is encouraging to note that in the last few years, while the idea of systems change has gained momentum in the development and philanthropy space, it has also become almost a buzz word. At Ashoka, a global network of social entrepreneurs, we have been at the forefront of connecting the concept of social entrepreneurship to systems change since the very beginning of our work in the early 1980s. This quote from Bill Drayton, Ashoka Founder and CEO, summarizes this philosophy: 'Social entrepreneurs are not content just to give a fish or teach how to fish. They will not rest until they have revolutionized the fishing industry.'⁶ All the social entrepreneurs we elect to the Ashoka Fellowship are tackling messy, complex social problems, trying to create change at a systemic level.

In this report, we showcase, through practical case studies of Ashoka Africa Fellows, why and how these leaders have developed systems-change strategies. To initiate the conver-

sation, we have selected five Fellows out of the 470 in Sub-Saharan Africa. Our goal is to create greater understanding about systems-change within three main groups: i) practitioners, i.e., social entrepreneurs and leaders in the citizen sector; ii) investors for social change in Africa; and iii) influential players such as corporate and government leaders. This is particularly important given that, as a collective of social entrepreneurs and changemakers,

we are hearing and witnessing the following:

- **The need to demystify and contextualize systems change.** This can sometimes be perceived as a concept with a Western bias⁷ or an overly complex concept with plenty of jargon. At Ashoka, we have developed the Africanizer framework to ensure that we test the relevancy of Ashoka programs and resources locally. This report is aimed at developing Africa-related content.
- **Social entrepreneurs continue to face major barriers to fund their most impactful work,** i.e., their systemic work. While the term systems change is increasingly being adopted, funding practices need to evolve beyond largely focusing on short-term grants and directed impact indicators. This work is a call to action for the funding community: philanthropists, foundations, impact investors, corporate donors, government agencies, and multilateral organizations. Our question is: if African philanthropy is rapidly developing, can it leapfrog to embrace learnings on deep and sustainable systems change?
- **There is still a strong investment bias towards expat-led social ventures in Africa, yet there are remarkable solutions on the continent.** Only 5.2 percent of the USD 9 billion in grants from US foundations directed to Sub-Saharan Africa went to local organizations.⁸ Yet, there are remark-

able systems-changing solutions led by proximate leaders, African entrepreneurs, and organizations headquartered in Africa.

- **The current enthusiasm for social enterprise and the power of markets.**⁹ The conversation around social innovation and social change is increasingly dominated by a business-centric outlook that often mixes financial sustainability with impact. This trend is pulling organizations away from their purpose and instead, drawing people towards direct service and away from systems change knowing that systems change requires a long-term horizon and is much less likely to be financially profitable than direct service.

We would like to extend a big thank you to Making More Health, the BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt, and Illuminate for supporting this project. We hope that this report, which also builds on a body of research and existing resources by Ashoka and like-minded organizations, will trigger some reflections on scaling social change. We remain committed to continuing to learn and act to build a stronger ecosystem for social entrepreneurship in Africa, together with vision-aligned partners across sectors.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The five case studies about the work of social entrepreneurs in Africa highlighted here aim at describing systems change through concrete examples in various sectors and countries. This report defines systems change as 'addressing root causes rather than symptoms by altering, shifting, and transforming structures, customs, mindsets, power dynamics, and rules through collaboration across a diverse set of actors with the intent of achieving lasting improvement of societal issues on a local, national, and global level.'¹⁰

The objectives of this report are to:

- deepen the understanding of systems change practices, in particular in the African context;
- distil how-tos, insights, and lessons from the experience of social entrepreneurs who are changing systems;
- share those insights with three target groups: social entrepreneurs and leaders in the citizen sector; impact investors including philanthropists, foundations, investors, corporate donors, government agencies, and multilateral organizations that want to evolve their current approach to funding in a manner that positions them to invest in systems change efforts; and influential organizations such as corporates and government leaders who can potentially become instrumental in changing systems.



The case studies demonstrate how social entrepreneurs, together with their teams, coalitions, partners and beneficiaries, are:

- building a more inclusive environment for children with disability (Shonaquip Social Enterprise, South Africa);
- creating greater value for small-holder coffee farmers by changing power structures (NUCAFE, Uganda);
- leveraging technology and public participation to improve public transparency and accountability (BudgIT, Nigeria);
- prompting a comprehensive response to the stroke crisis (Stroke Action Nigeria); and
- increasing access to sustainable eye care (Kovin Naidoo, through his various ventures, Africa).

As intermediary organizations, practitioners, funders, and philanthropists, we need to reflect and learn from the best practices of social entrepreneurs, embedding their strategic thinking in our own work.

The case studies in this report show how we can:

- **adopt a systemic approach** in developing our programs, activities and funding practices;
- **shift power dynamics** between the social groups that we are working with to advance a more equitable power distribution;
- **improve existing public systems**, rather than building parallel structures, by providing expertise, ensuring the alignment of stakeholders, and using technology;
- **leverage data and scientific research** in addressing embedded power imbalances in various industries;
- **develop low budget, yet high impact strategies**, in the knowledge that systems change does not necessarily need a large organization and leverage points can be found to maximize impact;
- **ensure accountability and legitimacy of our work** by closely engaging a variety of actors in our fields, such as citizens, government bodies, non-profits and companies; and
- **use the power of Everyone Changemaker** as a guiding principle for systems change work.

MESSAGE FOR PRACTITIONERS, SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS, AND CITIZEN SECTOR LEADERS

As a social entrepreneur, you have been dedicating an incredible amount of passion and energy to address a complex social or environmental issue and you know that the needs are just too large and urgent to solve this problem alone through direct impact only. How can you leverage your insights, innovation and field experience to influence the broader system in which you operate in a more effective manner? We hope that these case studies can serve as inspiration for you by providing examples of different sectors, systems and angles to systems change. The organizations featured range from non-profit structures and hybrid structures and greatly differ in terms of budget size as well.

We encourage you to deeply think about this despite the pressures of running an organization and the pressures of funders to focus on direct impact:

- What could be the overall impact of your scaling strategy to influence current practices?
- Do you understand the system you are trying to influence well enough? This includes the resources, rules, roles, relationships, and results that govern this system.
- Can you describe with precision the intended systems change and your likely contribution to it?
- How have you—and how can you—leverage data and evidence as well as current

and unlikely partners so that you can confidently approach policy makers, administrative bodies and influential players while often being considered to be a 'small' player?

- What changes does adopting a systems change strategy imply for your organization, your team, and the talent you want to attract?
- What does adopting a systems change approach imply for your leadership style, keeping in mind that pursuing systems change requires collaboration at all levels?
- What impact milestones can you design to measure your progress towards long-term goals?
- How can you monetize your systems change work through consultancies, training, certification, and/or membership fees? The good news is that systemic strategies do not need to be expensive.

If you want to read more, please check the following Ashoka reports: [From Small to Systemic, Systemic and Empowering](#) and [Signal](#).



MESSAGE FOR FUNDERS

Ashoka Fellows frequently report that their most impactful work—the kind that is focused on systemic change—is generally the least funded. This presents a clear challenge and opportunity for funders to grow the impact of their funding by adopting a systems change approach.

Currently, the dominant funding practices continue to be ill-suited to support systemic change approaches. Short funding horizons, restricted financial resources, and funders' interference with initiatives pose major challenges. Based on the report, *Embracing Complexity: Towards a Shared Understanding of*

Funding Systems Change, published in 2020 by Ashoka and a consortium of partners, the majority of systems change approaches are expected to need more than five years of financial support to achieve their goals. However, few funders commit for the long term. Additionally, most grants come with restrictions and unrestricted funding is rare; many social innovators reported that they had to adapt their initiatives to comply with funder requirements.

As African philanthropy rapidly develops, could it leapfrog to embrace learnings on deep, sustainable systems-change?

As highlighted in Seven Steps for Funding Systems Change, you can:

- 1 Find systemic leaders:** Start by finding current system changers who deeply understand the system and can advise throughout all further steps
- 2 Meet them on a level playing field:** Meet them where and as they are to engage them as active co-leaders throughout all further steps
- 3 Align your support with the vision:** Explore the vision together and the many different systemic strategies that can help achieve it
- 4 Commit to a lasting partnership:** Based on this mutual buy-in, build a trusted partnership for long-term commitment to the vision
- 5 Strengthen their team:** Invest in the people behind the work so they can keep learning, adapting, and creatively intervening in the system.
- 6 Strengthen their wider system:** See the whole field of stakeholders critical to and affected by the vision, so their role in achieving it can be recognised and supported. Recognise and align your influence on these systems as well.
- 7 Invest in yourself and the funding system:** Continue to build your own capacity for system change and support the evolution of the wider funding system together with systemic leaders.

MESSAGE FOR INFLUENTIAL BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT PLAYERS

Systemic change cannot be the product of one individual or one organization; it necessarily involves the collaboration of many players with diverse interests and can take place on local, national, and global levels. Organizations and individuals with considerable resources—through their financial might, networks, reputation, or a general ability to influence social, business, and political circles—can make a true difference by working with proximate leaders such as social entrepreneurs, who, often face barriers such as lack of recognition and credibility. This is true especially for social innovators working in organizations that are small in size and relatively young.

Influential organizations typically include the government, big businesses, or other large organizations such as industry associations or iNGOS (International NGOs).

If you are an influential organization, these pointers can help you make a significant contribution to the field of systemic change:

- Acknowledge the current situation and engage in self-reflection regarding your contribution to it. This requires courage and determination as some influential organizations and individuals may be benefitting from dysfunctional or inequitable systems and may have contributed to these systems.
- Actively seek conversations with proximate leaders and social innovators in your sector/ system who understand social issues and strategies.
- Develop a clear vision and plan for change in collaboration with proximate

leaders.

- Take a deliberate approach to explore whether you could leverage your influence, credibility, networks, and infrastructure to help create social change at scale by influencing how groups and individual organizations organize in the target system. Policymakers, in particular those at the state and national levels, have the clear role of structuring legal frameworks.
- Using 'sandbox' approaches, explore working with social entrepreneurs to test whether an idea truly has the potential to create system-wide impact.

If you would like to read more, please check the reports [Influence for Good](#) and [New Allies: How governments can unlock the potential of social entrepreneurs for the common good](#).

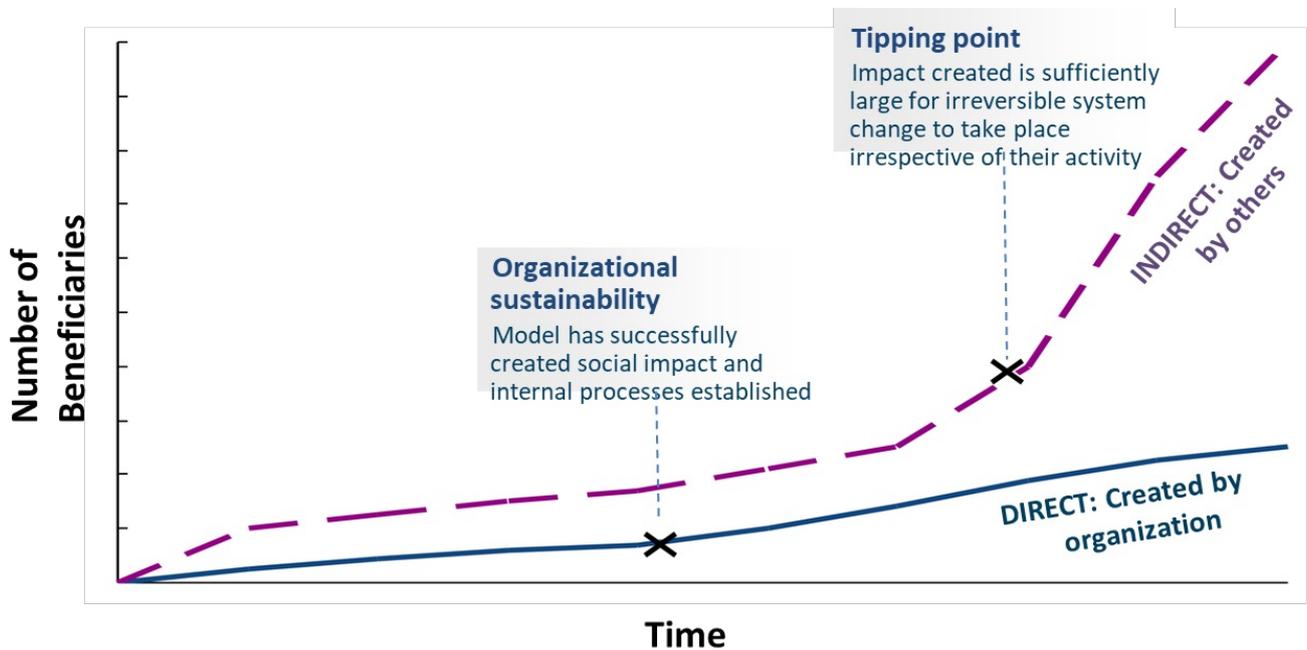


SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS AND SYSTEMS CHANGE

Social innovators act on two main levels of impact: direct impact and systemic impact. The former addresses the symptoms, while the latter addresses the root of the problem.

These two levels of impact are essential and complementary; a problem or crisis necessitates an urgent response wherein the symp-

toms are handled (for example, feeding the homeless, or building emergency shelters following a climate disaster) even while creating the conditions to prevent the symptoms from reappearing. This latter is done by tackling the causes—often multiple, complex, and intertwined—that have triggered them, ranging from discrimination in hiring, for example, to global warming.



Source: Ashoka
Figure 1



How is systems change work pathbreaking?

- It seeks to tackle root causes rather than symptoms of a societal problem and thus tends to take a multidisciplinary, long-term approach.
- It aims to solve societal problems with lasting effect, meaning that it works towards a new, stable situation that should, in time, ideally make a systems change leader's work obsolete.
- It typically alters, shifts, and transforms a system's characteristics, ranging from the explicit (policies, practices, and resource flows) to the semi-explicit (relationships and power dynamics), to the implicit (mental models).
- It produces different forms of systems change, ranging from adoption by other entities (such as the government) to a mindset shift within society.
- It may use evolving approaches as systems adapt to disruptions, often making it difficult to measure progress and impact in traditional ways.
- It does not require an organization to scale organically in the traditional sense.
- It recognizes that there is no single answer to complex problems. And that therefore systems change cannot be achieved by individual actors. Instead, it requires collaboration between many different actors who can build on each other's strengths and jointly learn from their successes as well as their failures.

Ashoka has identified six main 6 types of systems change strategies based on Ashoka Fellows' experiences:¹¹

There are 6 types of systems change strategies.



Competitive advantages

A new approach is copied by others, because it provides a competitive advantage (e.g. medical protocols).



Building a field/market

Building an ecosystem around an idea (e.g. psycho-social therapy).



Formal Process

To change laws, local regulations, administrative processes, or WHO white books



The Many Fishes

A new idea is spread via trainings, open sourcing, and other techniques.



The Whale

The new idea becomes the new norm because an influential player adopts it (market leader, Harvard University).



Narrative Change

Changing how we, as societies, think about issues (e.g. slavery, sustainability, education).





LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY AND CITIZENSHIP TO IMPROVE PUBLIC TRANSPARENCY

BUDGIT, NIGERIA

Official corruption has consistently been identified as one of the major challenges facing Nigeria (and Africa as a whole), with the absence of transparency in government budgets being one of the foremost concerns. Founded in 2011, BudgIT is a civic organization that applies technology to facilitate societal change by enabling citizen engagement as well as holding institutions and players within it accountable to their commitments. A pioneer in the field of technology-assisted social advocacy, BudgIT employs an array of tech tools to simplify public budgets and matters of public spending for citizens with the primary goal of raising standards of transparency and accountability in government. Continuous partnerships with civil society, public institutions, and the media—mainly in the areas of fiscal analyses of the national budget, civic technology and simplified data representation for communities—are the main pillars of BudgIT’s strategy to create more transparency and raise accountability.



Ashoka Fellow	Oluseun Onigbinde
Organization	BudgIT
Countries of Impact	Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Liberia ¹²
Year of Creation	2011
Website	yourbudgit.com
Annual Budget	USD 3,400,000
Number of Employees	Approximately 37 core staff, including 24 Tracking Officers



SNIPPETS OF IMPACT

- Between 2011 and 2021, 80 million Nigerians were provided with civic education on the national budget process.
- The organization exposed ‘fake’ (counterfeit) projects in Nigeria’s 2017 budget valued at over USD 113,575.
- BudgIT exposed 316 public project duplications in Nigeria’s 2021 national budget.
- Through its tech tool Tracka, BudgIT facilitated the completion of 15,218 government projects which have impacted at least five million people across communities. As a result, in 2021, the Nigerian government was galvanized into creating its own project tracking tool, Eyemark, leading to improved monitoring of public projects.

THE JOURNEY OF THE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR

Oluseun has always recognized that data and research can be empowering mechanisms for change, something he credits his engineering degree with. After spending years in finance as a banker in the private sector providing critical analysis of budgets and strategic research to help banks perform better, Oluseun made a mind shift. He was fired with the determination to apply these same principles to building a better country. Instead of providing analysis to managers, he thought a gamechanger in engendering government accountability to citizens would be to provide budget analysis to the public.

In 2011, Oluseun launched BudgIT to address the lack of transparency in Nigeria’s federal budgeting processes in order to address corruption and the abuse of public funds. The organization achieves this by making Nigeria’s budgetary data more accessible and comprehensible to the public through the use of digital technologies and by unpacking complex visual representations of the data into easier formats for the

benefit of citizens with low data literacy. Towards this end, BudgIT developed creative technologies that intersect with civic interaction and institutional reform.¹³

Through a focused campaign to raise awareness and analysis of the 2017 federal budget, it reached 2.5 million people using online and offline platforms and engaged 25,000 citizens in the review process, resulting in the exposure of fudged budgetary items and ‘fake’ projects worth over 41 million Naira (USD 113,575), including an investment that claimed to be funding a non-existent youth center in Kebbi State.¹⁴ By encouraging careful public review of the budget by citizens, BudgIT also exposed 316 public project duplications in Nigeria’s 2021 National Budget and was successful in the establishing of a standardized public servant salary cap.¹⁵ According to its media analytics, by 2021, the organization had reached 80 million Nigerians via trainings and media messages.

Based on its work in Nigeria, BudgIT is replicating its model in three other West African countries—Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone—which has the potential to transform systems at a regional level in West Africa.¹⁶

THE PROBLEM

Transparency International's Annual Corruption Perception Index (of 2021), ranked Nigeria as number 154 out of 180 countries in the world, placing it in the top 30 worst countries in the world.¹⁷ Sub-Saharan Africa was placed as the lowest-ranking region. The best performers in Africa were the Seychelles at 23, Cabo Verde at 39, Botswana at 45, Mauritius at 49, and Rwanda at 51. In comparison, the Democratic Republic of the Congo was ranked at 169, Equatorial Guinea at 173, Lybia at 172, Somalia at 178, and South Sudan at 180.

The citizen sector's inability to closely monitor government budgets enables this crippling national ill to persist; funds routinely disappear into private coffers with little backlash even while public services remain grossly inadequate. Less than a decade ago, active engagement of citizens in the budget

cycle in Nigeria was almost impossible as the national budget process was not clearly defined (a reality which is often attributed to the legacy of non-transparent military regimes). In fact, in many instances the actual budget itself was not made publicly available in Nigeria.

International best practices call for the citizen sector to conduct expenditure tracking of the government as well as execute general performance monitoring activities through, for instance, the use of citizen report cards as is done in the Philippines, India, and throughout Latin America.¹⁸ While several dozen CSOs are dedicated to promoting government transparency in Nigeria, many often find themselves under-equipped to truly influence the conversation because of the complexity in which the budget is presented to them and their low capacity to analyze the data. More importantly, this lack of capacity to analyse the budget makes it challenging for CSOs to monitor the implementation of



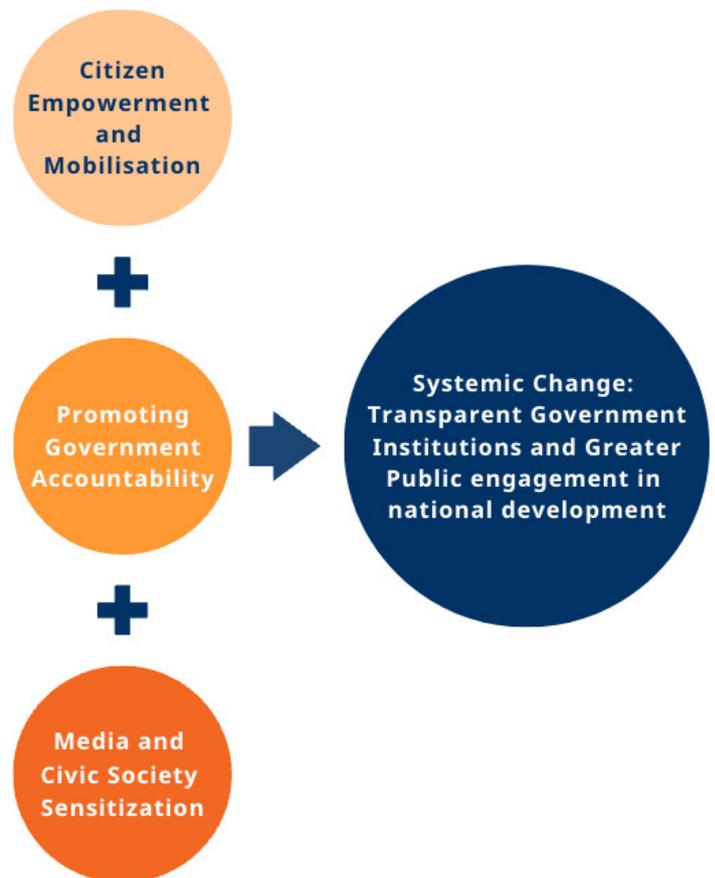
the budget after the funds have been allocated to the respective government ministries by the Budget Office.¹⁹

Nigeria's Freedom of Information Act, after being originally proposed in 1999, was finally signed into law in May 2011. This should now facilitate the transparency process as it accords citizens the right to request for operations and expenditure information from all institutions spending public funds. However, for those establishments not keen to open their books, budget data can be buried easily within complex reports which prove challenging for the citizen sector to assimilate and dissect. Individual actors within those non-transparent institutions who want to participate in bringing greater fiscal transparency to Nigeria often find it difficult to deliver timely and useful data to the citizen sector.

ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC IMBALANCES

To create systemic change, BudgIT works on three levels—citizens, the government, and civic leaders and media personnel—ensuring that each constituency is on the same page in promoting transparent public financial management aimed at reducing financial fraud and abuse of public funds (see Figure 2).

Schematic Illustration Of BudgIT's System Change Process



Source: Interview with Oluseun Onigbinde, 2022.

Figure 2

Citizen Empowerment

BudgIT's experience is that most citizens are unlikely to know much about public budgeting processes and the linkages between the national budget and service delivery issues in their communities, and nor are they aware of how their participation can improve their lives. BudgIT addresses these challenges and provides training to citizens on tracking public projects through Tracka, an electronic service delivery tracking platform developed by it, which simplifies the budget for ordinary people.²⁰

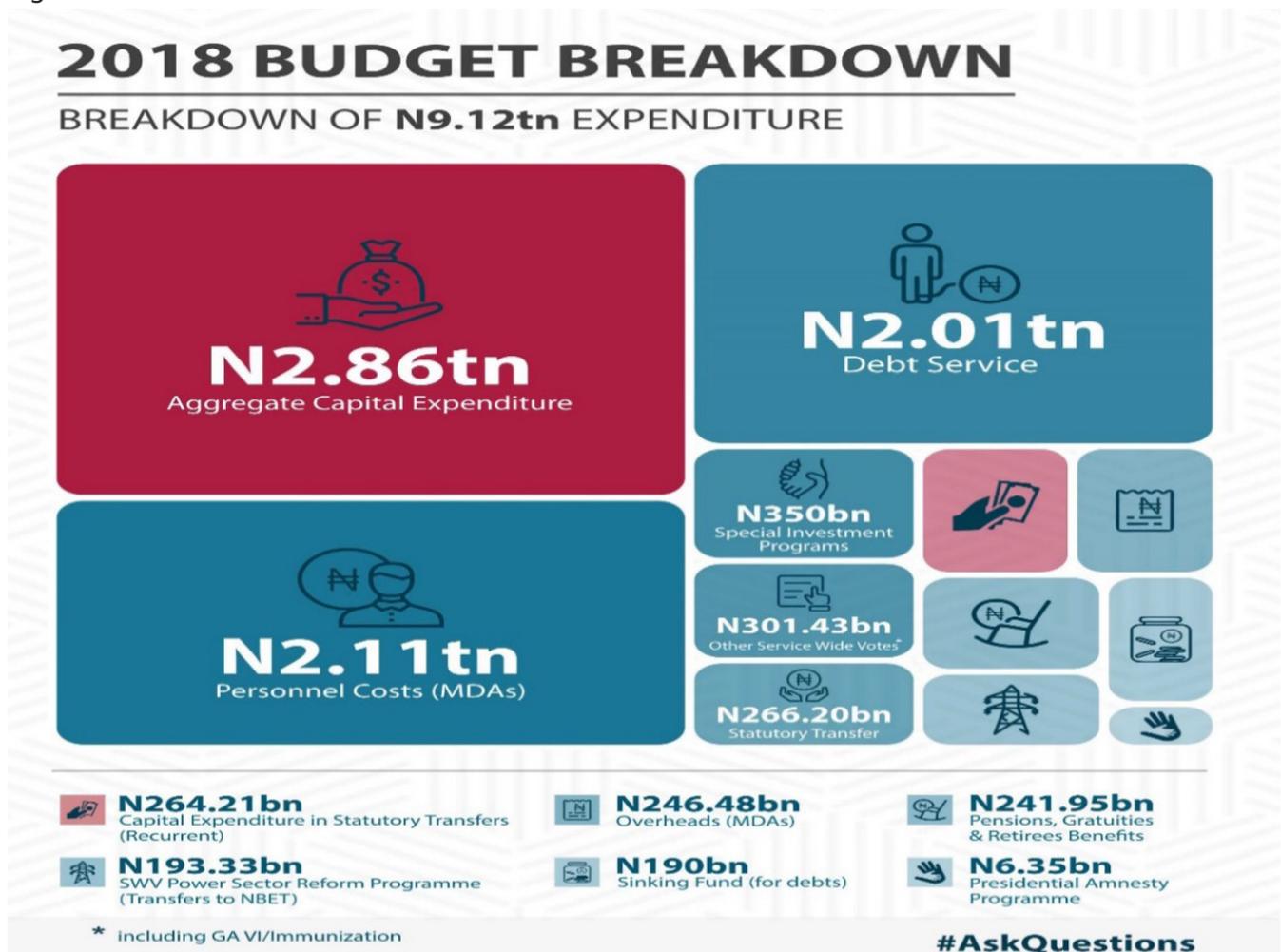
Simultaneously, BudgIT sensitizes and empowers the public to demand transparency in the national budgeting process by explaining the tenets of democracy and the social contract that makes governments accountable to citizens. In a country where the government routinely undermines citizen power, BudgIT is systematically building a culture of active citizenship to encourage individuals to fully participate in society, exercise civic power without fear, and persistently demand equity from elected representatives. The Tracka platform is layered on Open Data and integrated with existing social media tools, bringing people together to share photos, videos, documents and post comments on existing projects with a view to enabling active citizens to track the progress of budget implementation at the grassroots level.²¹ People's empowerment is furthered through townhall meetings in local communities

(where Tracka is shown and explained) and providing access to printed copies of public projects within communities.

Tracka also includes a Community Champions program comprising primarily of student volunteers from the community who provide updates on public project implementation within their communities. These Champions are responsible for the continual tracking of public projects and posting updates to their communities on local projects. All of this is done through Tracka using their mobile phones. Furthermore, when BudgIT engages a community, a tracking officer (who is a BudgIT employee) is employed in that community to empower Community Champions. Currently BudgIT has 850 Champions, mostly women and youth.

Sample of a Simplified Lagos State Budget Breakdown from Tracka

Figure 3



As is evident from the example shown (Figure 3), Tracka releases simplified versions of budgets (that also includes budget items such as personnel costs and overheads) for all states in Nigeria and opens up an avenue for citizens to cross-examine the budget process.²²

The Tracka model has been scaled up from an initial six states to 28 states and the Federal Capital Territory. To increase impact and promote inclusive development of the states, especially within rural communities, BudgIT has engaged 24 Tracking Officers to enhance the monitoring of implementation rates of all capital projects outlined in the budget. In the event of implementation rates being slow, they lobby the relevant government department.

BudgIT has also developed a government spending tracking website (www.govspend.ng) which simplifies the country's open treasury report for citizens, the media, and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The website provides citizens with access to the federal government's real-time expenditure, allowing them to monitor and understand the process. The website has increased citizen participation in public finance, an indicator that transparency and accountability are achievable if citizens and governments work together. According to BudgIT's 2021 annual report, there has been an average 24 percent growth in citizen participation in the budget process through social media interactions, website visits, radio engagements and community meetings.²³

Building Government Capacity

BudgIT stimulates system change by promoting transparency in Nigeria's budgeting process through collaborations with various arms of the government. It provides technical support on International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) which aims to improve the financial statements in the

public sector. The government spending tracking portal (www.govspend.ng), which BudgIT developed, also improves access to information for policy makers in the Nigerian government. The portal enables the government to provide easy access to government data and assists in data preservation and accountability, thus improving government answerability to its citizens. Alongside this, BudgIT also conducts capacity-building initiatives to help the government, civil society and the media to understand their role in promoting a transparent society. These sessions address the challenges in understanding the concept of a 'social contract' by public servants; many of them do not feel accountable to citizens once they are elected to office.

Civil Society and Media Engagement

BudgIT collaborates with civil society and media practitioners in their area of operations to promote change. To cite one example, in its Open Government Partnership program, BudgIT engaged Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) with a large presence in communities involving young people, such as the National Youth Council of Nigeria (Ikorodu-West), Millicent Foundation, Generation Next Nigeria, and Justice, Development and Peace Centre. These collaborations were brokered at the subnational level through the Open Alliance network (a coalition of CSOs working together to push for government accountability) to validate the State Action Plan (SAP) (i.e., the development implementation plan) in Enugu state. BudgIT has also provided advocacy training to CSOs in Bauchi and Gombe states on the role of CSOs in promoting open government partnerships (OGPs) in their respective state governments, and has capacitated several CSOs to improve the advocacy for accountability in their states through budget participation (i.e., having a say on budget allocations and spending). To further collaborations with the media, in 2011 BudgIT launched Kontri Mata, a visu-

ally compelling and creative production on YouTube that aims to educate citizens about events in the country that affect their economic and social well-being. With over 10 episodes to date, Kontri Mata, produced in pidgin language, is BudgIT's intellectual property and is fast gaining momentum among Nigerians, especially the Millennials and Gen Zs, who have an appetite for creative stories on governance matters. Also noteworthy is BudgIT's ever-changing multimedia methods of disseminating information to the public that are tailor-made for people of different age groups and education levels.²⁴

Some of the key media campaigns launched by BudgIT through electronic and print media in the country include the OpenNass, ValueofaVote, OccupyNigeria, OpenStates, StateofStates, LGAAlert, FixOurOil, and InvestinginPeople campaigns, which have had a cumulative and huge impact in raising public awareness on public finance and governance in Nigeria.²⁵

BudgIT's penchant to seize every opportunity to ensure transparency in budgets included the recent Account4COVID campaign. During the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, BudgIT sprang into action and interviewed over 200 citizens and Covid-19 survivors, health workers, and local government officials. They used this information to develop digital stories in video formats in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Ghana. This allowed the capture of citizens' perception of the fund allocations for Covid-19 interventions, thus improving accountability through citizens' participation in budgetary processes.

As a result of BudgIT's massive media campaigns, the organization has recorded 9.78 million total impressions on Twitter and 1,757 online newspaper mentions. This has led to greater citizen participation in the budgetary processes of Nigeria.²⁶

Funding Systemic Work

BudgIT operates through funding from external partners such as the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), a funding organization that works to promote open society values characterized by effective citizen participation, transparency and accountability, constitutionalism and rule of law, electoral processes, equitable management of public revenues and respect for the rights of citizens including women and other vulnerable groups that would otherwise be excluded.²⁷ OSIWA has supported BudgIT since its inception in 2011.

BudgIT's other main donors include Luminate, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Oxfam Nigeria, Ford Foundation, and the National Endowment for Democracy. In 2021 alone, BudgIT's systems-change interventions were funded to the tune of USD 3,421,787.53. The World Bank has supported the organization through technical support. Additionally, BudgIT runs projects across Africa, including the COVID-19 Transparency and Accountability Project (CTAP), and awards subgrants to more than 12 organizations through initiatives supported by the Hilton Foundation, Skoll Foundation, and USAID.



AT-A-GLANCE: KEY INSIGHTS ON SYSTEMS CHANGE

“ It is important that funders remain flexible to adapt to the changing dynamics of environments where civic tech organizations operate. Most programming approaches do not give the chance to test new ideas that might provide insights into changing behaviors, norms and rules across societies. Funding also needs to carry a long-term approach in terms of assessing results considering that change required might be slow and relies on several interconnected systems. ”²⁸

SEVERAL LESSONS CAN BE DRAWN FROM BUDGIT'S WORK. OLUSEUN'S TOP RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE:

- **Engage the government by understanding their challenges and incentives;** build trust and show that you are helping them solve problems.
- **Involve young people** in identifying with the civic tech solutions that modern organizations such as BudgIT are harnessing to effect social change.
- **Protect yourself and your teams:** around the world, organizations that deal with government transparency and accountability are exposed to possible attacks either by politicians or by those who think the organization's work is disrupting their established process of siphoning off public resources. Keep your voice as strong as possible and operate through partnerships to protect yourself and your work.
- **To deal with possible detractors,** focus on issues with reference to tangible data in a simplified manner.
- **Explore new uses for your model:** questions around gender are very important to look at too and tools such as Tracka can be applied to track sexual and gender-based violence and the impact of climate change on gender roles. This can lead to the designing of new technology-driven solutions.
- **Build inclusive solutions:** lack of internet access in rural areas and poor urban neighbourhoods result in a significant number of people being overlooked by virtual interventions, as a consequence of which some citizen voices are marginalized.



A I N A V I N E V I S U A L S

BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY

SHONAQUIP SOCIAL ENTERPRISE, SOUTH AFRICA

Children and young adults with disabilities in under-resourced settings such as Africa seldom achieve their full potential. This is a loss to the individuals and their families who are unable to enjoy the fullest possible quality of life, as well as to their communities who are unable to reap the benefits of their talent and often experience caring for people with disabilities as an excessive burden.

Through Shonaquip Social Enterprise, Shona McDonald and her team have not only designed and manufactured wheelchairs and posture support devices for children living in under resourced and rural areas, but have also built an ecosystem of accessible community-based support services and trainings for families, health professionals, and educators, all of whom are working to improve the quality of life of hundreds of thousands of children with mobility disabilities living in remote regions of Africa.



Ashoka Fellow	Shona McDonald
Organization	Shonaquip Social Enterprise
Countries of Impact	South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique, Eswatini, and Namibia, with export of products to Iraq, Georgia, Uganda, and India.
Year of Creation	1992
Website	shonaquipse.org.za
Annual Budget	USD 2,700,000
Number of Employees	86



SNIPPETS OF IMPACT

- To date, Shonaquip has assessed, fitted and reviewed well over 100,000 individual wheelchair users for posture support devices. The manufacture of wheelchairs and posture support devices, outreach clinics, capacity building, mentoring and training programs directly assists over 19,000 people per year, annually impacting more than 500,000 family members, their service providers, and the community.
- Shonaquip contributed to the South Africa White Paper on Special Education Needs between 1996 and 2001. ²⁹
- Shonaquip contributed to the development of World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines for South Africa on the provision of manual wheelchairs in settings with limited resources from 2006 to 2008. ³⁰
- Shonaquip contributed to the adoption of the South African National Rehabilitation Policy in 2010.
- In 2013 Shonaquip provided inputs for Standardisation of Provision of Mobility Assistive Devices in South Africa.
- Shonaquip gave inputs for the SA Social Development Bill and the complementary report to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC).



THE JOURNEY OF THE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR

Shona experienced the challenges faced by people with disabilities when her daughter, born in 1982, was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. It was impossible to find appropriate assistive devices and support care for her daughter; instead, she was told to put her in a care home and have another child. Shona started to design devices to address her daughter's mobility, communication, and educational needs. Soon, she began sharing her designs for the benefit of others. Shonaquip was officially born in 1992 to provide access to viable solutions for individual clients, as well as to work with and lobby government, civil society and the private sector to shift defeatist and negative attitudes around disability towards social justice and inclusion. The focus was on designing assistive technology solutions, capacity building, training, ensuring accessibility of community outreach clinics, and delivering wheelchair services in Southern Africa. Shona expanded her range of postural supports devices and wheelchairs to meet the needs of children living in rural and under-resourced areas, working on building just one item at a time and in investing in improving the designs and training programs as she went along. Her line of products grew rapidly.

Over the years Shonaquip Social Enterprise (ShonaquipSE) has gone beyond product, advocacy, and service delivery to build sustainable ecosystems that create a welcoming, just, and inclusive society for people with disabilities in Africa. It is comprised of three legal entities that work together to achieve the collective purpose of ensuring that the interest of each child remains the focus and priority of the social enterprise as a whole. Each entity has its own governing Board and audited financial reporting process. The distributed leadership teams of four Executive Officers is supported by a transversal sup-

port team, designed to support a common purpose and avoid organizational and operational silos:

- **Shonaquip's** role is to ensure that children with mobility disabilities have easy access to appropriate assistive technologies, clinical and technical support services, as well as the necessary information and training. All of these services can ensure a reduction in secondary health complications, improvement in physical functions, and the possibility of meaningful inclusion in everyday activities with their families, community, and society as a whole. To achieve this, the company designs and manufactures a range of ISO 13485 certified assistive devices, influences international product and training standards, and lobbies for improved access to essential wheelchair services with both the government and the private sector.
- **The Uhambo Foundation** (launched in 2010) works to ensure that children with disabilities, their parents, families, caregivers, and communities receive holistic support services and access to referral processes and pathways that promote social inclusion at all levels. Uhambo means 'journey' or 'traveling forward' in Shona, a Zimbabwean language. The Foundation works with government departments and a network of stakeholders and partners to forge systemic change through capacity building, inclusive early child development programs, community-based outreach clinic delivery, and training services.
- **The Champions of Change Trust** (launched in 2020) creates an empowering network of parent champions. The Trust provides a platform for children with disabilities and their parents and caregivers to share knowledge, build agency, and raise a collective voice in

lobbying for the rights of children with disabilities. The aim is to ensure that policy is translated into practice, all children are accorded their rights no matter what their circumstances, and that there is access to appropriate assistive technology, support services, information, education, and potential work opportunities.

In addition to the three entities in South Africa, Uhambo USA was established in 2011 as a section 501(c)(3) organization and as a Friends of Uhambo Foundation entity.

THE PROBLEM

16 percent of the world's population lives with disabilities; these 1.3 billion people are the largest 'minority' in the world. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines living with a disability as having a long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment that, in interaction with the environment, hinders one's participation in society on an equal basis with others.³¹

Children and adolescents with disabilities are a highly diverse group with wide-ranging life experiences. People with disabilities live in every community and are born with, or develop, impairments that can lead to experiencing barriers to access. But the degree to which children with disabilities are able to participate in society and lead fulfilling lives depends on the extent to which their needs are recognised, accommodated and included. A range of barriers limits their ability to function in daily life, access social services (like education and health care) and engage in family life and in their communities. These include:

- Physical barriers – for example, buildings, transportation, toilets, and playgrounds that cannot be accessed by wheelchair users.

- Communication and information barriers – such as a lack of textbooks in Braille, or public health announcements delivered without sign language interpretation.
- Attitudinal barriers – like personal bias, stereotyping, low expectations, pity, condescension, harassment, and bullying.

Each of these is rooted in stigma and discrimination that reflect negative perceptions of disability arising from ableism: a system of beliefs, norms and practices that devalues people with disabilities. Despite international commitments, children with disabilities remain largely invisible in research and programs meant to build equitable, inclusive societies. This invisibility is both a cause and a consequence of their exclusion.³²

Globally, 160 million people (2 percent of the population) have mobility impairments. Of these, 129 million live in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) and do not have access to correct wheelchairs. Of the 9 million who live in high-income countries (HIC) as many as 90 percent possess a suitable device, whereas only 5 percent of the 59 million who live in LMIC have the appropriate devices. Moreover, 30 million wheelchairs need to be produced, fitted, adjusted, supported and maintained annually to meet this need while only 3 million wheelchairs are actually produced annually.³³

South Africa itself is home to more than one million people who need wheelchairs. Of these, more than two-thirds will require some adaptations and further postural support products and services in order to prevent the development of secondary health complications.³⁴ South Africa was one of the first countries to ratify the 2007 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It also signed key international human rights treaties and two African treaties protecting and guaranteeing children's economic and social rights (examples of the treaties:

Convention on the Rights of the Child, and Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict).

While the South African constitution guarantees equal education for all children, an estimated 600,000 children with disabilities remain out of school. In 2015, according to government data, only 121,500 learners with disabilities were included in 'ordinary' schools and over 119,500 learners were enrolled in special schools.³⁵ Children with disabilities often work hard to accommodate themselves in an inaccessible world that excludes them. But they are not 'problems' that need to be fixed or changed. Disability is part of the diversity of human experience; functional limitations manifest in the life cycle of every human being. The extent to which children with disabilities are able to

lead happy lives depends on society's willingness to confront barriers to change.³⁶

ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC IMBALANCES

Since its inception, ShonaquipSE had recognised that a holistic approach was needed to remove the barriers to social change and has actively pursued collaborations with partners to deliver on the needs of the community it serves. ShonaquipSE has substantially changed the landscape for children with mobility disabilities and their families through advocacy, policy development, policy implementation practices and processes, community programs, trainings and, of course, the provision of unique, rural and low-resource and environment-appropriate mobility devices. Policies and practices have



started to flow beyond the borders of South Africa, to Namibia and Botswana, where the transversal wheelchair tender process (successfully implemented in South Africa), is now being implemented alongside a strong local commitment for clinical support training and mentorship in line with the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines.

ShonaquipSE views systems change through an interconnectedness lens. It does not just provide the appropriate equipment; it also works to empower and upskill families, assisting them to make informed decisions regarding their children's disability.

Ever since the original products were designed, ShonaquipSE has been aware of the risks of supplying devices without developing an ecosystem around a person with a disability. This is essential if impact is to be sustainable. Along with its (accredited and non-accredited) training programs, the organization raises awareness around disability and inclusion more broadly in the community, civil services and the business sector, and creates opportunities for greater economic participation of people with disabilities and their families. Their training programs are modular and flexible, many of which can be delivered online or through a combination of online and in-person training sessions. Training facilitators and seating therapists are equipped with the knowledge, skills and field experience to facilitate capacity building for parents, care providers and their service providers.

Through this process of community-based training and engagement ShonaquipSE is able to dive deeper in its approach to shifting the dialogues on disability in local communities, opening the conversation and demystifying the stigmas and bias that dominate behaviour, decision-making and budgeting. ShonaquipSE continues to contribute to policy shifts on many different levels.

Posture Support and Seating Services

The provision of assistive technology is part of the organization's wider effort to increase the well-being and practical and functional inclusion of diverse populations. As a local medical device manufacturer which has become Africa's first ISO 13485 certified paediatric wheelchair services provider, ShonaquipSE designs, clinically tests, manufactures, and assembles assistive technology for children with mobility and postural disabilities that is contextual for the South African outdoor lifestyle and economic and physical environment. A positive and fun depiction of assistive technology and how it impacts the user's lifestyle and daily function is promoted together with advocacy that not only confronts the stigma associated with a disability but addresses it as part of the brand messaging.

ShonaquipSE self-propelling and attendant-propelled wheelchairs, paediatric buggies, and electric power chairs. Positioning options include wheelchair back supports, 24hour static body positioners, pressure care cushions, and therapy equipment. All the products are designed to decrease the development of secondary health complications and aid independent functioning, from improved breathing to reducing contractures or enabling active participation in school, sport, and work.

Delivering on the Social Purpose: Advocacy and Policy

ShonaquipSE brings together the diverse but linked threads of device provision, capacity-building, and activism required to achieve comprehensive, sustainable change. While its device production is focused on children with mobility and mobility-related impairments, its work has expanded over time and now also includes children with other disabilities, adults with disabilities, and dis-

abled peoples' networks including families, educators, and health and social workers. ShonaquipSE also works closely with private sector and the government to capacitate and strengthen existing public provision pathways.

Advocating and lobbying for inclusion of people with disabilities has a significant role to play in social impact work, particularly when the sector is dominated by disinformation, ignorance, prejudice, and the fear of public burden. In the field of disabilities, advocacy is a vital tool as it has the power to change public budget allocations and private investment behaviour. Together with training, advocacy enhances the knowledge of clinical therapists regarding appropriate devices provision enabling correct prescription and fitting. However, advocacy can become difficult to reconcile along with commercial activities. For example, ShonaquipSE was seen by some as driven by the self-interest of a wheelchair manufacturer, thereby undermining the message.³⁷

Right from the beginning, ShonaquipSE has worked in different advocacy-related capacities with government service providers and decision-makers, playing a strong motivational function in the development of the government's assistive devices policy and practice. The earliest collaborations were with government-employed therapists who provided inputs on the design of the buggies and 24-hour posture devices for children. Over the years, ShonaquipSE has worked with the government as a capacity-builder and trainer, supplier, and implementer. It has also played a definitive government monitoring and accountability role and has regularly represented the disability sector in South Africa continues to make regular contributions to the design and review of South African mobility related assistive technology policy. The government also acts as both purchaser and recipient of devices, as detailed later.

Simultaneously, ShonaquipSE has trained government service providers, device technicians, clinicians, and community workers. For example, ShonaquipSE collaborated with the national Department of Health, assisting with the designing and running of wheelchair seating training courses and providing local seating practitioners with WHO-aligned training in appropriate wheelchair service provision. In the Western Cape province for example the ShonaquipSE has conducted 3 large provincial household surveys with Government, on the prevalence of disability, aimed at improving Government referral pathways for service provision. They are subcontracted by government and other funders to run outreach seating clinics in under-served parts of the country and have found that the combination of remote training and regular in-person skills mentoring is improving the quality of services offered across the region.

No one organization or person can influence policy or systems change. Rather, it calls for catalyzing and facilitating a forceful collective effort. ShonaquipSE's collaborative approach to lobbying the South African government led to the drafting of the National Rehabilitation Policy of Mobility Assistive Devices in South Africa in 2006. By partnering with the government and extending its service provision for people with disabilities, ShonaquipSE has helped to strengthen the country's capacity to deliver comprehensive quality wheelchair services that exceed the WHO standards. Although the majority of ShonaquipSEs device production and related wheelchair outreach services are provided across South Africa's nine provinces, ShonaquipSE is extending its reach regionally, providing strategic inputs for policy and improving the provision of practice, products, and services to Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, eSwatini and Zimbabwe. It also exports products to Georgia, India, Iraq, and Uganda.

Education

Play is vital for children's development, as that is how they explore the world and practice important life skills. Schools provide the context for a child's association with the world outside the family, enabling the building of social interactions. This also includes developing friendships, relationships, and mutual respect between the children, and between the children and teachers.

It is a common perception that the ability of children with disabilities to play and learn is low. ShonaquipSE has developed the Ndinogona 'I Can' Stimulation Programme and the Ndinogona 'I Can' Inclusive Play for South Africa's Early Childhood Development (ECD) program that provides training, experience, and resources to empower even the least equipped centers to promote play and learning for all children across the spectrum

of abilities and needs. Both these programs equip parents, caregivers, ECD practitioners, and teachers to adapt ECD concepts through structured stimulation and play to create learning experiences that are fun, safe, and empowering for each child within their care. To date, over 1000 caregivers working in all ECD and special need centers have been trained in Ndinogona programs.

These programs have resulted in a significant shift in perception of the potential of children with disabilities; parents, caregivers, ECD practitioners, and teachers have gained increased motivation to include all children in opportunities for play and learning. Even community members confirm that the training had helped them to identify the barriers faced by children in accessing and implementing inclusive play opportunities in their communities.



Empowering Community Members

Source: Shonaquip.³⁸

Figure 4

attitudinal, school policies and practices, that continue to affect people with disabilities ability to meaningfully participate.

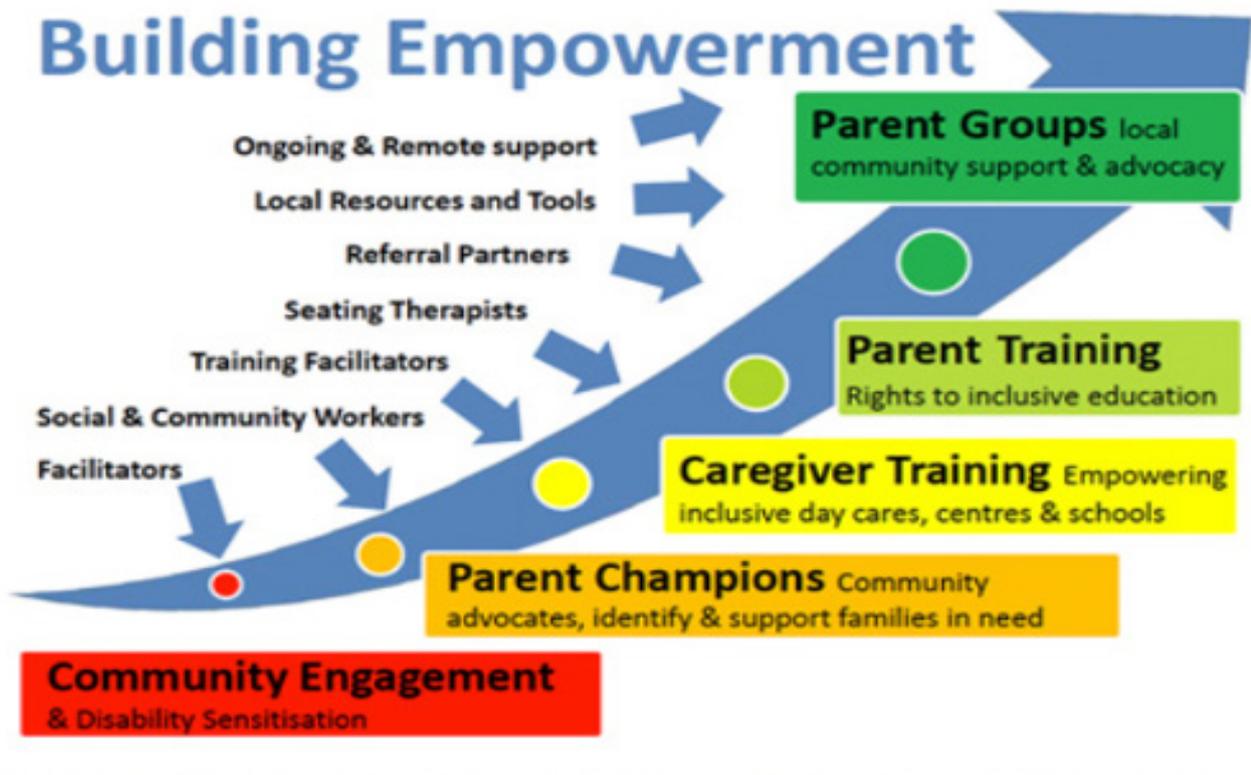


Figure 4 illustrates how ShonaquipSE ensures that children with mobility disabilities, their parents, families, caregivers, and communities receive holistic support to benefit from social inclusion at all levels.³⁹

Changing perceptions is key to ShonaquipSE's approach. To achieve this, it developed the Let's Talk Disability program, a five-hour training for community members—adults with disabilities, community development and health workers, social and auxiliary workers, teachers, and staff and volunteers of community-based organizations working in the South African context—to explore their own preconceived ideas about disability and re-imagine these together as they share experiences, learn, and problem solve. These facilitated, local conversations centering around inclusion and the rights of people with disabilities are designed to equip community members, remove barriers; physical,

ShonaquipSE also advocates more broadly for the economic inclusion of people with disabilities and offers an advisory service for local companies seeking to improve disability inclusion in their workforce. Leading by example and indicating commitment to, and role-modelling of, the economic inclusion of people with disabilities, 30 percent of ShonaquipSE's staff are disabled, many of whom make use of a device themselves. Their first-hand insights have been incorporated into further improving the design of devices and corporate training materials.

Empowering Networks of Parents of Children with Disabilities

Shona started her social venture as a mother of a child with a disability. Since very few parents have the opportunity to access information which can make them equal part-

ners in their child's future, she realized that by building networks of parents which would empower them to achieve agency through a dynamic mix of connecting and knowledge sharing, it could also harness a collective voice of the most underrepresented sector of the community. In 2020, the Parent Champions Trust was launched—a network of parents of children with disabilities—to enable them to access high quality information and connect with key stakeholders in the community as well as with other parents so that their children and families could thrive. Using a WhatsApp platform, this network of parents is providing support to people with disabilities. By 2022, the network had grown to include well over 1000 parents who were receiving weekly remote training.

The nationwide Network Parents platform encourages families to become change agents in the lives of not only their children, but also of other children in their communities. This network also serves as a tool for advocacy as it identifies, coordinates, and analyzes data on barriers they face on a day-to-day basis, which is invaluable in expanding access to information, leading to improved referral pathways and policies.

Funding Systemic Change

Shona believes that both the public and funding agencies need to recognize that it is possible to run a business and still add value to key marginalized groups and drive positive social change. She started ShonaquipSE as a business with trepidation, fully aware that her venture would be perceived as taking advantage of people with disabilities. However, her experience of running an NGO and dealing with the constraints and restrictions of funding agencies spurred her on. Going the NGO route could prove to be unsustainable in the long run, limiting her dreams.

However, as ShonaquipSE evolved and the work diversified rapidly, the challenges of being a social enterprise became apparent, and she encountered challenges in securing bank loans, equity or venture capital as social enterprises are deemed to be too risky and not profitable enough since all profits are reinvested in the social impact work.

Recognizing the need for alternative income streams for her policy, advocacy, and community outreach work, the Uhambo Foundation (a project delivery vehicle) was registered in addition to the company. This was the beginning of Shonaquip Social Enterprise as a multiple hybrid entity. ShonaquipSE, which sells posture support and mobility devices, uses its profits for community and capacity-building work. In addition to a legal structure in South Africa, a US-based non-profit was also created to support fundraising. Overall, 98 percent of ShonaquipSE's budget comes from earned revenue as opposed to philanthropic donations. Rather than dealing with the traditional polarity between philanthropic funding and earned revenues, Shona has designed a smart structure of various legal entities that allow organizations willing to spend money on disability (for example, international NGOs, corporations, government entities such as the Departments of Health, Education and Social Development.) to do so either through the company, the Foundation or the Trust for purchased services, training or equipment.

AT-A-GLANCE: KEY INSIGHTS ON SYSTEMS CHANGE

“Pushing a concept forward and championing it at a time which is just not ripe for it will burn out a team and end in frustration. The more disruption there is in and around the system you are trying to influence, the easier it will be to get buy in, traction and opportunity to shift a system. Sometimes you have to wait for something to break or break it yourself in order for it to be reimagined.”

ShonaquipSE's journey and experiences over the years are a testament to the value and the power of investing in an ecosystemic approach to change. In Shona's experience, for systemic change to take place in a truly sustainably effective manner, organizations need to design, focus, and work on facilitating change both inside and outside the organization.

HER KEY INSIGHTS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

Stronger Together; Trust, Distributed Responsibility, and Leadership:

To orchestrate a movement, an entry point is necessary: an innovation, an action that demonstrates, catalyzes, and then rewards meaningful improvement. We need to personally feel the effect it has on us in order to pass it on. Change flows through individuals, not around them. To harness this energy and individual power, we need to generate excitement around improvement progress and ensure that by its very existence it creates rewards and recognition for everybody associated with it.

Influence and Access:

To influence the environment you want to change you need to deeply understand it, feel it, and know it. Every element of it. Try taking a 'puzzle approach.' Step back from the details and imagine the whole picture. Plot out all the different parts, starting with the overarching international policy, then moving on to national policies, local practices, and the individuals and influencers involved. Make sure you know who is active in each area, in each role, and in delivering or not delivering. Dig down into the details till you can no longer see the big picture at all, only the problems. Then zoom back out, recognizing which pieces or areas in this ecosystem are missing or broken, creating barriers, or preventing flow. This is where your work needs to start.

SHONA'S TIPS ON HOW TO GO ABOUT RECTIFYING THE MISSING PARTS IN POLICY, NETWORKS, AND INFORMATION:

Policy

- Ensure you understand the implications of what you seek to change or include in policy.
- Network and identify partners who share a common need, purpose, and values as yours and work with them on influencing policy.
- Position yourself and your organization within the ecosystem in a way that you are recognized as a valuable resource to your partners, government, consultants and other organizations.
- Collate data and understand how policy can be translated into practice.
- Publish your findings that validate and support your organization's purpose, giving credit to everybody who has contributed.
- Regularly comment on new policies initiated at the local, national, and global levels.

Networks

- Ensure you are aware of all role-players in your sector; identify those that share common values and purpose.
- Don't duplicate work; find avenues to collaborate or partner.
- Join committees and work groups and contribute, ensuring you and your organization prove to be a constructive, reliable and effective resource.

Information

- Recognize but don't abuse the power you are perceived to have by dominating the sector. Listen more, speak less.
- Share your competence and knowledge by collaborating and building the power of others, both inside and outside your organization.
- Build a broad network and provide all partners, especially rights-based organizations, with relevant data to foster knowledge and agency where this is needed.
- Ensure your stakeholders become the knowledge holders of the information they need in order to be a part of the change you want to see.
- At all costs avoid positioning yourself as the rescuer or the hero.

CREATING GREATER VALUE FOR SMALL-HOLDER COFFEE FARMERS

NUCAFE, UGANDA

According to an International Labour Organization (ILO) study, over 220 million working people in sub-Saharan Africa earn only USD 2 per day. Of this, 60 percent are engaged in agricultural production; however, agricultural value chains typically deprive these farmers of over 90 percent of the retail value of their produce.⁴⁰

The work of National Union of Coffee Agri-businesses and Farm Enterprises (NUCAFE)—an association of coffee farmers in Uganda—illustrates how social entrepreneurs apply systems change approaches to change the power dynamics in value chains.

Since 2003, NUCAFE has been reshaping the entire coffee production value chain in Uganda through an innovative business strategy: the Farmer Ownership Model (FOM). Instead of being limited as suppliers of raw materials (i.e., selling coffee as flowers or red cherries⁴¹ to coffee processors), farmers pay a service fee to the processors and remain in control of the coffee as it gets refined to ungraded, graded, or even roasted beans. These products sell at much higher margins, allowing farmers to increase their income by 250 percent on average, as compared to the traditional model.⁴² NUCAFE's work has produced significant benefits for millions of people throughout Uganda.



Ashoka FellowJoseph Nkandu

OrganizationNUCAFE

Countries of ImpactUganda

Year of Creation1992

Websitenucafe.org

Annual BudgetApproximately USD 2,000,000

Number of Employees

53 employees, plus 250 small-holder farmer associations in the field.



SNIPPETS OF IMPACT

- Over 250,000 coffee farming households and two million small-scale farmers are members of NUCAFE⁴³ (i.e., 90 percent of coffee farmers).
- NUCAFE played a pivotal role in influencing the formulation of the first National Coffee Policy of Uganda in 2013 and the National Coffee Law in 2021.
- Women from coffee farming households have been empowered to become coffee farmers. Currently 55 percent of NUCAFE's members are women.
- Uganda's exports of coffee increased from two million bags in the early 2000s to six million bags in 2022, enabling farmers to make a living.

THE JOURNEY OF THE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR

Joseph Nkandu grew up on a coffee farm and was witness to his parents' struggle to make ends meet. He watched entire plantations, including his own, burn to the ground during the Ugandan civil war (1980-86). Joseph's family, like many others, fled to safety and eventually returned to start from scratch after the conflict subsided. Many families did not have the resources to plant and tend to new crops and were forced to abandon coffee production altogether.⁴⁴

As a student at Makerere University's College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Joseph stood out as a young leader and took on several student leadership positions. While he always knew that he would eventually return to coffee farming, he first wanted to better his understanding of the coffee sector and to establish the root cause of its varied challenges. After graduating in 1999, Joseph went on a research mission during which he talked to hundreds of farmers and participated in several coffee-focused advocacy and trade fora, both nationally and internationally. He began to get a

clearer idea of what the real challenges were and to mentally formulate a solution that he felt could turn things around.

In 1999, he assumed the role of National Coordinator for the Uganda Coffee Farmers Association (UCFA) and revived the Association. His initial years at UCFA were spent in developing his Farmer Ownership Model and when it was ready for testing, he dissolved the UCFA and established NUCAFE in 2003. To date, Joseph has built and grown NUCAFE into a 53-person operation working with 250,000 coffee farming households and two million small-scale farmers in Uganda.

Central to FOM's methodology is that farmers, by changing how they interpret their role, can take control of their own future. In the model, farmers organize themselves to assume as many roles and responsibilities as possible at different stages of the coffee value chain—including establishing partnerships with customers at every step—thereby increasing their economic and social power.⁴⁵

The model organizes individual farmers into groups which are then structured into associations or cooperatives. These provide services such as bulking, primary processing of coffee, and delivery to the central hub at the level of the national farmer organization NUCAFE, which facilitates further value addition and other business services, such as secondary processing and manufacturing, training, marketing, information dissemination, and advocacy.

Farmers are transformed from merely serving as raw material suppliers into contributors to as many different segments of the industry as possible. NUCAFE's focus as process facilitators (rather than as buyers of coffee) provides a range of services that includes, for example, pre-financing production—with generous repayment periods and low interest rates—and helping farmers process, manufacture and market their coffee directly to downstream buyers, as well as assistance with getting a foothold in new

markets. This enables farmers to take part in the more profitable aspects of the coffee value chain that would otherwise be extremely difficult to obtain from conventional brokers who have traditionally been the buyers of raw materials. NUCAFE's principle of not buying coffee from the farmers helps to avoid a conflict of interest: it becomes a trust broker instead of a competitor. The overall aim is to increase the value of the coffee for the farmer by ensuring that they remain the owners of their produce during the entire value addition process, whether it is outsourced to service providers or processed inhouse.

NUCAFE establishes that when farmers demonstrate responsibility for high-level value chain processes and practice ownership by taking responsibility, making investments, leveraging collective entrepreneurship (incentivized via performance-related pay), and operate in a conducive policy environment, farmers dramatically increase their profits.



THE PROBLEM

Coffee sales accounted for 11 percent of Uganda's export revenue in 2021.⁴⁶ Although its contribution to export revenues has dropped since the 1990s, coffee continues to be the country's most important agricultural commodity. 80 percent of Uganda's workforce is employed in the agricultural sector and the coffee industry alone employs over 3.5 million people (10 percent of Uganda's population) on approximately half a million smallholder farms. Uganda is second only to Ethiopia as Africa's largest supplier of coffee to the global market and accounts for two percent of global production and three percent of global exports. However, despite the size and importance of this sector, most Ugandan coffee farmers continue to grapple with crippling poverty and live on less than USD 2 a day.⁴⁷

Coffee beans change hands dozens of times as they move up a complex value chain from producer to consumer. Small farmers typically sell their coffee beans in raw or dried form to traders who are often agents of large coffee millers. Traders take advantage of their negotiating power and often pay outright cash to further cement their position; most farmers face short-term economic needs and are unable to resist the lure of immediate financial gratification. Traders then transport the beans to processing plants after which it is sold to local exporters. The exporters sell the coffee to international traders, from whom the roasters purchase the semi-finished product. After roasters add another layer of value to the coffee, they sell the now ready-to-consume coffee to retailers and cafes all over the world. A farmer earns only USD 0.2 for one kilogram of unprocessed coffee that eventually yields about 80 cups of coffee that are sold for a few dollars a cup at cafés. Clearly, this market structure is designed to benefit players at the top of the value chain at the expense

of those at the bottom.

ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC IMBALANCES

NUCAFE's Farmer Ownership Model is designed and implemented to change the extortionist system through a farmer-owned pyramid structure:

- **Locally:** Farmer households are organized into groups of not more than 25-35 members each. This ensures that farmers know each other on a personal level and work together to develop cohesive interests. They typically collect and share information about individual farms and bulk local production avenues for easier processing.
- **Regionally:** About 10 local groups are organized into a farmers' association. At this level, farmers develop relationships with processing facilities and help local groups with developing bankable business plans, upping skills and building capacity (for instance, in coffee processing, harvesting, drying, and so on). Association meetings are held in which awareness is raised on topics like poverty cycles and power imbalances within the coffee value chain.
- **Nationally:** All farmer associations are organized within the national umbrella organization NUCAFE which develops relationships with exporters, roasters, and input suppliers. It also coordinates farmers' advocacy efforts, makes sure that development money goes directly to farmers, and supports research efforts by universities and think tanks.

NUCAFE's organizational model nurtures coffee farmers to assume as many value-adding roles as possible within the value chain, especially in processing, packaging, and branding. This is different from conventional development approaches that tend to focus more on agricultural processes and production.

Farms of any size can participate in this inclusive model which improves product quality, increases productivity, promotes traceability of the origin of the coffee, and influences policy makers to create a conducive business environment. As a result, farmers don't just improve their earning potential; they also gain decision-making power and control over their own development.

Organizing Differently to Increase Value Creation for Small-holder Farmers

Before NUCAFE introduced the Farmer Ownership Model, coffee marketing boards that had secured special legal privilege (i.e., licenses and permits) could process and export coffee. NUCAFE's campaign to change this model of functioning kickstarted in 2008 and in 2009 it signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Italian company Caffè River for buying coffee from NUCAFE. In 2010 the first export container left for Italy via a partner in Uganda who had the necessary license. This was proof to the government that the new model worked. Pressure from NUCAFE resulted in a change in the National Coffee Policy in 2013. As a result of this cooperatives and farmers could also directly process and export coffee.



NUCAFE has followed a five-step approach for setting up its national platform:

1. It first familiarized itself with the on-the-ground situation that was skewed against farmers. By analyzing the value chain, it was able to make the case for the Farmer Ownership Model and prioritized villages that had the potential to grow coffee for early adoption at a local level.
2. The foundation for the model was built by starting the first farmer organizations and developing local leadership capacity. NUCAFE acted as a community organizer and mobilizer instead of a competitor, which helped people to trust its role in the value chain.
3. In collaboration with farmers, a vision and business plan for a new coffee value chain on a national level was developed. NUCAFE was founded in 2003 with USAID support, through which it raised awareness and built credibility for FOM. The organization implemented regional and national structures based on pilot programs and garnered the support of an increasing number of active local farmer organizations.
4. The Farmer Ownership Model was institutionalized by linking local, regional, and national farmer organizations and by advocating for policies such as the Uganda Coffee Policy of 2013 and the National Coffee Law of 2021, which make the model possible.
5. NUCAFE has successfully shifted the power dynamics within the coffee value chain in Uganda through these crucial policy changes and by covering about 90 percent of coffee farmers in the country. On average, NUCAFE farmers received an increase of 250 percent in prices compared to what they earned before joining

NUCAFE.⁴⁸

6. NUCAFE is continuing to deepen its impact by including subject matter related to solar technologies, eco-friendly farming, and its own alternative to Western fair-trade and eco-labels. It has developed an industrial solar supply plant which produces energy to run factories without emitting toxic gases into the atmosphere and which ultimately contributes to combating climate change.⁴⁹

Changing Gender-related and Spending Mindsets

NUCAFE promotes gender equity through training sessions. Earlier, women did not actively participate in the coffee space and nor were they in leadership roles in coffee associations and cooperatives; the husband was in charge of the farm's financial decisions, including how to spend the sales proceeds. After the harvest was sold, husbands frequently vanished for weeks to spend the earnings on either drink or other women. NUCAFE started putting training modules into place to increase equity on the farms. It campaigned to dispel stereotypes by requesting that couples discuss their finances or/and share success stories of other farmers who welcomed their wives as equal business partners. NUCAFE also had to make sure that farmers understood how both market and shared-role dynamics positively impacted the value chain.

Going forward, NUCAFE is exploring how to replicate the Farmer Ownership Model in other countries and value chains. It is encouraging partnerships with academia, researchers, regulatory agencies, development organizations, and policy makers in its future expansion. To achieve this, it follows a three-pronged strategy:

- Train replicators: NUCAFE publishes guides and manuals as open-source materials and also trains and actively supports other organizations internationally in setting up their own Farmer Ownership Models. Further, it trains leaders of cooperatives to host training sessions for farmers in their communities. It introduces the farmers to the history of coffee and educates them on how the coffee value chain works (including pricing processes).
- Engage universities: NUCAFE integrates the Farmer Ownership Model and its learnings in the curricula of agriculture, management, and international development universities and is currently developing incubation programs.
- Involve governments: The organization is boosting the probability of receiving support from governments by getting the Farmer Ownership Model mentioned in UN whitepapers and at policy conferences. Going forward, this strategy will serve to further improve policies for coffee farmers in Uganda.

Systems-change needs collaborative work. In the case of NUCAFE this is evident from the example of one of their major stakeholders, the Private Sector Foundation Uganda (PSFU), of which NUCAFE is a member.⁵⁰ PSFU is Uganda's umbrella body for the private sector and includes business associations as well as public sector agencies that are key to private sector growth. It proved to be an invaluable partner in influencing and



supporting NUCAFE in engaging the Government of Uganda to formulate the National Coffee Policy. PSFU has also supported NUCAFE investments in value addition to empower farmers since 2002 through scaling in the value chain and has provided support in mobilizing as well as organizing smallholder coffee farmers into associations and cooperatives.

Funding Systems Change

NUCAFE is a hybrid farmer-owned social enterprise; this includes its business entity, NUCAFE Grading Limited (NGL), and NUCAFE, both of which generate a significant part of the funding for the organization. NUCAFE generates 98 percent of its revenue without relying on external subsidies or donor grants.

- 1. Memberships:** As a process facilitator, NUCAFE does not earn revenue from buying coffee from its members. Instead, it charges service fees for the value-addition benefits it provides. One source of income for NUCAFE comes through the use of the centralized processing facility. For each batch of processed coffee, farmers pay a small fee (USD100 per ton) allowing them to climb up the value chain without losing ownership of the product. This nominal charge is highly affordable for associated farmers. In addition, NUCAFE charges a market linkage fee that amounts to approximately less than one percent of the value of the coffee processed and marketed. This fee is for connecting farmers to international social impact buyers who pay higher prices to support the social mission.⁵¹
- 2. Partnerships:** NUCAFE has constantly looked for new ways to enhance the earnings of its farmer members. To finance projects, this frequently required significant local and international coop-

eration. Omukago Coffee Shop and the Agricultural Business Initiative Trust (aBi) are two successful ventures of collaborating with partners; the latter is one of the major funders of these programs. The goal of aBi, which was co-founded by the governments of Denmark and Uganda, was to offer money and technical assistance for the development of value chains in Uganda. Through this partnership, and that of Trademark East Africa and other partners, NUCAFE was able to finance the equipment required to build a cutting-edge centralized processing facility. However, the processing facility was not directly connected to the consumers at the top of the coffee value chain. With the help of the Italian roasting business Caffè River, NUCAFE opened its own coffee shop in Kampala, Uganda, to fill the void. The shop offers high quality Arabica and Robusta coffees. NUCAFE aims to shift the cultural norms by increasing local demand for coffee.



AT-A-GLANCE: KEY INSIGHTS ON SYSTEMS CHANGE

“**A word to investors:** *Patience is part of the game to create change. Donors need to be patient although one can agree on intermediary milestones and targets. Donors also need to understand the significance of institution building, network development, and advocacy to create change. Getting funds for these aspects of systemic changemaking continue to pose a challenge.*”

Altering power relations

- The NUCAFE Farmer Ownership Model upturns the fundamental operating principles of a key industry in Uganda—coffee farming and production. It changes the classic model by empowering farmers to maintain ownership of their coffee throughout the various stages along the processing chain.
- By organizing coffee farmers into cooperatives and associations, the model not only increases economic returns for them but also transforms traditional power structures between farmers, buyers, and public authorities. Farmers now make decisions on the production, sales, and marketing processes.
- NUCAFE institutionalized the model by advocating for policy changes that allow farmers and cooperatives to conduct production and sales activities as well as by engaging other stakeholders such as international organizations and universities.
- By grouping farmers rather than them having a one-on-one relationship with distributors where they felt constrained, the model is a robust example of farmers' collective negotiating powers.

Effecting policy change ⁵²

- NUCAFE first gathered facts and figures on how widespread the problem was and how it impacted communities. The objective was to create a win-win strategy for all key players.
- For making policy change a reality, finding political allies and interfacing with people in power is critical. However, it is important to remain politically neutral so as not to dilute one's efficacy. NUCAFE successfully brought on board a former finance minister who grew up as a coffee farmer and also mobilized the Ugandan and international civil society as well as farmers themselves.

Creating systems change⁵³

- NUCAFE's model clearly demonstrates that there are no quick fixes and that to accomplish lasting systems change, it is critical to work on several levels. The first is to understand the problem(s) one is seeking to rectify. This should be viewed within the context of the entire ecosystem to enable a systems-change approach in building new business models that empowers those that are affected by the problem.
- To make social transformation a reality, NUCAFE enabled and mobilized team building and organized a critical mass of major stakeholders who would actively support change. Power mapping was fundamental to identifying the organizations and systems to turn to in order to effect change.
- And finally, ensuring continued and unbroken leadership via strategic succession planning is a must.



PROMPTING A COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSE TO THE STROKE CRISIS

STROKE ACTION NIGERIA

In a region with one of the highest stroke rates in the world, Rita Melifonwu launched Stroke Action Nigeria (SAN) in 2012 to offer stroke care, prevention, and rehabilitation for stroke survivors. Through her organization, she is transforming the ecosystem around the approach to stroke and the management of its care. By engaging stroke survivors, caretakers, medical professionals and policy makers to build stroke awareness, prevention, and treatment capacity across the country, SAN has contributed to significantly reducing stroke prevalence in Nigeria. Her organization's carefully designed and comprehensive interventions include advancing policy change, partnerships with national and international stakeholder organizations, and the engagement of stroke survivors and other individuals as Stroke Ambassadors.

As a Board Member of the World Stroke Organization (WSO), a global non-profit, Rita is also a member of its World Stroke Campaign Committee, Membership Committee, and Taskforce for Prehospital Stroke Care.



Ashoka Fellow

Rita Melifonwu

Organization

Stroke Action Nigeria (SAN)

Countries of Impact

Nigeria and United Kingdom.
Stroke Action is active in five states in Nigeria through a network of 200 volunteer Stroke Ambassadors.

Year of Creation

2012

Website

strokeactionnigeria.com

Annual Budget

Approximately USD 10,000

Number of Employees

6 Volunteer Stroke Ambassadors

SNIPPETS OF IMPACT

- SAN contributed to the formulation of the 2018 National Multi-Sectoral Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases.
- SAN's government lobbying has resulted in stroke survivors being legally entitled to access Nigeria's Basic Healthcare Provision Fund from 2018.
- SAN has created and nurtured stroke support organizations across Nigeria to become champions in advancing stroke interventions. These have, in turn, started their own support groups in the states in which they are based.
- As a direct result of SAN's interventions, as many as 97 percent of stroke survivors have recovered (in comparison to the 40 percent fatality rate).⁵⁴
- In 2020, SAN was presented as an exemplar model for community stroke rehabilitation at the World Stroke Congress.



THE JOURNEY OF THE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR

As a nurse in the UK, Rita quickly made a mark in the area of bettering prevailing practices at the hospital she worked in, including how nurses can use evidence-based research to improve care, for which she won the Malabar Award for Evidence-Based Practice in 1998. She also noticed that blacks and ethnic minorities were at higher risk for strokes than their white counterparts. Determined to start a stroke unit in her hospital which lacked the funds for it, she wrote to the then Prime Minister Tony Blair who forwarded her letter to the Ministry of Health. The Ministry urged her to apply for their Mary Seacole Nursing Leadership Award 1999, which she won. This led Rita to found Stroke Action UK⁵⁵ which contributed to the London Borough of Enfield.

Having already supported stroke survivors in London and pioneered the Life After Stroke Centre in 2000—an enabling and safe space for stroke survivors, carers, and families to cope with the stroke recovery journey by sharing experiences, socializing, re-learning life skills, and providing support to regain functional ability after a stroke—Rita's work in Nigeria began in 2012. She received disturbing news that her aunt in Nigeria had had a stroke and could not find any assistance. The acute lack of stroke support in her home country led her to establish Stroke Action Nigeria.

SAN, which became a member of the World Stroke Organization in 2012, was the first Stroke Support Organization (SSO) in Nigeria to advocate for quality stroke care. It equips individuals and communities with the information and resources that puts them in charge of their own health, leading to an improved quality of life. Additionally, it is working with existing medical care facilities and the government, providing them with

the tools and means to implement preventive measures to tackle the high incidence of strokes. With the aim of making 90 percent of Nigerians aware of stroke risk factors, SAN successfully lobbied with the government to develop a national stroke registry and strategy. Such a registry typically generates and collates data on the incidence of first-ever stroke events and describes the patterns of care and outcomes of treatment. This arms appropriate resources and tools to treat stroke patients and help them reintegrate into society.⁵⁶

SAN's pioneering intervention was chosen as a model case in 2020 by the World Health Organization (WHO). A direct consequence of this acknowledgment of the organization's impact is that SAN gets invited to the World Stroke Congress, a powerful space in which to network, lobby and create awareness around stroke. Stroke Action has also contributed to framing the WHO's Rehabilitation 2030 Initiative, which is focused at strengthening health systems globally to fill the rehabilitation gap.⁵⁷

THE PROBLEM

Strokes are a leading cause of disability, dementia and death worldwide. Approximately 70 percent of deaths from stroke and 87 percent of stroke-related disability occur in low-income and middle-income countries.⁵⁸

At the turn of the century, the most common illnesses in Africa were communicable diseases, whereas non-communicable diseases, including strokes, were considered rare, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. However, evidence indicates that today, Africa could have up to three-times greater rates of stroke incidence and higher stroke prevalence than Western Europe and the USA. Moreover, Africans are likely to have a

stroke within the fourth to sixth decades of life, with serious implications for the individual, their family, and society. This age profile is particularly notable as strokes in younger people tend to result in a greater loss of self-worth and socioeconomic productivity than in older individuals.

In the last two years in Nigeria (2020-22), strokes have affected adults in their economically active lifetime, triggering unemployment and poverty among the survivors. Stroke deaths have touched alarming numbers in the country, with 46 percent of stroke survivors dying within three months and an additional 30 percent dying within one year.⁵⁹

Despite the advancement in medication and treatment of stroke in Africa, substantial gaps remain in understanding its causative factors, patient care, and practice; the effective organization of preventative, therapeutic, and rehabilitative stroke services remain a challenge in many African countries. This includes limited access to diagnostic and time-dependent interventional services (such as reperfusion therapies and stroke surgery), the absence of stroke units, and challenges pertaining to patient retention during the post-stroke rehabilitation period.

Before Stroke Action Nigeria was established, there were no stroke-support organizations or stroke societies in the country. Work on strokes was limited to being research-based as opposed to being holistic. Rita identified the following key gaps in the system:

- Lack of awareness about stroke
- Dearth of training for healthcare professionals
- Absence of a stroke management strategy
- Paucity of stroke units in hospitals
- Non-existent stroke support in communities

ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC IMBALANCES

From inception, SAN's objective has been to effect systemic change. To reach its goal it not only harnesses available human and educational resources but also utilizes every financial and legal means necessary to influence government policy and strategy to make stroke care a reality at the national level.

Shortly after its creation in 2013, Stroke Action Nigeria signed an MOU with the Ministry of Health⁶⁰ to collaborate in mitigating stroke risk as well as in developing quality stroke care in the country. Since then, there has been significant transformation in stroke awareness and services; the country has seen an increase in the education of healthcare professionals who are currently working in stroke units in hospitals, and more energy is being invested in advocacy and change in collaboration with stroke stakeholders. As a result of these efforts, in the following year itself (between 2014-15) SAN reached out to 320 stroke patients, of which 78 percent were able to return to their daily lives without hospital re-admission or mortality.⁶¹ Today, Stroke Action's work is being adopted in all government hospitals across the country, at both the community and national levels.

Establishment of Nigeria Stroke Reference Group with Federal Ministry of Health

SAN's achievements are a powerful testament to the power of collaborative work. In 2015, it formed a consortium comprising health administrators, stroke patients, and specialists with varied backgrounds in stroke-related care such as neurology, neurosurgery, neurorehabilitation, nursing, physiotherapy, and speech therapy. The

consortium collaborated with the Medical Association of Nigerians Across Great Britain (MANSAG) to sign an MOU to enhance stroke care in Nigeria through skills and technology transfer, policy development, annual training, and Public-Private Partnerships (PPP). The multidisciplinary Nigerian Stroke Reference Group (NSRG)—charged with charting the way forward for stroke care across Nigeria—was born of this collaboration in 2015 with the full support of the government. This advisory group guided the government in including stroke when developing the National Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, which includes prevention, management, post-stroke short- and long-term rehabilitation, and support for both survivors and caregivers.

Nigeria Multi-Sectorial Action Plan on NCDs Including Stroke

A notable success of the Nigerian Stroke Reference Group was to get stroke included in Nigeria's National Multisectoral Action Plan (NNMSAP) for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD).⁶² The NNMSAP for 2019-25 was signed off by the President and the Minister of Health in 2019 and is being implemented across the country.

In 2018, another significant milestone—achieved by SAN through government lobbying—was that stroke survivors became legally entitled to access the Basic Healthcare Provision Fund, enabling them to receive essential stroke treatment. This covers pri-



mary care, minor illness, outpatient enquiries and operations, access to medicine, and physiotherapy.

Research is an important aspect of advocating for policy change. Rita is currently undertaking a research study on social participation and life after stroke with the London South Bank University⁶³ and is also a member of OSCAIL (Organized Stroke Care Across Income Levels), an international body that is advocating for stroke to be included in hospital and community research.

Everyone a Changemaker: Stroke Ambassadors and Stroke Entrepreneurs

Stroke Action has employed creative strategies to generate public awareness. They have built a stroke community WhatsApp platform for stroke survivors, carers, and health workers. They have also developed an app called EnABLE⁶⁴ aimed at prevention and early intervention in case of a stroke. It encourages individuals to live healthy lives and to regularly carry out medical check-ups in order to reduce the risk of a stroke. And lastly, SAN's collaborations with the media (TV, radio, and newspapers) have resulted in media campaigns and press releases on World Stroke Day.

SAN has built an army of 200 citizen volunteers—Stroke Ambassadors—whose mandate as change agents is to drive SAN's agenda on several levels. Doctors, nurses, stroke survivors and their caretakers, and others passionate about addressing stroke care in Nigeria have come forward as Stroke Ambassadors to advance change in their communities. Trained by SAN to lead stroke advocacy campaigns and support skills, these volunteers are leading behavior change among stroke survivors, carers, health professionals and lay people, including busting the myth that stroke is witchcraft-induced.⁶⁵

The ambassadors, who typically work 2-3 days a week, conduct one-day training programs followed by ongoing training as per client needs. They are paid a small stipend for their work to cover expenses.

Additionally, Rita has replicated the Life After Stroke Centre model through social franchising. This model facilitates the transfer of knowledge and experience to potential stroke entrepreneurs—health care professionals (doctors, nurses, physiotherapists), stroke survivors and caregivers—who wish to operate their own stroke support organizations. Potential stroke entrepreneurs are given the right, as also the obligation, to operate community-based franchised stroke support organizations as a business, as per the franchisor's concept. The stroke entrepreneur, for a fee, uses the franchisor's name and trademark, know-how, business methods and techniques, and other rights. The entrepreneur receives support, training, and assistance from SAN, as also inputs for further development of the concept.

Stroke Action has also managed to ensure inclusivity by training individuals who have been either directly or indirectly affected by stroke to become caregivers to those recovering from a stroke. It has recruited influential individuals such to help with modifying the national guide on stroke and transforming practices in the medical profession.

Funding Systems Change

Although SAN had partnered with the government, obtaining funding through grants has proved to be a challenge. In the initial couple of years, Rita primarily relied on personal savings from her work in the UK to fund and sustain Stroke Action.

Realizing the need for financial sustainability, SAN generates revenue through a membership model which:

a) enables access to medicines for three key stroke risk factors (diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol) as well as for having blood pressure and Body Mass Index checked;

b) gives access to support groups—carers, persons with diabetes and/or hypertension, those quitting smoking, weight watchers, park walkers and runners; and

c) grants access to the resources, trainings and discounted prices to the events of World Stroke Organization (WSO)—wherein members get to attend the international World Stroke Congress (WSC). Stroke Action has over 80 members who are either individuals or organizations.

Stroke Action also runs an ‘independent

living’ one-stop-shop at Onitsha (Anambra State), a new concept in Africa, where stroke survivors are able to buy a complete range of rehabilitation products (from wheelchairs to materials that help one relearn how to write or how to bathe oneself). It has also made these products available in an online marketplace. In 2021 Stroke Action started a farm and a greenhouse for stroke survivors to become agripreneurs.

Evaluating the enormous amount of time spent on grant applications and how unsustainable a complete dependence on grant funding can be, Stroke Action has resolved to discontinue applying for grants and is increasingly putting more effort into finding ways of generating income with the equipment and services that they already own. This includes gym equipment, well-being testing kits, providing physiotherapy, etc.



AT-A-GLANCE: KEY INSIGHTS ON SYSTEMS CHANGE

“ Political systems can be frustrating when trying to achieve systems change because governments keep changing. Even after having come to an agreement with a minister, within a year or two there can be changes in the government and one has to start lobbying over again.”

Some reflections from Rita about systems-change from her experience:

- In the Nigerian context, people have not bought into the idea of systems change. People are quite territorial about their work; achieving systemic change requires an open mind and true collaboration.
- Investors need to understand the challenges that social entrepreneurs face in raising funds and consider social returns on investment when assessing investment readiness.



INCREASING ACCESS TO SUSTAINABLE EYE CARE IN AFRICA

ONESIGHT ESSILORLUXOTTICA FOUNDATION, SOUTH AFRICA

Uncorrected refractive errors—which can lead to visual impairment including blindness—affects 2.7 billion people around the world. Problems with sight can negatively impact not just people’s personal lives—their health, education, and work opportunities—but also the sustainable development of local communities and economies.

Optometrist and public health leader Kovin Naidoo is pursuing his goal of access to vision care for all. By positioning vision as a key development agenda, he is setting up sustainable eye care services and engaging multiple stakeholders from the government, private sector, and local communities. His broad range of tools includes research, data generation, social franchises, advocacy, and partnership building.



Ashoka Fellow

Kovin Naidoo

Organization

Kovin was the CEO of the Brien Holden Vision Institute until 2018. In 2019 he joined EssilorLuxottica and 2022 the OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation to further his strategy for providing vision care for all.

Countries of Impact

Over 54 countries in Africa

Website

onesight.essilorluxottica.com

africaneyeinstitute.org.za



African Eye Institute

SNIPPETS OF IMPACT

- As a result of Kovin and colleagues lobbying efforts, in 2008 the WHO recognized refractive errors as a contributor to 18 percent of the world's blindness.
- Through the Brien Holden Vision Institute, optometric services and glasses were provided to over three million people at more than 400 vision centers and eyecare sites globally.
- In the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa, Brien Holden Vision Institute initiated and implemented a district-based optometry program in 2007 including eye health promotion and referrals to ophthalmologists. After three years the KwaZulu-Natal government took over the program and expanded it to the overall province. This program has modelled a highly doable integrated eye care intervention for the country.

THE JOURNEY OF THE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR

Kovin has a track record of being a catalyst and fighting for social justice causes. In his youth, he was actively involved in the anti-apartheid movement and led major campaigns, for which he served an eight-month jail term. Since the early 1990s, he has single-mindedly focused on transforming eye care in the public health sector. To push forward his objective, this social entrepreneur has worked closely with various organizations including NGOs, the academia, and more recently, he joined a corporate foundation, the OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation to further his vision. Along with research and advocacy, Kovin's work has helped to make visible—especially in disenfranchised communities—the underlying issues that cause blindness.

Through his interventions, he has contributed to making systematic shifts within the optometry space through various organizations and sectors by building fluid 'teams of teams' in order to make eye care accessible for all:

- Kovin has not only supported independent practitioners, but he has also convened a group of eye practitioners, leading to the establishment of Clear Vision, a cooperative of 143 practices that he co-founded. This was later acquired by Spec-Savers South Africa, a leading South African optometry chain, to further the concept.
- In 2000 he co-founded and led the International Centre for Eye Education (ICEE) Africa which is developing sustainable systems to provide vision care services to those in need.⁶⁶ In 2003, as a tribute to the contribution of professor Brien Holden in making possible that quality eye care reaches everyone, it was later renamed the Brien Holden Vision Institute Foundation (BHVI).⁶⁷
- Since 2019, Kovin has been Senior Vice President, Inclusive Business and Philanthropy, at EssilorLuxottica, the world's largest manufacturer of ophthalmic lenses, and since 2022, OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation Global Head of Advocacy and Partnerships.

THE PROBLEM

Globally, approximately 2.2 billion people suffer from vision impairment or blindness of which at least one billion impairments could have been prevented. According to the first World Report on Vision issued by the World Health Organization (WHO), more than one billion people worldwide are living with vision impairment because they do not get the care they need for conditions like glaucoma, cataract, and short and far sightedness.⁶⁸ Ageing populations, changing lifestyles and limited access to eye care, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, are among the main drivers of the rising numbers of people living with vision impairment: the effective functionality of billions of people in the world is hindered due to the lack of a basic eye exam and being prescribed a pair of prescription glasses.

Global research conducted by BHVI in 2010 showed that by 2050, 50 percent of the world's population would suffer from short-sightedness or myopia.⁶⁹ In spite of these alarming statistics, both the government and the private sector have not acted to reverse the projections.

The BHVI study suggested that the biggest challenge lay in the fact that a large number of people lacked access to prescription glasses. The data revealed that worldwide, approximately USD 272 billions of lost productivity occurred as a result of a loss or impairment in vision in one or both eyes due to the high cost of lenses which made spectacles unaffordable for the marginalized. This is further compounded by the reality that the production of spectacles falls short of meeting the demand for them. The dearth of clinicians, manufacturers, and sellers in rural areas adds to the unavailability issues. While there were isolated initiatives by citizen sector organizations to provide care, services, and eyeglasses to the rural poor in South

Africa and the world, these were usually charity-based and only provided temporary and sporadic solutions to the problem; they failed to address the underlying socio-economic and political issues.⁷⁰

To counter these obstacles to eye health, in 1999 Kavin and his colleague, Professor Brien Holden, co-founded the International Centre for Eye Care Education (ICEE), later renamed the Brien Holden Vision Institute. The objective of this initiative was to offer access to vision care for everyone by positioning vision as a key development agenda and by setting up sustainable eye care services.

ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC IMBALANCES

In the early days, when ICEE referred to systems change, it presented a broad how-to definition that included forging multiple partnerships and altering policies, norms, and beliefs or biases. Soon, Kavin and Brien realized that it was critical to focus on engaging the government to scale the work. Public sector engagement therefore dominated their strategy, especially in the areas of a national agenda focused on eye health (for which they needed a responsive government) as well as the support of other sectors to institute policy change. Initially, when attempting to provide for a health condition like short sightedness or far sightedness for which the patients had to procure spectacles, BHVI had to sell them at a highly subsidised fee or provide them for free, which was not sustainable.

The challenge was that they were not working towards solving an accepted problem. Rather, they were taking on something that even the WHO lacked a classification on: the need for refractive correction—eye exams and glasses—did not fall under the

definition of strategies to counter vision impairment and blindness. Through intensive lobbying, the Brien Holden Vision Institute was successful in persuading several governments to commit to accepting that there was a problem.

As a prelude to focusing on initiating change at the global level, in 2000 BHVI conducted a research study on Refractive Error in Children (as part of a WHO global group of studies) that brought to light that only 20 percent of children in Africa who needed spectacles had them.⁷¹ As a direct result of the research, refractive error (which includes myopia, hyperopia, presbyopia, and astigmatism, for example, and which can easily be corrected) was finally recognized by the WHO as an issue. This victory was achieved in collaboration with LV Prasad Eye Institute, India.

Advocacy and Government Engagement

In addition to positioning refractive error as a rectifiable eye health issue, it was also necessary to ensure that the most affected populations—the poor and those living in rural areas—would be reached. However, to deploy outreach to last-mile communities and to achieve scale, it was clear that countries needed to make a shift from the private to the public health sector.

Kovin is a firm believer in an integrated approach that not only brings together all players in the eye care sector, but which also develops inter-sectoral collaboration as a central premise to achieving scale: incorporating the private sector into the solution would translate into more resources becoming available for governments to cater to the poorest of the poor especially in a post-Covid world of competing priorities and limited re-



sources. According to Kovin, 'We cannot talk about systems change and limit ourselves to encouraging non-profits to donate or sell spectacles to under-resourced communities. We must develop strategies that bring together the government, non-profits, social enterprises and the private sector. The private sector cannot be seen as just a donor but must be embraced as a role player as well.'

Key to BHVI's success was Kovin's dogged presence at planning workshops and conferences on a national level in Africa and globally, where he firmly placed uncorrected refractive error and vision impairment on the agenda. He used data to influence thinking on eye care services and solutions, highlighting how these were integral to ensuring the wellbeing not only of individuals, but of nations as well.

At the OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation, which is dedicated to 'eliminating uncorrected poor vision in a generation'⁷² Kovin is starting to see changes taking place as a result of advocacy efforts through this influential business platform. A foremost example is getting the buy-in from the finance ministry and other players who are involved in the budgetary process within governments, for example, in India. One outcome of its relentless advocacy and ability to build collaborations and deliberate partnerships over the years is that the Foundation is able to engage with different partners globally, such as road safety campaign organizations, ministries of education and of child rights, refugee organizations, the literacy and services sectors, and others. Data can be a game changer for organizations to better support governments in planning and strategizing processes. Through the Foundations' research department, studies have been conducted to demonstrate the impact of vision on the education of children, the quality of life of the elderly, productivity of citizens, and road safety.

In a fairly short span of time, the OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation has been able to build relationships with key organizations to effect change. It is partnering with the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (a governing body of motor sport that promotes safe, sustainable and accessible mobility for all road users across the world) on a road safety program.⁷³ This partnership attracted the attention of the World Economic Forum around the issue of vision impairment as it contextualized vision within road safety for motor companies, attracting corporations that would not have ordinarily been interested in healthcare. This example underlines the principle that when shifting systems, multiplicity in outreach is critical when considering who is brought on board. While campaigns such as Road Safety have a global footprint, when it comes to vision the main deficiencies exist in the Global South. This is primarily because of the lack of health professionals and access to affordable spectacles. In addition, even when access exists the poor salaries of truck drivers in developing countries results in them prioritising other more pressing needs over vision care. The importance and value of coalitions and collaborations in attempting systems change is critical. Examples that attest to the effectiveness of advocacy and interdependence in getting buy-in from stakeholders can be seen through key campaigns like VISION 2020: The Right to Sight launched in 1999 by the WHO and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB). VISION 2020, a global initiative for the elimination of avoidable blindness, was aimed at intensifying global advocacy efforts, strengthening national prevention of blindness programs, and supporting the development of national eye care plans.⁷⁴ Playing his part in the Vision 2020 initiative, through BHVI Kovin initiated Our Children's Vision campaign which eventually reached 40 million individuals and focused on service delivery, policy change through advocacy, and awareness building.⁷⁵

Developing Sustainable Eye Care Services

With the realization that transforming underlying political and social issues was the only route to create sustainable change, through the ICEE/BHVI, in 2006 Kovin developed an economic service delivery model operated on multiple layers that included 'train-the-trainer' programs that trained and mobilized nurses and community health workers to provide services where no optometrists existed. It also provided optometry training programs (only five countries in Africa had optometry courses at that point in time). While the programs to train nurses and others were a stop-gap measure to accommodate the lack of optometrists, the investment in optometry training led to the setting up of permanent training centers in countries such as Mozambique, Malawi, Uganda, Eritrea, and Vietnam. In addition,

efforts of other actors in the system) were also supported in Ethiopia, India, Mali, Tanzania, and Cambodia.⁷⁶

Instead of opting for donor-driven or philanthropic models, the BHVI has created financially sustainable eye-care service models through translational research⁷⁷, manufacturing cutting-edge products (example: customized hybrid contact lenses) and developing affordable technology such as a high-resolution retinal camera that acquires multispectral images of the retina which supports sustainable eye-care services.⁷⁸ Most of the revenue generated from this has been reinvested in public health and further research to create sustainable services. Government collaboration was sought to open vision centers with the aim that, over time, it would eventually run these centers independently of BHVI.



Kovin's train-the-trainer template was made possible because of collaboration with civil society organizations and the government that identified suitable candidates (ophthalmic nurses or primary care nurses). These candidates attended a course which trained them to undertake simple basic eye-care examinations and make recommendations for eyeglasses or referrals to others in the more complex and complicated cases.

Once trained and awarded their certificate, these eye-care practitioners were supplied with a toolkit which contained all the equipment needed for the services that they provided. This approach ensured penetration of eye care services into practitioners' communities. They were assisted in setting up their own training programs once back in their communities and also provided with support and education to keep their training up to date. This also served to ensure that the continual spread of the initiative remained uninterrupted.

Kovin also works with government and private local health clinics and hospitals to ensure the widest possible access. Which is why part of the training includes an internship component: students are required to complete a fixed set of hours in optometric practice before they can qualify for certification. Because the demand for these internships outweighed the supply of such positions, Kovin approached a local public sector hospital which did not have an optometric service. He was successful in negotiating an intake of interested students to the hospital. In return, he helped the hospital set up an optometric clinic, where private optometrists managed and supervised these students on a part-time basis. This proved so successful that he did this in other hospitals as well.

At BHVI, Kovin and his team also developed the Seven Billion Model which went beyond the conventional way of doing business.

In this model, social entrepreneurship was epitomized by the vision centres (run by social entrepreneurs) that generated a small income, as well as the social franchises (run by small entrepreneurs in underserved areas), with the primary aim of creating access. This space was also supported by players in the private sector, where optometrists could offer affordable packages, using frames and lenses that were usually supplied by NGOs and subsidized programs.

OneSight EssilorLuxottica's approach proves that free/private enterprise can be integrated into the public sector effectively. This is highlighted in the case of Kenya where entrepreneurs own their own optical shops. Another strategy to reach the poorest of the poor is where the government lends support in bringing both philanthropy and for-profit entrepreneurship into its hospitals. For example, the Foundation gives millions of glasses free to government hospitals in Kenya to cater to those who cannot afford it. In tandem with the Kenya Society for the Blind (a government-recognized body), the Foundation set up subsidized optical shops in government hospitals wherein the government covers a significant chunk of the infrastructure costs and non-profits provide some of the equipment and optical shop accessories. In this instance, public sector optometrists provide the clinical services while the Kenya Society for the Blind runs the optical shops. Such cross-sector partnerships—where eye-care is built-in within the overall health care system—are successfully cutting costs while ensuring that social development services percolate to all populations. Since services are being provided in milieus where no optometrists exist, technology is being integrated to link optometrists with technicians in rural areas so that services can be provided without dependence on huge numbers of optometrists (which are lacking in Kenya). In Kenya, the Foundation has also trained school leavers as EyeRafikis⁷⁹ to provide a very specific function around conducting eye

exams and giving prescriptions for glasses, who are then linked to an optometrist who supervises their work. The Eye Rafiki program includes training and entrepreneurship development, with trainees ultimately owning their own optical shops in rural areas through which they provide sustainable affordable eye care services in underserved areas. Optometry oversight is now being integrated into this model utilizing technology so that integration with other aspects of eye and health care in both the private and public sector can be achieved.⁸⁰

An expansion of the Eye Rafiki program is the DREAMS project—a USAID and OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation collaboration—which provides opportunities to empower young women who are at risk of HIV. This program offers slots to some of these women to train to become Eye Rafikis. The thinking is that elevating people out of poverty and providing them with opportunities to run their own enterprises or jobs will motivate behaviour change and reduce the risk of HIV. When the Eye Rafiki program was established in 2018, the first level of collaborations/interactions was with government health and regulatory bodies, training institutions in the private sector, and eye health facilities. The DREAMS partnership is a vibrant example of collaboration with development organizations focused on issues beyond eye care. To deepen systems change, various initiatives involving diverse partnerships are currently being explored across different ventures and enterprises (e.g., linking optometrists to the Eye Rafikis via telemedicine, working with road safety campaigns and other related programs).

The OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation also establishes Vision Centres in government hospitals, supports and administers them, and eventually hands them over to the government to manage and run. All the programs are developed and integrated into the health department systems and process-

es. Running and managing a Vision Centre requires a transference of skills; this occurs at both the government and employee ends of the spectrum. The Foundation has established close to 120 of such centers in Africa.

Funding Systems Change

When the BHVI Foundation was started after existing as ICEE, Kovin, Professor Brien Holden, and their colleagues realized that donor funding was not sustainable. Therefore, they integrated the support of a previously existing research division in contact lenses and dry eye and spectacle lenses into the Foundation's efforts. This research division commercialized products, which have been sold around the world to the value of USD 26 billion. These generated royalties of over USD 300 million, giving Kovin and his colleagues independence from donor-driven agendas. This approach gave BHVI the freedom to do translational research, create cutting-edge products, and develop affordable technology that supports sustainable eye care services. Most of the revenue from these was reinvested into further research to design eye care products and part of the income was utilised for the Foundation's public health programs targeted at creating sustainable eye-care services.

Currently, EssilorLuxottica, the largest optical company in the world, is committed to financially supporting the OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation. This Foundation operates with a long-term ambition of eliminating uncorrected poor vision by creating access to sustainable vision care and raising awareness of vision care. It is supported by the highest level of leadership in the company. Systemic change is more likely to be achieved if donors and funders focused on sustainable systematic solutions rather than on the number of organizations funded. Systemically, eye-care has found it difficult to secure

funding that is geared towards solutions as opposed to funding that is only focused on individual projects. Currently, the challenges revolve around rethinking funding models. Here, the emphasis lies in challenging and transforming the approach that international donors have in funding projects. The ultimate goal would be to deal with the issue of refractive errors holistically, as opposed to funding on a project-to-project basis.

Kovin cites an example (in 2018) when Standard Chartered Bank committed to USD 2.5 million for uncorrected refractive errors in schools in East Africa. BHVI invited a range of stakeholders and was instrumental in forming a coalition. They created an entity that became far more impactful than an individual organization would have ever been able to be. Furthermore, Standard Chartered

Bank provided a million dollars for KwaZulu-Natal that was utilized to develop and integrate optometry and optical services into the public sector. After three years the government took over the management of this program which has since expanded to all districts of the province—a perfect example of collaboration and systems development. The eye care services are now integrated with the health system which ensures the smooth transition between eye care and diabetes or management of other chronic diseases, given that these conditions have an ocular disease outcome.



AT-A-GLANCE: KEY INSIGHTS ON SYSTEMS CHANGE

“When it comes to advocacy, the business sector provides different entry points. Doors open quickly, different platforms such as the World Economic Forum can be leveraged, and governments are generally keen to engage in public-private partnerships as they see businesses as possible long-term allies (whereas NGOs often have access to only limited-term funding). Businesses are able to invest significantly when they see the logic behind an intervention.”

- **Positioning a new development topic:**

If you want to get your agenda on the table, remember to not engage others only at the level of your agenda. For me, this has meant serving on the executive body of the World Council of Optometry, contributing to all other activities of this body, and influencing the private sector to see the bigger picture beyond the main focus area and mobilizing their support. Evidence is critical in positioning a new agenda and our early investment in research really helped our advocacy and fundraising efforts.

- **Learnings from engaging with the government:**

My experience of changing systems has required a marriage of the private sector with global public health, in which stakeholders from all sectors collaborate and benefit from this involvement. Many of the governments in Africa do not have the sufficient resources for existing services. In my experience, social entrepreneurs should find ways to take entrepreneurship into the public sector rather than think that we can do it ‘away’ from the government. For example, India has interesting large-scale private initiatives for eye care, but it is important to think about sustaining

change through institutionalization, which often implies the government should embrace those solutions.

- **Creating systems change in Africa:**

Given the levels of poverty and the lack of access to healthcare, there is a great demand for essential services in Africa. Governments are eager to find solutions. In the field of eye care specifically, the return on investment for politicians is attractive as beneficiaries experience an instant change in their lives as soon as they recover their vision. This facilitates mobilization. The regulations that govern healthcare are a bit complicated and require collaboration with other sectors, such as education, the business sector, etc. We are compelled to deal with systems change as a result.

- **Dealing with corruption:**

A simple principle that started at BHVI was not providing any per diems or, of course, any informal bribes. However, the organization could pay for a flight to a conference or direct expenses, both of which are attractive for public officials. Speaking about systemic issues, we often think of government officials when talking about corruption, but we very seldom look at businesses, NGOs, and other players who can sustain these unhealthy practices.

GLOSSARY

Changemaker: Someone who has the empathy to see and understand problems, the leadership and agency to act, the teamwork skills to inspire others, and the creativity to work together until the problems are solved.

Collective impact: The impact generated by several actors together through some form of collaboration and coordination towards a shared intention. This assumes that the same level of impact would not have been possible by each individual collaborator acting on her/his own.

Direct impact: The impact of an individual or organization that directly serves beneficiaries or addresses a problem; for example, planting trees to address climate change.

Indirect impact: The impact of an individual or organization that only indirectly serves beneficiaries or addresses a problem by enabling another individual or organization to have greater impact. Examples of this are introducing environmental industry standards or changing consumer behaviour to address climate change.

Fundee: The recipient of any form of funding.

Funder: The provider of any form of funding.

Social entrepreneurship: Creative and entrepreneurial approaches channeled through an organization, whether a for-profit or non-profit, to resolve a social or environmental problem.

Social innovation: Creative approaches to fundamentally solve a social or environmental problem.

System: The patterned network of relationships constituting a coherent whole that exists between individuals, groups, and institutions.

System(s) or Systemic change: A shift in the underlying dynamics of the cause of a problem so that better outcomes are derived.

Systemic leadership: This form of leadership focuses on empowerment, collaboration, facilitation, coordination, inclusion, adaptation, humility, and more. There are several other terms that define it, for example, servant leadership or weaving.

RECOMMENDED READINGS ON SYSTEMS CHANGE

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METHODOLOGY

The social entrepreneurs and their organizations for the case studies were selected from a shortlist of 20 Ashoka Fellows in Africa. The selection criteria for the cases featured in this report included:

- Diversity of systemic approach: We picked social entrepreneurs who are addressing different systemic imbalances and who have also developed unique avenues of addressing these imbalances (technological, policy-based, knowledge focused, etc.).
- Social issue diversity: We wanted to cover a wide range of subject areas and therefore chose Fellows addressing diverse social issues (access to healthcare, inclusion, economic development, citizenship, etc.).
- Gender diversity: We selected both female and male social entrepreneurs.
- Geographic diversity: We selected Ashoka Fellows from Southern Africa, East Africa, and West Africa.

We gathered information from various data sources to write the case studies. Primary data included the following: strategic documents developed by the organizations; materials resulting from the selection process and profile-writing of the Ashoka Fellows; semi-structured interviews with the social entrepreneurs and one of their stakeholders around their strategy and its evolution and main milestones. Secondary data was in the form of website content, media reports, articles and impact reports, all of which provided additional context and information for each case.

List of interviews:

- Shona McDonald, Founder, Shonaquip Social Enterprise
- Victor McKinney, Board Member, Shonaquip Social Enterprise
- Rita Melifonwu, Founder and Executive Director, Stroke Action Nigeria
- Peace Chukwuma, Stroke Ambassador Peer Coach, Stroke Action Nigeria
- Joseph Nkandu, Founder, NUCAFE
- Ronny Mulongo, Manager of membership of Private Sector Foundation Uganda
- Kovin Naidoo, Co-founder, African Eye Institute
- Simon Day, Regional Program Coordinator for sub-Saharan Africa at International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB)
- Oluseun Onigbinde, Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer, BudgIT
- Joseph Amenaghawon, former Program Manager at Open Society Foundation

ABOUT ASHOKA

Founded in 1980 by Bill Drayton with the belief that the most powerful force in the world is a big idea in the hands of an entrepreneur, Ashoka applies insights from the world's leading social entrepreneurs to set in motion profound societal transformation. Ashoka is leading the way to an Everyone a Changemaker (EACH) world in which each person actively shapes society.

For over 40 years, Ashoka has been identifying and supporting social entrepreneurs across the globe who work at the systems change level—i.e., they address the root causes of a social problem and build towards a new world. By 2023, more than 3,800 Ashoka Fellows in over 92 countries have grown their impact via Ashoka's financial and network support. Every year more than 100 new social entrepreneurs join its network, each one carefully and rigorously selected from across fields like education, health care, economic development, human rights, and the environment.

In Africa, Ashoka has been active since the early 1990s. To date, it has elected over 470 Ashoka Fellows in 23 countries of Sub-Saharan Africa through its four regional offices in Lagos, Johannesburg, Nairobi and Dakar.

Through the process of working alongside its Fellows, Ashoka has learned a great deal about the patterns and mechanics of successful social change. We understand that transformative impact comes from altering interactions, norms, policies, and markets - by transforming systems, and, ultimately, mindsets, culture, and frameworks. Social change requires broad civic participation. Successful social entrepreneurs do not solve problems for their constituencies. Instead, they strengthen civil society: they mobilize

people from all walks of life and give them roles in creating the solution and shaping the new norm. To achieve this, they lead differently: they enable citizens to come together with empathy. They enable the emergence of teams of teams that collaborate across institutions, fields, sectors, and borders. They build trust, without which social change will not happen. We are confronted with weakening institutions and a fraying social fabric; successful social entrepreneurs work towards shaping a society where everyone thrives, is powerful, engaged, and can contribute.

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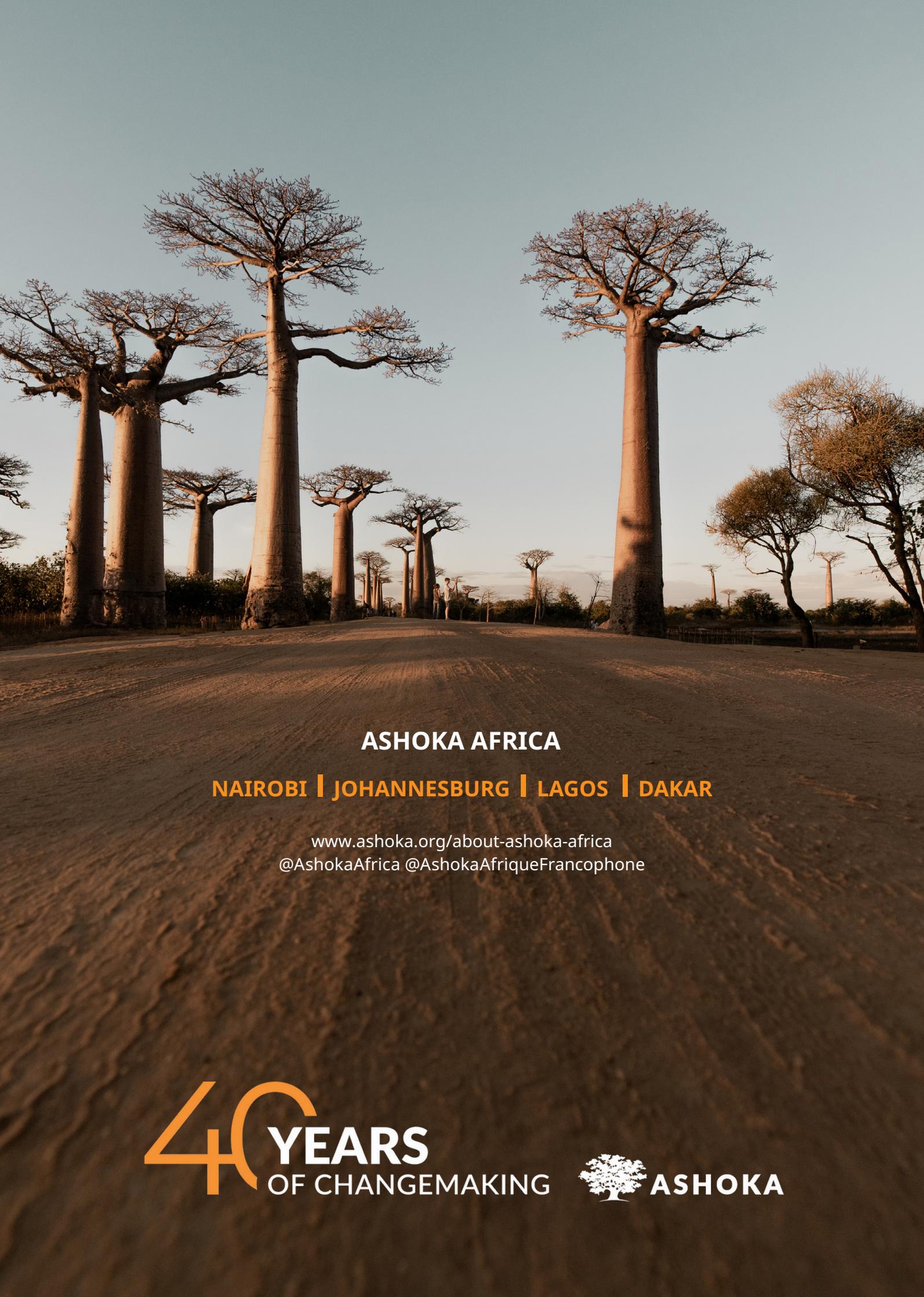
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