The Bridgespan Group

Powered by the People: Community-Driven Change in Urban Informal Settlements

How NGOs in India and Africa partner with communities that drive their own change

By Pritha Venkatachalam, Jan Schwier, Keshav Kanoria, Erica Lezama, Amrutha Datla, and Bill Breen

Collaborating to accelerate social impact

June 2022

Table of Contents

Cover photo credits: CORO (left), YUVA (right), and Ubuntu Pathways (bottom, right).

Executive Summary

A decade ago, a Muslim religious scholar named Hussain Khan was a vocal critic of the Mahila Mandal Federation (MMF), a Mumbai-based grassroots women's group, which has been nurtured by an NGO called CORO for the past 20 years. He questioned MMF's efforts to help women take on leadership roles in their communities in urban informal settlements. But instead of viewing Khan as an adversary, MMF believed he might one day become an ally.

Today, Khan hosts MMF meetings at his madrassa (school), which traditionally excludes women. And he has developed a course, "Quran and the Constitution," which builds community members' awareness of their constitutional rights and their moral responsibility to help neighbours in need.

What prompted Khan's change of heart?

Along with MMF, CORO spent three years conversing with Khan about the challenges women living in urban informal settlements encounter, including domestic violence and low access to education. CORO was well-positioned to engage in those meetings, since it is largely led by Dalit[i] and Muslim people who live in the communities in which they work. Khan was later selected into CORO's Samta Fellowship, where he spent a full year reflecting on the values enshrined in the Indian constitution and acquiring leadership and movement-building skills that he took back to his community.

Maulana Hussain Khan talks to community members in Chembur, Mumbai. (Photo credit: CORO)

It is not an accident that Khan now champions the work of a grassroots group that he formerly opposed. It is an outgrowth of CORO's core approach to supporting community-driven change: to meet people where they are and earn their trust. The idea is to unlock their "power within" to advocate for the rights of Dalits, Muslims, and other historically marginalised communities to have an equal opportunity to advance their lives.

To learn more about how this kind of ground up, community-driven change comes to life, a Bridgespan Group team spent several months researching and interviewing CORO as well as three other NGOs in the Global South: Mumbai-based Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA); Kenya's Shining Hope for Communities (SHOFCO); and Ubuntu Pathways, which works in South Africa's Gqeberha (formerly Port Elizabeth) townships.

---

i   As in this explainer from *The Quint*, Scheduled Castes are sub-communities within the framework of the Hindu caste system that have historically faced deprivation, oppression, and extreme social isolation in India on account of their perceived "low status."

Our research reaffirmed that community-driven change is challenging to execute. Multifaceted power dynamics related to gender, caste, class, and religion often pose significant barriers to change. However, we also learned that, despite all of this, the four NGOs pushed past those challenges to build long track records of success by playing a supporting role as community groups built their own solutions.

Tightly focusing on a few NGOs, rather than on many, gave us a close-up look at on-the-ground approaches to working with community members as they take steps towards leading their own change. One of our main insights was the similarities in how community-driven organisations think. Specifically, we identified **five mutually reinforcing mindsets** that help orient these NGOs around community members' priorities and lived experience.

Local-Assets Mindset: Community-driven organisations know that "poor" communities possess a wealth of assets. The four NGOs embrace the logic that community members have the social and human capital – stored up in local knowledge, skills, experiences, motivation, and relationships – to tackle their challenges better than any outside group can.

Dignity Mindset: Community-driven organisations recognise that all people have the right to live with respect and without discrimination, so they can fulfil their potential. Thus, they are better able to push back against the inclination to bypass those whom some might consider to be especially "marginalised" or "vulnerable."

Long-Term Mindset: Community-driven organisations summon patience and persistence to confront complex, vexing challenges. They know that issues such as lack of access to quality early childhood education and threats of eviction are systemic in nature and don't have quick fixes.

Flexibility Mindset: Community-driven organisations believe that when community members point to a better way, they need to quickly pivot from the established plan. When a crisis emerges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, they are quick to follow the community's lead and support a new service or strategy.

"Scaling-In" Mindset: Community-driven organisations think about going deeper, not necessarily wider, to support people's efforts to build better lives. They put a premium on holistic approaches to impacting individuals in specific communities, as opposed to spreading out geographically to reach as many people as possible.

Our other major insight was on the shift from thinking to doing. The NGOs all pursue some combination of **five interrelated pathways** for supporting community-driven change. To be sure, NGOs with a programmatic approach to advancing social impact also pursue these pathways. However, the community-driven organisations we studied apply the mindsets in following these pathways.

Building awareness of communities on their rights and entitlements. Using a variety of approaches, the NGOs provide supports for people living in urban informal settlements to better understand their rights and the services that are available to them, so that they are better equipped to demand them and advocate for change.

Mobilising/collectivising communities around a shared agenda. Because they lean into the mindset of tapping into local assets, the NGOs mobilise communities and channel people's collective efforts towards a shared goal and an agenda for achieving it.

Nurturing people's skills and capabilities. The NGOs help people develop the technical skills and soft capabilities, such as self-awareness and values alignment, to design and implement social-change projects and hold government accountable.

Fostering solutions from the ground up. The NGOs support community leaders' social change initiatives through mentorship, technical assistance, and by opening up stakeholder networks. In some cases, they co-create solutions with community members.

Researching and advocating for change. By conducting research that is informed by their deep community work, the NGOs provide community members with additional tools to push for policy changes. Articles and research papers also help build the case for collective, cross-sector action.

Over the past decade, there has been a growing recognition across the social sector that community-driven change, as we describe in the report, increases the odds of achieving impact that lasts, not least because the community feels a sense of ownership. So how might other NGOs and funders begin to lean into community-driven change and adapt the mindsets and pathways that work best for them?

We conclude with questions that aim to help you **reflect** on your organisation's mindsets; **connect** with community-driven peers and community leaders; and **embed** practices that lead to people owning the change they seek.

Introduction

In October 2020, as COVID-19 surged across Africa, Trends and Insights For Africa (TIFA) released the results of a survey identifying nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) working in Kenya that were "most known for providing assistance to the needy" during the pandemic. One might well have assumed that a large, international aid organisation would have topped the list. But that was not the case. By a wide margin, the most frequently cited NGO was Shining Hope for Communities (SHOFCO), which deeply leans into the people-first ethos of "by the community, for the community."[1]

Operating under the logic that "solving complex problems starts at the grassroots," SHOFCO works with residents and local leaders across more than 34 informal settlements in Kenya, to help unlock ways for people to solve their communities' most pressing problems.

SHOFCO is largely comprised of the people it serves. It has deep relationships with an expansive network of 1.2 million residents of urban informal settlements. SHOFCO puts community members first and backs them through direct services, community advocacy platforms, and education and leadership development for girls. As such, the organisation has woven together tight bands of trust across the urban informal settlements it serves. Thus, the NGO was able to organise a rapid response to the COVID-19 crisis.

One of SHOFCO'S Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) stations in Kibera, Nairobi, Kenya. (Photo Credit: Victor Oginga)

At the time of this writing, SHOFCO had partnered with community leaders to help 2.4 million people through COVD-19 recovery efforts. This included screening 1.8 million people for COVID-19 symptoms; contact tracing for more than 730,000 individuals; and deploying 354 handwashing stations. Those results are but one example of what can be achieved when an organisation looks to communities it has deep ties with to help deliver critical resources in a time of acute need.

There are other NGOs like SHOFCO that approach social change by harnessing the power and agency of communities that have historically been marginalised in urban informal settlements. As we studied a handful of them, we found these organisations bring distinct

---

1   In the survey of 555 respondents, SHOFCO got 45 percent of the votes. Kenya Red Cross Society, which came in second, got 16 percent.

mindsets to this work, which requires them to reconceive of community members as change-makers rather than beneficiaries; to partner rather than to lead; and ultimately, to step back and support communities as they drive their own change. Additionally, we identified interrelated **pathways** these organisations pursue to bring community-driven mindsets to life and abet communities as they pursue their goals.

We document those mindsets and pathways in this report. However, it is not a blueprint for community-driven change. Community-driven change is incredibly hard to implement, and we cannot provide a simple or prescriptive guide. Rather, our goal is to present insights so that NGOs and funders – as well as other actors looking to participate or invest in community-driven change efforts – can make more informed decisions on what might work best for them, depending on their context.

Community-Driven Change

Over the past decade, there has been a growing acknowledgement amongst social sector institutions of what community organisers and advocates have long argued: that community members with lived experience matter most; that they are uniquely positioned to partner with NGOs and funders in solving their challenges or better yet, take the lead; and, in fact, that community-driven change often increases the odds of achieving impact that lasts, not least because the community feels a sense of ownership.[2]

In a report that explored what community-driven change looks like through the eyes of community leaders in India, Nepal, Mexico, Russia, Vietnam, and Zambia, GlobalGiving and Global Fund for Community Foundations posited that "lasting transformation depends not on the success of an individual project or organisation but … on the full ownership and participation of the people seeking the change." In June 2020, the World Bank concluded that "community-driven development" has delivered "tangible results on the ground in some of the most geographically remote and operationally hard-to-reach areas on the globe." As of June 2021, thus, the bank had lent a total of $43 billion for 374 such projects in 93 countries.[3]

Over the past few years, The Bridgespan Group has researched several aspects of community-driven change. In a June 2020 article in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, we explored "peer-driven change," where families share knowledge and financial capital as they "define and lead for themselves the improvements they seek in their lives and communities." A July 2020 Bridgespan study traced different approaches to community engagement during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Mumbai's urban informal settlements. It highlighted the successes of the "community members as owner" model, in which "communities solve their own problems with minimal external support," as one end of a spectrum of community participation in change efforts that also included "community members as partner" as a form of community-driven change. We presented the insights from this study at the launch of the Global Alliance for Communities at the World

---

2   With community-driven change, community members either partner with NGOs and funders and are jointly accountable for the results, or they take the lead, as the primary decisionmakers.

3   "Community-Driven Development," The World Bank, n.d.

Communities Forum. And a September 2021 article – part of a series on race and place-based philanthropy in the United States – took a close-up look at how 12 regional funders harnessed "the knowledge and expertise of communities to shape their strategies."

Against that backdrop, we have set out to understand how community-driven change unfolds in urban informal settlements in India and Africa. Specifically, how do community-driven NGOs that work in urban informal settlements build and share power, partner effectively, and enable community members to lead their own change? How do organisations that anchor their work in community-driven models build trust and gain credibility as well as foster the agency of communities?

To answer these animating questions, we looked for well-established community-driven organisations that work in urban informal settlements and that have demonstrated their effectiveness. We then took a deep dive into four community-driven NGOs, two in India (Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action or YUVA, and CORO) and two in Africa (Ubuntu Pathways and SHOFCO). The important work of others also informs our work deeply. (See a description of our research methodology and a bibliography in the appendices starting on page 24.)

The Power of the People in Urban Informal Settlements

Urban informal settlements in the Global South provide fertile ground for understanding the strengths of community-driven models, the challenges they confront, and the opportunities for these approaches to benefit lives and livelihoods. As the World Bank put it in a June 2020 article, "COVID-19 Turns Spotlight on Slums," there is a dire need to harness "community participation and ownership" and thereby take on the challenges confronting these settlements, especially during the pandemic.

According to the United Nations' definition of a "slum," residents of urban informal settlements lack at least some of the following basic needs: durable walls, a secure lease or title, adequate living space, and access to safe drinking water and toilets.[4] The challenging conditions in urban informal settlements render its residents more susceptible to health shocks as well as crime and exploitation. According to public health research, people living in urban informal settlements are much more predisposed to diarrhoeal diseases and infectious diseases such as dengue and tuberculosis.[5] Because they have, at best, only tenuous rights to the land on which they live, many are victimised by more established squatters who demand "rent" or by urban planning schemes that threaten to evict them.

---

4   Throughout this report, we primarily use the term "urban informal settlements." In some cases, we use the term "slum," which is commonly used by the United Nations, to mean the same as "urban informal settlements." However, to some readers, "slum" has a pejorative meaning that may also conflate the physical problems of poor habitats with the people living in them. For this reason, we use "urban informal settlements" more frequently than "slum."

5   For example, see Alexandre Zerbo, Rafael C. Delgado, and Pedro A. González, "Vulnerability and everyday health risks of urban informal settlements in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Global Health Journal* 4, no. 2 (June 2020): 46-50.

As the world urbanises, urban informal settlements are growing. Over 1 billion people live in urban informal settlements worldwide. In India, one in three urban residents live in urban informal settlements – more than 160 million people – according to the World Bank's World Development Indicators. In Kenya and South Africa, 47 percent (6.5 million people) and 26 percent (9.8 million people) of their respective urban populations reside in urban informal settlements.

Those challenges have combined with the staggering rise in urban informal settlement populations to create a crisis that demands a sustained response from the public, private, and social sectors. And yet, urban informal settlements possess significant assets and capabilities that make them ripe for community-driven change.

People move to urban informal settlements to build better lives. They are entrepreneurs who recycle trash, sell food, or clean cities and homes. They have built cottage and micro industries that produce such things as textiles and leather, as well as micro-economies that drive slum cities, which can include hundreds of thousands of residents. Thus, they typically possess the initiative to define and lead for themselves the improvements they seek in their lives, provided they have access to the right resources and support.

At the same time, urban informal settlement communities possess a neighbours-helping-neighbours ethos, where people share knowledge and resources such as skills, information, and social networks. That mutual support, which families and neighbours demonstrate every day, comprises the seed stock that allows community-driven change efforts to take root – and hopefully flourish.

Four NGOs that Put Community First

How can NGOs and funders tap into communities' social capital and entrepreneurial spirit in urban informal settlements, and thereby support community members as they lead their own change? Three types of activities come to mind. They can partner with communities as community members to identify needs and priorities and build the means to deliver (or facilitate the delivery of) vital services. They can support community leaders to build awareness amongst communities of their rights and entitlements, to advocate for services, and to change behaviours. And they can support communities as they advocate for change and work with local governments to inform policies that benefit residents.

Each of the four NGOs in this study have invested years of effort in supporting communities as they take the lead in pursuing a mix of these activities. (See Appendix B for fact sheets on each organisation.)

Founded in 1984, YUVA works to enable vulnerable groups to access their rights via the formation of collectives and people's ownership of their change efforts. This work is complemented with advocacy and policy recommendations. Currently, YUVA works in over 100 urban informal settlements in five states across India.

Over the past three decades, CORO has adopted a community-driven approach in which women and men from under-served communities in India (including Scheduled Caste,[6] Muslim, and tribal communities) mobilise grassroots efforts that advocate for equality and justice in six areas: empowering women socially and economically; accessing natural resources; defending the rights of those who are marginalised by India's caste system; holding bureaucracy to account for such legal rights as the right to food and education; engaging youth; and improving livelihoods for young people and women, as well as tribal and Dalit communities. CORO works in the states of Maharashtra and Rajasthan in India.

Since SHOFCO'S founding in 2004, one of its most singular approaches to community-driven change is the SHOFCO Urban Network (SUN). It supports 1.2 million SUN members as they form social groups and push for self-powered social impact. Case in point: SUN has created a Savings and Credit Cooperative for its members and their immediate families, with more than $1.5 million in assets from the community. SHOFCO also works with community groups to select girls to attend free, high-quality schools.
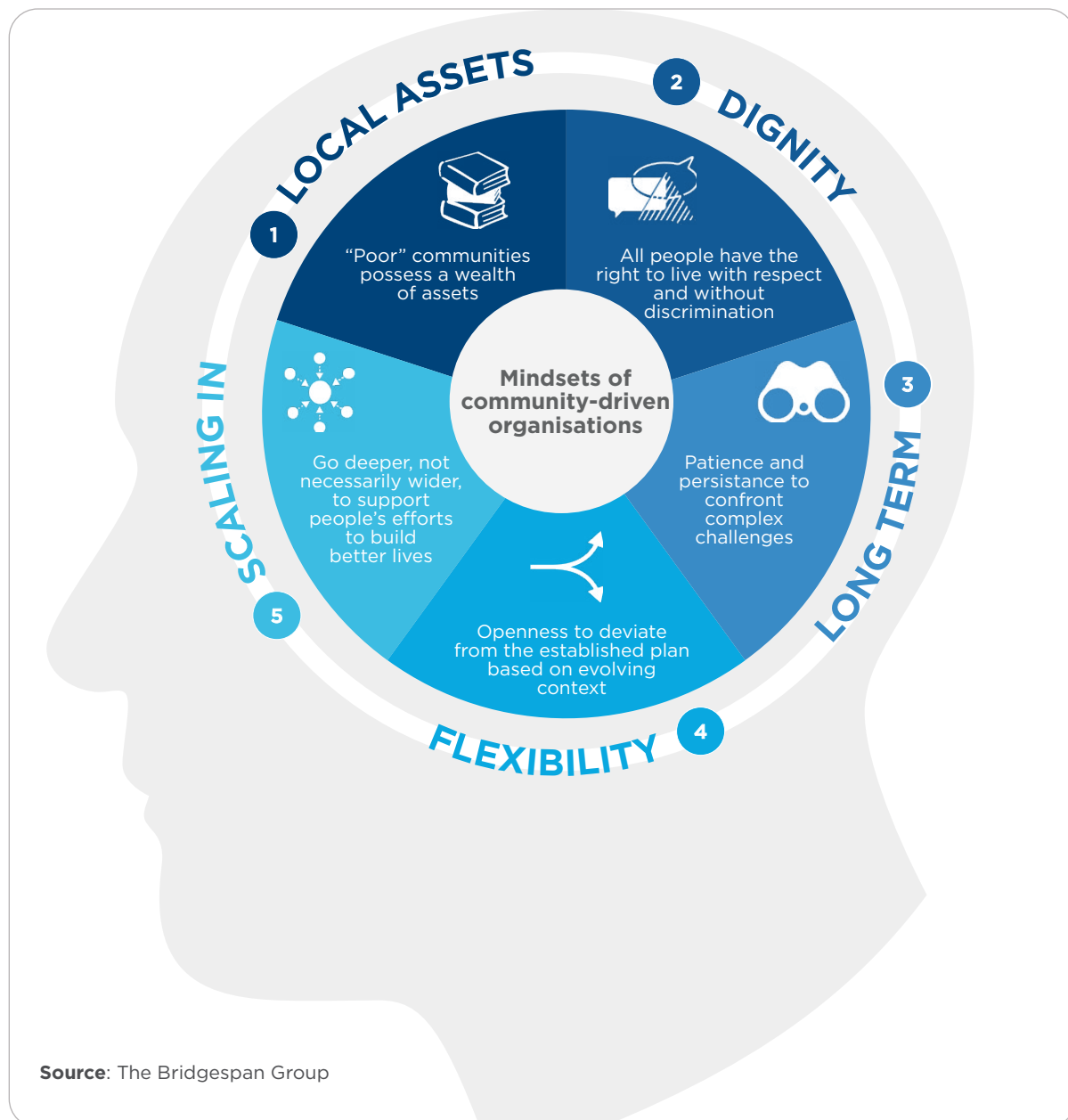
Established in 1999, Ubuntu Pathways (UP) works exclusively with families in the townships of South Africa's Gqeberha (previously named Port Elizabeth). UP takes a comprehensive approach to supporting people by focusing on cradle-to-career services including education, healthcare, childcare, and vocational training. Embracing the logic that those who are closest to the problem are best positioned to create the solution, UP partners with community members to identify priorities, to co-design and deliver programmes and services, and sometimes even to reset its own strategy.

---

6   As in this explainer from *The Quint*, Scheduled Castes are sub-communities within the framework of the Hindu caste system that have historically faced deprivation, oppression, and extreme social isolation in India on account of their perceived "low status."

Mindsets of Community-Driven Organisations

Community-driven organisations often think differently from more programme-driven NGOs and funders. They orient themselves around the priorities of community members, rather than predetermined goals. They value lived experience more than subject-matter expertise. They enable community members to recognise their own inherent power and untapped potential.

Taken together, our research surfaced **five recurring mindsets**. It might well be that all these mindsets must come into play, if NGOs are going to help communities fully drive the change they seek.

LOCAL ASSETS

1 "Poor" communities possess a wealth of assets

DIGNITY

2 All people have the right to live with respect and without discrimination

LONG TERM

3 Patience and persistence to confront complex challenges

FLEXIBILITY

4 Openness to deviate from the established plan based on evolving context

SCALING IN

5 Go deeper, not necessarily wider, to support people's efforts to build better lives

Mindsets of community-driven organisations

Source: The Bridgespan Group

In Kibera, Nairobi, Kenya, Catherine Gathura (director of Kibera SUN programme) talks to Zone D leadership. (Photo credit: SHOFCO)

Local-Assets Mindset: Community-driven organisations know that "poor" communities possess a wealth of assets.

The narratives we hold about the communities in urban informal settlements often lead us to focus on their deficits – that is, their problems and challenges. Community-driven organisations push through those narratives and seek out those same communities' assets – their social networks and infrastructure, as well as the skills, experience, and knowledge that people possess. They put a premium on lived experience and the logic that community members know their own challenges better than any outside group and are therefore better positioned to tackle them when they have the right support.

As a result, the four NGOs in this study ensure that most of their staff come from the communities they serve, increasing the odds that the organisations will win community members' trust. They also look for ways to help communities build on their existing assets, so they can design and own their solutions.

For example, the SHOFCO Urban Network (SUN) draws on community members' experiences and insights as they identify their goals and drive their agenda for change. SHOFCO then plays a supportive role, by enrolling self-help groups (which exist in many urban informal settlements) as SUN members, and by creating spaces for members to come together and act collectively. SUN elects its own community leaders, 59 percent of whom are women, while SHOFCO trains them in conflict mediation, social justice activism, and civic engagement.

Although SHOFCO estimates that SUN reaches 1.2 million people in Kenya, it does not automatically introduce the platform to urban informal settlements. Instead, the NGO first looks for evidence that communities "have skin in the game" – that prospective communities have taken steps to try to solve their challenges on their own. "In areas where community leaders are thinking of setting up SUN, we first ask, 'What have you already put in place? Where has your community led in changing things?'" said Kennedy

Odede, SHOFCO's founder and CEO. "This ensures that communities are willing to take charge of their own solutions before asking SHOFCO to help."

For its part, CORO believes that grassroots leaders possess unique assets – their nuanced understanding of context, their assessment of a community's strengths and weaknesses, their ability to prioritise the issues that matter most, and above all, their relationships – that can make them effective agents for long-lasting change. Hence, CORO makes leadership training available for promising community members, so they can realise their own untapped "power within" and in turn, recognise and tap into the power of mobilising around a shared goal. This transition, from thinking about "what I might do" to thinking inclusively about "what we can do," enables these newly minted leaders and their grassroots organisations to design and execute effective social-impact initiatives.

Dignity Mindset: Community-driven organisations recognise that all people have the right to live with respect and without discrimination so they can fulfil their potential.

Even the most under-served communities are heterogeneous, where some segments of the populations – such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, and religious minorities – are more marginalised than others. But for community-driven organisations, every voice counts and every life matters. These NGOs do not accept hierarchies within communities. They include everyone and they value each person's role and aspirations.

For example, SUN ensures that people with disabilities, youth, and women are represented on its executive committee. In this way, SHOFCO capitalises on one of dignity's key ingredients – inclusion – which enables the organisation to harness everyone's unique experiences and insights.

SHOFCO's Odede believes that the key to changing a person's life is to value that person's life. He argues that "poverty is a state of mind." When people living in urban informal settlements accept that notion, they then have the power and confidence to advocate for change and hold government leaders accountable.

Nevertheless, we have seen how easily overstretched NGOs can attend to those who stand the best chance of improving their lives while neglecting those who face the longest odds. YUVA counteracts that tendency by deliberately seeking out those

Children at play in Lallubhai Compound, Mankhurd, Mumbai. (Photo credit: Paula Bronstein)

who need the most support, such as marginalised youth, who are discriminated against not only economically but also socially. Through YUVA's rights-based sessions, and job and life skills trainings, they gain more power and dignity over their lives.

Additionally, YUVA demonstrates its respect for every community member in small but meaningful ways. During the first wave of the pandemic, when external aid agencies distributed food to urban informal settlements, people were grateful for the response but unhappy with being treated as needy beneficiaries. Realising this, YUVA stepped in with a dignity-led strategy and supported residents as they came together to cook and distribute food amongst themselves. By taking ownership of the food production and distribution process, community members were active participants in determining the supports they received, while retaining their sense of dignity.

Similarly, YUVA's Bal Adhikar Sangharsh Sangathan (BASS) children's collectives in Mumbai elevate the voices of children – who are almost always under-represented in public policy forums – and support them as they present their ideas on advancing their own development. As a yuvaonline blog post put it, "The demand for child-friendly cities! Who could be [better] placed to define this than the children themselves?"

Long-Term Mindset: Community-driven organisations summon patience and persistence to confront complex, vexing challenges.

In an ideal world, NGOs would accomplish their goals, declare victory, and disband. However, even though philanthropy has contributed to some dramatic, globe-spanning successes, such as virtually eradicating polio – we all know how rarely such an outsize achievement occurs.

Community-driven organisations that work in urban informal settlements understand that the complex issues they address – providing early childhood education; reducing gender-based violence; preventing evictions – will unfortunately remain with us for the foreseeable future. Those systemic problems resist quick-fix solutions. As a result, community-driven organisations think long-term and summon the patience and perseverance to keep working away at seemingly intractable challenges.

As far back as 1997, at a time when most urban informal settlements were non-notified (lacked legal recognition) in Nagpur, YUVA supported local activists and organisations to collectively advocate for land rights and legal recognition for settlement residents. Shehar Vikas Manch (City Development Forum) emerged from these efforts and has since spearheaded the movement for tenure security in the city. Under increasing pressure because of the community-led collective efforts, the Maharashtra government notified more than 30 urban informal settlements in 2017, thereby conferring land rights to more than three million people. Despite this success, many more of Nagpur's urban informal settlements remain in legal limbo.

Across those 20 years, YUVA took patient, incremental steps towards progress, including supporting community-based organisations (CBOs) in creating platforms for community members to engage with government and other stakeholders. For example, since the

Sheher Vikas Manch people's organisation anchors a mohalla sabha with community members in Nagpur. (Photo credit: YUVA)

early 2000s, Sumati Belady, a YUVA teacher, has worked with the people in her Mumbai community to secure housing rights. "As part of YUVA's intervention in the area, I stood with the people in their fight for securing housing and basic facilities," she wrote in an article posted to Medium. "I have engaged in activities I have never done before, like writing letters to the … [municipal] authorities and approaching local political leaders."

Like YUVA, SHOFCO is in it for the long term. Since 2007, SHOFCO has worked to end election-related violence in urban informal settlements. "When elections come around, politicians pay youth to support them and it becomes an avenue for chaos," said Caroline Kisia, SHOFCO's chief operating officer. "Those same politicians will meet quite comfortably while the communities are busy killing each other."

For the past 15 years, SHOFCO's community-led SUN network has worked to become apolitical. Instead of supporting political candidates in advance of elections, a growing number of members have remained neutral. After the elections, those SUN members support the victors – so long as those newly elected officials follow through on delivering the services they had promised during their campaigns.

That tactic, whose aim is to make elected officials accountable to communities in urban informal settlements, began to bear fruit during the highly contested 2017 elections, when there was no violence in communities where SUN had a presence. Instead, there was a peaceful rally of more than 6,000 slum residents demanding an end to election-related violence. "We feel we are making progress," said Kisia, even as she acknowledged that more work remains.

Flexibility Mindset: Community-driven organisations believe that when community members point to a better way, they need to quickly pivot from the established plan.

No matter how enticing their strategy or programme, community-driven NGOs rarely fall in love with it. They might wed themselves to an approach or an issue over the short term, but above all, they are pragmatic. When they learn something new and vital from their communities, or when a crisis emerges (such as COVID-19 or mass evictions from an urban informal settlement), they are quick to suspend an ill-suited approach and try something more promising.

Or they might widen their organisational lens and add a new field of focus, as Ubuntu Pathways (UP) has done. In its first years as a start-up, UP focused largely on education. In one of its regular community meetings with parents, UP's leadership proudly unveiled a plan to build a computer centre. But then, to the leaders' surprise, a parent pushed back.

"She stood up and said, 'I'm happy about the computers, but we spend all of our weekends going to funerals,'" recalled Gcobani Zonke, UP's deputy president. "'Our kids are dying from something that we don't understand.' She was referring to HIV/AIDS. She changed the conversation and our whole way of thinking. Soon after, we started working with the community to make people aware of HIV/AIDS."

Each piece of the model came from a similar, community-driven revelation. In addition to partnering with the community on HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns, UP launched a programme to eliminate the transmission of HIV from infected pregnant women to their babies. It also built a state-of-the-art, primary and preventative healthcare facility.

Parents of students enrolled in the Ubuntu School gather at Ubuntu Pathway's site in Gqeberha, South Africa. (Photo credit: Ubuntu Pathways)
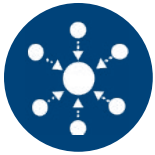
"Scaling-In" Mindset: Community-driven organisations think about going deeper, not necessarily wider, to support people's efforts to build better lives.

It is certainly understandable that NGOs working in a large country like India, where more than 134 million people live on a daily income of less than $2, think in terms of scaling up to reach hundreds of thousands and even millions of under-served people.

However, some community-driven organisations flip that model and think in terms of "scaling in." These organisations lean towards depth (extent of the impact on lives reached) rather than breadth (number of lives reached). They care more about nurturing the skills of community members within a defined geography and providing them with platforms to champion their own change rather than about scaling a single service across multiple geographies.

The scaling in mindset informs the logic behind UP's holistic, cradle-to-career approach, where it provides an array of cross-sector services to each individual young person. Across its 20 years of effort, UP has deeply affected the lives of about 2,000 people. That figure looks paltry compared with NGOs that reach hundreds of thousands. However, UP's leaders believe it takes sustained, concentrated effort to put a child on a pathway out of poverty, which in the leaders' minds is the only measurement that matters. "It is all about quality and deepening services rather than quantity," said Zonke. "You don't do a community any favours when you spread too thin, because when you leave, people aren't on solid ground. We work with people until they can take care of themselves and have confidence in themselves."

When that happens, added Managing Director Tarryn Mthimkhulu, the individual's success can radiate out to other family members and even neighbours, demonstrating that there are indeed pathways to a better life. Moreover, UP's core programming affects thousands of families indirectly, as former UP students go on to launch their own, independent efforts to support their communities.

Photos of students and their parents/caretakers are on display as a source of motivation at Ubuntu School. (Photo credit: Ubuntu Pathways)

With that said, Zonke acknowledges that would-be funders often struggle with the "depth over breadth" approach. "From a business perspective, [funders] want to see big figures. Those numbers mean a lot to them," he conceded.

> " We are trying to build something that has intergenerational impact. A Band-Aid is not sustainable."
>
> JACOB LIEF, FOUNDER AND CEO, UBUNTU PATHWAYS

Nevertheless, UP is so committed to the scaling in mindset that it has opted out of working with funders who do not align with its approach. "We are trying to build something that has intergenerational impact," said Jacob Lief, UP's founder and CEO. "A Band-Aid is not sustainable."

Similarly, CORO treats every woman as a "unit of social change." In the settlements where the CORO-supported women's collective Mahila Mandal Federation (MMF) works, women face an array of issues over their lifetimes, including domestic violence, limited access to sanitation, and the lack of economic opportunities. CORO supports these women as they form collectives and create platforms for shared learning. Through CORO, some receive grassroots-leadership fellowships, as well as voluntary and staff roles at the NGO, which they use to elevate their collective voices. Since most of MMF's members speak from their lived experiences, including discrimination, domestic violence and desertion (ie, non-legal divorces), they have the credibility to win the trust of many more people and gain allies to their cause.

Nevertheless, there are times when a community-driven organisation decides to scale up, but not always in a geographical sense. The NGO might pursue non-traditional approaches, such as through policy and advocacy work or by tapping into networks and alliances, where they partner with intermediaries and other NGOs. For example, YUVA has partnered with many alliances over the decades, including Rashtriya Awas Adhikar Abhiyaan, the UN Major Group for Children and Youth, and the Working People's Coalition. YUVA's logic: by accessing larger platforms on issues the community cares about, it can help community members exert more pressure on policymakers to act.

Pathways Towards Community-Driven Change

Community-driven change efforts strive to get to a place where communities lead their own change – a place where the NGO and the donor simply play a supportive role. They do this by pursuing at least one of five pathways towards enduring, community-driven change – pathways that are interrelated as well as interdependent.

To be clear, NGOs that take a more directive programmatic approach to achieving social impact might also follow some of these same pathways. The difference between them and community-driven NGOs? The mindsets the latter bring to the effort. For them, the five mindsets are sacrosanct. They deeply inform the *how* of bringing community-driven change to life. The mindsets enable each of the NGOs in this study to live into their pathway in a way that puts the community first.

Five Pathways to Community-Driven Change

- Building awareness of communities on their rights and entitlements
- Mobilising/ collectivising communities around a shared agenda
- Nurturing people's skills and capabilities
- Fostering solutions from the ground up
- Researching and advocating for change

Note: These are not exhaustive as they are based on a study of four organisations.

Source: The Bridgespan Group

Building awareness of communities on their rights and entitlements

People living in urban informal settlements are often unaware of their rights and entitlements, which can leave them ill-equipped to drive their own change. Thus, an important pathway to achieving community-driven change is to make the unknown – rights and entitlements – known. This is one of the ways these NGOs live into the dignity mindset, where every voice counts and every life matters.

YUVA makes people aware of their rights through a variety of ways, such as by coordinating community-based street plays on such themes as child protection, gender violence, and drug abuse, as well as by partnering on awareness workshops, for example, on leading environmentally sustainable lives.

Malwani Yuva Parishad youth collective members present a street play in Mumbai. (Photo credit: YUVA)

The Malwani YUVA Parishad (MYP), a YUVA-facilitated youth collective, created safe spaces for young people to learn from one another to determine the course of their own lives through collective action. It has not only given them power as individuals, but also helped them drive change at the community level. Their community-based interaction and performances focused on controlling drug abuse, advocating for a gender-just society, and promoting religious tolerance and harmony have already reached over 5,000 people.

By regularly engaging with the community-based organisations in its network, CORO supports local leaders as they put a spotlight on problems that destroy families and debilitate communities, but often are hidden in plain sight.

For example, MMF, the women's collective supported by CORO, addresses gender-based violence by challenging social norms and practices that justify and perpetuate such violence. One of MMF's core approaches is enabling people to recognise that freedom from gender-based violence is a fundamental human right.

Working in an informal settlement in Mumbai's Chembur area, MMF segmented the settlement into groups of 350 households and assigned a team leader to each group. The leader was supported by a community task force comprised of health professionals

and attorneys, as well as local influencers. Through door-to-door visits to households and weekly meetings with targeted groups, the teams brought gender-based violence out into the open and showed how it violates people's right to life, health, and personal freedom.

By continually chipping away at the problem, MMF has emboldened community members to openly discuss the effects of domestic violence, strategies for preventing it, and ways to report it. The result: in the past five years, MMF has worked with 14,500 households, built a network of 4,500 active members prepared to intervene at the community level, and dealt with more than 5,000 cases of domestic violence.

Bridgespan's team walks through a CORO site with community leaders in Chembur, Mumbai. (Photo credit: Amrutha Datla)

Mobilising/collectivising communities around a shared agenda

Community-driven change derives much of its power from its capacity to channel the collective efforts of individuals and families towards a shared goal and an agenda for achieving it. Because they embrace the mindset of building on communities' assets, the NGOs in this study know that urban informal settlements are fertile grounds for collective action. Many already have self-organised groups – for example, women's and youth groups, and credit societies – that are ripe for aggregation and eager to take on a broader agenda.

SHOFCO takes a deliberate approach to helping communities catalyse their social capital and channel it towards a shared enterprise. In each urban informal settlement that SUN works in, it organises pre-existing informal groups, such as self-help groups, into formal groups where everyone is issued a membership ID card and people can convene regularly in SHOFCO's meeting spaces. Group members then get benefits, such as discounted services and access to the Savings and Credit Cooperative, which is registered with the Ministry of Trade and pays dividends to its members. Once SUN has organised a critical mass of groups, it introduces a federated governance structure, where community members elect people to represent their needs to government officials.

In this way, SUN's considerable collective power – it has more than 1.2 million community members – flows up to those in government, reminding elected officials of their campaign

promises. As a result, accountability flows to constituents, just as it should in any healthy democracy.

"Politicians look at poor people as votes, not as folks who need roads and hospitals and other services," said Catherine Gathura, SHOFCO's director of SUN. "Bringing people together is a powerful way for us to call out the political class. Once they see our numbers, they are bound to be accountable to us."

For its part, YUVA helps to mobilise community-based organisations such as MYP, the youth group that works to increase the involvement of young people in the development of their communities in Mumbai's Malwani urban informal settlement. The youth collective was set up by the youth themselves, who sensed the need to come together to collectively work on community-based social issues. Over the past seven years, the collective has further strengthened its processes and independently led campaigns on identity, access to play spaces, and more.

In the second wave of the pandemic, the collective played a substantial role in facilitating vaccinations in the community (for example, encouraging registrations and dispelling myths) through vaccination help desks that YUVA supported. MYP also helped support communities affected by Cyclone Tauktae in 2021. A blog posted to Youth Ki Awaaz spotlighted the organising efforts of one MYP member named Asma: "By encouraging young people to collaborate with nonprofits, hold local leaders accountable, and advocate for the rights of the people in their community, Asma has demonstrated the power of an empowered approach to creating a truly participatory democracy."

🔵 Nurturing people's skills and capabilities

To enhance people's ability to design and implement social change projects, demand services, and hold government accountable, community-driven NGOs find ways to tap into people's skills and talents. It's yet another way for the NGOs to activate their "local assets" mindset. They do this by conducting leadership- and skills-training sessions, organising learning-through-sharing workshops, and providing mentoring services.

For example, CORO's core initiative is the Grassroots Leadership Development Programme (GLDP), developed in partnership with Leaders' Quest in 2007. Since then, the programme has reached more than 350 grassroots organisations and garnered support from many collaborating partners. The programme recruits passionate, high-potential fellows, 69 percent of whom come from under-served communities. People from the community, along with subject-matter experts, then train the fellows on self-awareness, leadership, and various hard and soft skills. The fellows are "people who have real talent and promise,

> "Politicians look at poor people as votes, not as folks who need roads and hospitals and other services. Bringing people together is a powerful way for us to call out the political class. Once they see our numbers, they are bound to be accountable to us."
>
> CATHERINE GATHURA, DIRECTOR, SHOFCO URBAN NETWORK (SUN)

The first group of graduates from CORO's Grassroots Leadership Development Programme celebrate their graduation day in 2009. (Photo credit: CORO)

but probably haven't had the opportunity to express it," said Lindsay Levin, founder and managing partner of Leaders' Quest, in a video on CORO's website. "We give them the kind of training and support … that enables them to step into their own power."

Fellows become part of the broader CORO network, where they continue to receive mentoring and refresher training to update their skills. Each fellow typically works in two to three communities, on average reaching 1,500-2,000 people. For example, as described in a 2019 Dalberg report[7] that evaluated CORO's grassroots leadership programme, Teena, a child bride turned lawyer, supported the efforts of local groups to abolish child marriage in three communities. Another fellow, Ashwini, helped 70 women collectively obtain bank loans to set up small businesses.

Because their efforts ripple outward, all 1,300 fellows have directly and indirectly supported the efforts of two million people, across 2,500 communities, to improve their lives. This is but one of the ways that a scaling in mindset, where the GLDP deeply focuses on each individual Fellow, can affect the lives of many more people.

In Kenya, SHOFCO provides training and resources to help people living in urban informal settlements harness their skills and drive. In addition to building the leadership skills of SUN-elected community leaders, SHOFCO also provides residents with training on how to save and manage their money. And it trains aspiring micropreneurs in business planning and basic bookkeeping. To help flatten a spike in unemployment resulting from the pandemic, SHOFCO provided more than 5,000 urban informal settlement residents with job skills and business training, so they are better able to find work or launch their own small enterprises, such as selling items (online and in town) that they had made, such as school uniforms as well as soap, sanitisers, and shampoo.

---

7   As noted in CORO's Annual Report 2018-2019.

Fostering solutions from the ground up

Recognising the latent human potential and enterprise that resides in every urban informal settlement, the NGOs in this study strive to support community members as they lead their own grassroots change, or work shoulder to shoulder with residents and community-based organisations to co-create promising approaches.

The training, technical assistance, and mentoring that CORO provides all have a single aim: to support local leaders as they develop, test, and implement initiatives that address their communities' needs. One example is a husband and wife team, Yogesh and Jaya. In 2009, both joined CORO's fellowship programme, where they had the space to identify what they truly cared about and the issue they wanted to address. The couple aligned with the goal of proving that hearing-impaired children can be taught to speak.

Having learned, through CORO's workshops, how to diagnose challenges and design fit-for-purpose solutions, Yogesh and Jaya registered their CBO, Voice of the Voiceless, in 2009. By 2017, the CBO had successfully launched a screening programme to detect hearing impairment in children living in Solapur (a district in Maharashtra). It designed a simple and affordable test for identifying hearing-related issues and administered it to 287,000 children in the district. Since then, it has gone on to make hearing aids and speech therapy available to children in Solapur who need them.

In addition to its training, CORO supported Yogesh and Jaya with mentoring and funding for travel and other expenses. Otherwise, CORO got out of the way. "There was no hierarchy," said Yogesh, describing CORO's approach. "There was no supreme leader. It's all about your own ability and potential."

> "There was no hierarchy. There was no supreme leader. It's all about your own ability and potential."
>
> YOGESH, CORO FELLOW, DESCRIBING CORO'S APPROACH

On the other hand, Ubuntu Pathways takes more of a partnership approach to fostering solutions from the ground up. In the townships of Gqeberha, South Africa, UP works with community members to co-design services including education, healthcare, and vocational training. These programmes combine to create a cradle-to-career strategy that aims to support young people as they grow into building a healthy, stable future for themselves and their families.

The NGO partners with individuals and community groups via one-on-one discussions, focus groups, workshops, and feedback surveys. But perhaps the most direct way that UP lives into its "for the community, by the community" ethos is that 95 percent of its staff are from the townships. These staff members have an intimate knowledge of their communities' needs, challenges, and aspirations, which they then integrate into the programmes they co-design with other community members.

Researching and advocating for change

Some of the NGOs in this study undertake and disseminate research that builds the runway for collective action. As a result, community-driven initiatives have a better shot at taking flight. Although community groups do not typically lead these research efforts, they do deeply inform the findings. Moreover, research into the issues that matter most to communities gives them another set of tools to advocate for policy changes at the local, state, and national levels.

Through articles and white papers, YUVA documents its work with local communities and publishes its insights through online and offline forums, so that other social sector actors might benefit. The knowledge comes from on-the-ground experience, co-authored by community members and workers. In 2018, YUVA started the Urban Resource Centre, a living archive of local knowledge on such issues as housing, migration, informal livelihoods, and urban childhood. In the past year, YUVA has revitalised the main physical library space, explored building an online repository, and launched libraries in other Mumbai communities. The Centre's archives are continually updated by narratives generated from YUVA's work.

Additionally, these NGOs support community leaders and community-based organisations as they lead their own advocacy efforts. They do this by playing an important yet largely invisible support role, providing technical assistance, specialised training on issues like stakeholder engagement, and connecting community leaders to government officials and other stakeholders. This kind of behind-the-scenes work requires a long-term mindset: although individual initiatives might realise a "mission accomplished" moment, there will always be new causes to advocate for.

For example, CORO plays a secondary-but-necessary role in supporting its fellows as they drive policy changes. Yogesh and Jaya's Voice of the Voiceless CBO, with support from CORO, influenced the creation of a state law that provides INR 1 lakh (about $1,300) to every child diagnosed with a hearing impairment in Maharashtra. To assist in making that happen, CORO provided policy recommendations and specialised negotiation training, and connected the CBO with relevant stakeholders.

In Kenya, SHOFCO CEO Kennedy Odede worked behind the scenes to advance the field of community-driven change in the Global South, by convening a group of leaders to co-design the World Communities Forum. At a virtual, two-day event that took place in March 2021, the Forum paired high-profile leaders, including the Clinton Foundation's Chelsea Clinton and Ford Foundation CEO Darren Walker, with community-based leaders. Those proximate leaders shared from-the-grassroots insights on how they are using community-driven strategies and programmes to tackle racial equity and economic recovery from the pandemic.

The Forum also served as a launch pad for the Global Alliance for Communities, consisting of more than 150 members, all of whom work to catalyse community-driven change throughout the world. "We can no longer afford to live in a world of aid workers and beneficiaries," said Odede when the World Communities Forum was first announced. "We must recognise the talents that exist in marginalised communities and unlock this potential to drive durable social change."

> "We can no longer afford to live in a world of aid workers and beneficiaries. We must recognise the talents that exist in marginalised communities and unlock this potential to drive durable social change."
>
> **KENNEDY ODEDE, CEO, SHOFCO**

Advancing Community-Driven Change

Community-driven change requires continuous learning. Only then can the social sector extend the insights, evidence, and examples that translate intent into action. There is also an opportunity to cross-pollinate perspectives across the ecosystem and learn from other geographies.

Since a good question is the way into shared learning, here are a few that might help to spark further conversation that will advance the field:

- What enables organisations to evolve from being informed by the communities they serve to partnering with them, so they lead their own change?

- Which funding practices best support community-driven NGOs and social movements? How else can funders and intermediaries best help to create a thriving environment and field of practice?

- Do community-driven organisations and their current or prospective funders need to adapt and innovate their approaches to measure progress and results?

- How have community-driven change models advanced equity and inclusion, especially in tackling power dynamics related to caste, class, religion, gender, and other aspects of identity that have historically marginalised communities?

- Can these insights from urban communities be applied to rural contexts – are there any important nuances that would differentiate the two contexts?

At Bridgespan, we are keen to pursue these and other relevant questions over the coming years. We invite NGOs, funders, and researchers to share their experiences and join us on this journey.

Your Turn

YUVA, CORO, SHOFCO, and Ubuntu Pathways. They and a growing number of other actors have embraced the notion that when community members co-develop and ultimately own the solutions to the challenges they confront, they stand a better chance of fostering impact that endures.

This is not to say that other organisations should discard their established approaches to serving under-resourced communities and immediately pivot to community-driven change. But we do encourage organisations to learn about community-driven change and think about how these approaches might enhance and sustain the social impact they seek to achieve.

So, if you are an NGO leader or funder, how might you start? Consider a three-part process where you reflect on your organisation's mindsets; connect with community-centric peers and community leaders; and embed practices that lead to community-driven change.

Reflect: You can look across your strategies and programmes and think about whether you are bringing community-driven mindsets to bear on your work – and whether there are promising opportunities to do more.

Are you fully harnessing the knowledge of the community members who are closest to their challenges? Are you flexible enough to not only shift a strategy or practice because of community feedback, but also to work alongside community members to design something better?

Connect: Once you assess the potential for deploying a community-driven change effort, it makes sense to connect with fellow travellers – that is, peers (other NGOs as well as funders) who also prioritise putting communities first. The goal is to understand how they are evolving their approach, what has worked and what has not, what they have learned, and what benefits they are reaping.

And then there is the connection that matters most: with community members themselves. To begin (or continue) to build that connection, ask them about their aspirations: What are their dreams for themselves and their children? How can you best support them, without getting in their way, as they pursue their aspirations and take ownership of the change they seek? What are some of the barriers and hardships they want to solve?

Embed: At a certain point, all of that reflecting and connecting should lead to acting. As has been said, "It is easier to think your way into a new way of acting than to act your way into a new way of thinking."[1] As you pursue one or more

---

1   The quote has been attributed to several people, including Habitat for Humanity International Co-Founder Millard Fuller.

pathways to community-driven change – such as mobilising communities around a shared agenda or fostering solutions from the ground up – there are some distinct actions you can embed in your work. For example, you can hire more of your staff from within the community: all four NGOs in this report recruit most of their staff and leaders from the communities they serve. People from the community possess invaluable assets, such as their experiences, social capital, trusted relationships, and credibility.

As an NGO leader, you may also need to be in conversation with your funders about embedding approaches to community-driven change. That dialogue might begin with an explanation of how a shift in your own organisation's mindsets and pathways would advance your mission. However, funders may also need to advance their practices. A measurement and evaluation system, for example, that focuses on tangible sector-level results (e.g. food delivered, health outcomes, reduced violence) might need to incorporate more intangible human-centred metrics around dignity and confidence over a longer time period to truly capture the impact of community-driven change. And shifting to community-driven approaches is complex and messy work that would benefit immensely from patient, flexible capital.

Appendix A: Methodology

When The Bridgespan Group studied how [Mumbai slum residents individually and collectively](#) involved themselves with the initial response to the COVID-19 crisis, a spectrum of community member participation emerged. These models were neither fixed nor discrete categories; rather, the same community might flexibly assume different and multiple positions across the spectrum of roles, depending on the need at hand, the specific COVID-19 activity, the capabilities and resources of the community, and the role of government or partner organisations. In addition, a community's engagement could shift towards "community members as owners" – a strong manifestation of community-driven change – as its experience grows over time, or shift towards "community members as recipients" in times of crisis, as happened during the initial pandemic lockdown.

Increasing community participation

Recipients

Community members **receive essential products and services**, as determined, designed, and provided **by external stakeholders**. There is minimal active participation by the community.

Partners

Community members are **closely involved in identifying collective needs, co-creating solutions** with interested stakeholders, and **supporting implementation**. Communities share decision making and accountability with external stakeholders.

Owners

Community members **solve their own problems with minimal external support** and resources, as needed. Communities are primary decision makers and hold accountability.

Source: The Bridgespan Group

That spectrum informed how we selected the four NGOs featured in this report. We looked for organisations that are deeply embedded in their communities and that operate on the "community members as partners" or "community members as owners" part of the spectrum. We also sought organisations with a long track record of service, signalling their resilience and persistence. Of course, we also sought out organisations that are having an impact – that have proved themselves adept at supporting communities as they work to drive their own change. And we selected NGOs that span a few geographies in the Global South, which turned out to be India, Kenya, and South Africa.

The team adopted a mixed methods approach in researching the four NGOs. In addition to gathering data, we conducted more than 50 remote interviews with the leaders, board members, and funders of the four organisations, as well as some of the

community members they serve. Team members also made field visits to each of the four organisations and the communities they work with.

To advance our understanding of community-driven change, we also interviewed experts in the field. And we conducted secondary research, including a review of global literature on community-driven approaches to social impact.

Appendix B: NGO fact sheets

Here are brief overviews of the four NGOs featured in this report – organisations that support community-driven change in India, Kenya, and South Africa.

YUVA

ORIGIN AND MISSION: Formally established in 1984, Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA) defines its mission as "empower[ing] the oppressed and the marginalised by facilitating organisations and institutions towards building equal partnerships in the development process, ensuring the fulfilment of the human right to live in security, dignity, and peace," according to its website.

ESTABLISHED: 1984

QUICK FACTS

TARGET POPULATION AND FOCUS AREAS:

YUVA works with communities residing in urban informal settlements (as well as rural areas) with a focus on communities in inadequate habitats, informal workers in the highest employing industries (construction, domestic work, self-employed industries, and agriculture), and children and youth excluded from government welfare. YUVA operates in the five states of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, New Delhi, and Jharkhand.

MODEL AND APPROACH: To achieve its objectives, YUVA employs three related approaches:

360-degree development at the community level: YUVA supports communities as they work to lead their own socio-economic change. Specifically, it:

- Helps communities become aware of their constitutional rights and the services and entitlements that are available to them, such as the right to clean water and effective sanitation.
- Collectivises people into community-based groups (e.g. women's groups, youth groups, credit societies).
- Supports collectives as they demand services, advocate for change, and hold government accountable.
- Facilitates the delivery of basic services (e.g. access to water or electricity).

Policy, research, and advocacy: YUVA conducts research, generates evidence, and lobbies and advocates for inclusive urbanisation policies and participatory governance. It has developed, for example, toolkits for children's participation in urban governance and memorandums for local governance through mohalla sabhas (ward committees).

Networks and campaigns: The NGO supports several campaigns to promote social justice and inclusion in cities (e.g. the "Right to the City" campaign, which pushes for the inclusion of better urban housing for the most marginalised people in Mumbai's Development Plan). YUVA also engages in solidarity actions, nationally and internationally, to highlight people's causes. Additionally, YUVA hosts ComplexCity, an annual festival to celebrate urban diversity and bridge the urban-rural divide in cities, through youth competitions, city walks, film screenings, and other creative formats. The NGO is also a member of several international and India-based networks and alliances on housing, child rights, and youth.

Additionally, YUVA documents and disseminates its experiences (e.g. through the Urban Resource Center, a living archive that draws from the organisation's and the city's history) and provides advisory services to grassroots organisations.

KEY RESULTS:

- Founded in Mumbai, YUVA now works in over 100 urban informal settlements across five states, including in cities such as Mumbai, Nagpur, Indore, and Guwahati, directly and through partnerships.

- From 2015 to 2020, YUVA has helped more than 15,000 children and 18,000 youth through social transformation processes. More than 14,000 legal entitlements have been delivered to marginalised persons, helping them access social welfare, and YUVA's Labour Helpline has recovered more than INR 60 lakh ($80,000) in wages for construction and daily-wage workers.

YUVA has influenced policy shifts and supported many grassroots organisations and community-based organisations, including:

- Through the Shehar Vikas Manch (SVM), which was formed as a collective of community-based organisations to advocate for land rights, YUVA pressed the demand for secure land rights for three million residents in Nagpur's urban informal settlements. YUVA and SVM have worked together on multiple campaigns and advocacy efforts, with YUVA providing support in the form of building awareness, fostering capacity, and engaging stakeholders. In 2017, with people demanding universal land tenure across urban informal settlements in the run-up to municipal elections, YUVA helped persuade the Government of Maharashtra to issue a series of resolutions granting land titles for residents of urban informal settlements in Nagpur and other cities in Maharashtra.

- In Ambujwadi, demolitions of urban informal settlements have put the community at risk. Between 1997 and 2004, over 10,000 people lost their homes. The community came together to create a movement called the New Babrekar Sangharsh Committee. YUVA supported the Committee's efforts to mobilise people, create awareness of people's land rights, and provided training. The movement helped persuade the government to build 411 homes in Malwani. The community, along with YUVA, is still involved in habitat rights work, and has taken up such additional challenges as on youth development, facilitating access to basic services, and more.

CORO

CORO

ESTABLISHED: 1989

QUICK FACTS

TARGET POPULATION AND FOCUS AREAS:

CORO works with people and communities who want to take charge of their own development. The organisation focuses on women, children, and under-served communities residing in urban informal settlements (bastis) as well as in rural areas. CORO chiefly focuses on gender education, rights education, health, and other entitlements.

MODEL AND APPROACH: To achieve its objectives, CORO undertakes the following activities:

Grassroots Leadership Development Programme (GLDP): CORO's GLDP is a capacity-building programme for potential leaders who work or are associated with grassroots organisations. Across 18 months, it works with individuals from the community (fellows) who have the willingness and latent capabilities to become change-makers. Through facilitated discussions and activities, the fellows strive to better understand what they want to focus on. The programme then supports the fellows as they build leadership skills. CORO also mentors fellows as they develop and execute projects across a wide range of issues (e.g. disability, gender-based violence, livelihoods). Once they complete the programme, fellows take on bigger responsibilities within their own organisations. Some are integrated into the CORO network, either formally as mentors or staff or through informal involvement in campaigns.

Women's empowerment: To address women's unique challenges, CORO supports women as they create women's collectives (Mahila Mandals) and self-help groups. These groups build awareness on issues and create platforms for dialogue, action, and community advocacy.

Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS) programme: CORO believes that public schools have a key role to play in educating children about gender equality and non-violence. Through GEMS, CORO, in collaboration with the International Center for Research on Women and Tata Institute of Social Sciences, has developed a curriculum to engage 12-to-14-year-old girls and boys on issues related to unequal gender norms and violence. This led to CORO becoming a technical resource partner, along with the state government and UNICEF, to Meena Raju Manch, a school-based gender sensitisation programme in 24,000 schools in Maharashtra.

Regional campaigns: Based on inputs from fellows and broader communities, CORO has supported grassroots-led, region-specific campaigns on single-women's issues, gender-equal sanitation, and rainwater harvesting:

- **Right to Pee:** The Right to Pee (RTP) campaign was formed to advocate for free, clean, safe public urinals for women in Mumbai. RTP collaborates with a variety of stakeholders – from urban design firms to the Municipal Corporation of Mumbai – to integrate gender sensitivity and increase people's participation in accessing, monitoring, and maintaining sanitation infrastructure.
- **Addressing Water Scarcity through People Initiative (AWSPI):** By harnessing CORO's expertise in mobilising people and combining that with technical expertise from partner organisations, AWSPI supports villages in Satara (a district of Maharashtra) as they strive to secure underground water resources and equitable distribution of water. A hallmark of this effort is local women's leadership on underground water-related issues.
- **Single-women's network:** Twenty-seven GLDP Fellows who were single women (without husbands) when they completed their training initiated a campaign to address violence and stigma against single women in India. Over the past seven years, they have built a single-women's network with more than 19,000 members to address the socio-cultural discrimination against them, their property rights, and their livelihoods.

KEY RESULTS:

- More than 1,300 fellows trained since 2008; they in turn have reached more than two million people.
- 350 CBOs supported.
- More than 10,000 individuals played a decision-making role in Gram Sabhas (village-level governance committee); 218 leaders elected in local self-government elections/statutory bodies.

Gender Education: Meena Raju Manch has reached 400,000 students. The effort has evolved to include gender sensitisation and child rights in 50 villages in Maharashtra.

Women Empowerment: Programme to combat gender-based violence has reached 14,500 households. Facilitated more than 250 Mahila Mandals that have registered approximately 5,000 cases of gender-based violence in the past five years from these households.

SHOFCO

SHOFCO
Shining Hope for Communities

ORIGIN AND MISSION: Established in 2004, Shining Hope for Communities (SHOFCO) is a "grassroots movement that catalyses large-scale transformation in urban slums by providing critical services for all, community advocacy platforms, and education and leadership development for women and girls," according to its website.

ESTABLISHED: 2004

<div style="vertical">QUICK FACTS</div>

TARGET POPULATION AND FOCUS AREAS: SHOFCO works with people in 34 informal settlements across 14 counties in Kenya. SHOFCO's headquarters is in Kibera (in Nairobi), Kenya's largest urban informal settlement, where it was founded. Kibera's 250,000 people live on just 2.5 kilometers of land.[9]

MODEL AND APPROACH: To transform "urban poverty to urban promise," as its website puts it, SHOFCO employs the following three levers:

Basic Essential Services: SHOFCO's model is built on the notion that systemically denying basic services to people is one of the most powerful ways of marginalising them. As a result, SHOFCO works with communities to identify their needs and co-develop approaches for delivering the services they require. These include health clinics, job skills training and employment programmes, initiatives to establish savings and loan programmes, services to respond to gender-based violence, and services for water and sanitation (including aerial piping systems). SHOFCO's COVID-19 response efforts expanded direct services to include soap production and distribution, handwashing stations, and distribution of personal protective equipment.

SHOFCO Urban Network (SUN): SUN is a community organising platform that supports communities as they lead their own change. SHOFCO supports existing and new community groups (e.g. women's groups and youth groups) by legally registering them and providing spaces for these groups to gather, as well as by conducting training. The registered groups then become part of a governance structure that allows the community to elect diverse representatives to advocate for specific community needs, design solutions, and liaise with SHOFCO and governments at local and city levels. Individuals pay less than $1 per month for SUN membership. These "community contributions" go into a saving scheme that pays out to community members in times of need. The most culturally significant use of the saving scheme is to provide welfare payments to cover burial costs for members who have a death in the family.

Girls' Education and Leadership: SHOFCO supports community-based efforts to develop girls into next-generation leaders. The community ecosystem (teachers, parents, and community members) participates in a vetting process to select girls to attend high-quality schools (Kibera School for Girls and Mathare School for Girls). SHOFCO pays for the girls' tuition. To help support students' access to education, caregivers and parents volunteer for three weeks during the school year to cook for students and faculty, and to clean the schools.

---

9   Kibera Facts and Information; Dominic Oliver, "Finding hope in Africa's largest slum," six-two, February 2, 2022.

KEY RESULTS:

Basic Essential Services: SHOFCO's direct services reached 2.4 million people in 2020. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, SHOFCO's healthcare clinics launched a testing and contact tracing programme that reached more than 730,000 community members. As of this writing, the NGO has administered vaccines to more than 20,000 residents of urban informal settlements.

SHOFCO Urban Network (SUN): In 2021, SUN grew by 72 percent over the previous year, reaching an estimated 1.2 million people, a majority of whom are women, across 27 communities. Since 2017, SUN has provided more than $1.2 million in funeral payouts to families, averting a financial setback equivalent to 2,076 months of household spending.

Girls' Education and Leadership: In 2021, 636 girls were enrolled in the Kibera and Mathare Schools for Girls.

Ubuntu Pathways

UBUNTU
PATHWAYS

ORIGIN AND MISSION: Established in 1999 by Jacob Lief and Malizole "Banks" Gwaxula, Ubuntu Pathways (UP) "breaks the cycle of poverty by providing South Africa's most vulnerable children what all children deserve – everything, every day," according to its website.

ESTABLISHED: 1999

QUICK FACTS

TARGET POPULATION AND FOCUS AREAS: UP focuses on under-resourced youth and their families in Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth), South Africa. Within Gqeberha, UP focuses on a seven square kilometre area that includes about 400,000 people.

MODEL AND APPROACH: UP employs a "cradle-to-career" approach – through direct programming as well as community outreach – to meet the holistic needs of the community:

Direct programming includes childhood development, housing stability, education programmes at the Ubuntu School, job skills training, counselling, and healthcare programmes. Eighty percent of UP's programming is done on the Ubuntu Campus (a world-class facility designed and developed with the community), while 20 percent is done in the community. In this way, UP at least partly leans into the ethos of "meeting people where they are." Most initiatives require a combination of on-campus and in-community support. For example, UP caseworkers visit clients' homes to evaluate and address household-specific needs. These caseworkers then collaborate closely with teachers, nurses, and UP staff to implement tailored case-management plans.

UP was able to respond swiftly to COVID-19, which devastated Gqeberha: community members lost their jobs; children were not able to attend school in person; and families lacked reliable access to healthcare and food supplies. In response, UP suspended all non-essential services and transformed its campus into an emergency response centre, providing medicine, food, and psycho-social services to reach over 10,000 children and families. Then UP transitioned to focus on a vaccination roll-out plan. It also provided personal protective equipment to hospitals, schools, and clinics and created a targeted food security programme.

KEY RESULTS: Ubuntu Pathways prides itself on adopting a "scaling-in" point of view that focuses on meeting the holistic needs of every child and family served, instead of meeting one need for a larger population. Currently, UP reaches 2,000 children and their families.

Over the course of its 20 years, UP has invested 1 billion rand ($63 million) in Gqeberha's townships, through programmes that are co-designed and implemented via community partnerships. It estimates that every $1 invested in an UP-child results in an $8.70 increase in that child's lifetime earnings. Additionally, since the programme's inception, all the pregnant women living with HIV who utilised UP's OBGYN facility gave birth to virus-free babies, and 82 percent of UP's non-university youth have found employment through the Job Skills Training programme. Ninety percent of the HIV/AIDS patients who utilise UP's healthcare clinic adhere to their treatments, compared to 57 percent in the townships overall. UP's COVID-19 response efforts provided 30,000 people with monthly food parcels and essential items as well as continued counselling and education services virtually.

Appendix C: Acknowledgements

The following experts and organisations were consulted during our research for this report.

Field experts

- Dr. Ratoola Kundu, Assistant Professor, School of Habitat Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai

- Sachin Sachdeva, Director, Paul Hamlyn Foundation

- Sheela Patel, Director, Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centers

- Rajesh Tandon, Founder, Participatory Research in Asia and Chairperson of the Global Alliance on Community-Engaged Research

- Richard Chase, author of "Community-led solutions: Building evidence that counts"

- Mauricio Miller, American social entrepreneur and author, and Founder, Family Independence Initiative

YUVA

To learn about YUVA and its approach to community-driven change, we spoke to: Roshni Nuggehalli (Executive Director, YUVA), Doel Jaikishen (Communications Manager, YUVA), Nisreen Ebrahim (Board Member, YUVA), Rajendra Joshi (Board Member, YUVA), Rakesh Narayana (Manager, Programmes at Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives), Anil Wasnik (CBO Leader, Sheher Vikas Manch), and Asma Ansari (CBO Leader, Malwani YUVA Parishad).

We also carried out a field visit to Malwani, Malad in Mumbai, and interacted with several youth, including Pratik, who created the constitutional rights module, and Ahmedi Ansari, a community member working on women's education; as well as members of the Mohalla Committee, people of Malwani (who were there before the YUVA intervention), and the YUVA programme team.

CORO

To understand CORO's approach, we spoke to Sujata Khandekar (Founding Director, CORO India), Yogesh Bhange (GLDP Fellow, CORO), Santosh Jadhav (GLDP Fellow, CORO), Anjum Sheikh (GLDP Fellow, CORO), Luis Miranda (Chairperson, CORO), Lakshmi Lingam (Board Member, CORO), Natasha Joshi (Associate Director, Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies), and Aloka Majumdar (Senior Vice President and Head of Corporate Social Responsibility, HSBC India).

We also conducted a field visit to Chembur, Mumbai, where we met with Sheela Pawar (CORO Fellow 2008 and Team Leader), Anwari Khan (CORO Fellow 2008 and Team Leader), Yasmin Khan (CORO Fellow 2016), Dr. Prajapati (Community Task Force Member), Razia Sheikh (CRC member since 2009), Saima Khan (Yuva Manthan, Youth Leader), and Maulana Hussain Khan (CORO Fellow 2017).

SHOFCO

We spoke to Kennedy Odede (President, CEO, and Founder), Caroline Kisia (Chief Operating Officer), Katherine Potaski (Chief Advancement Officer), Gladys Mwende (Chief Programme Officer), Richard Cunningham (Managing Director at Barclays and SHOFCO Board Member), Linda Ochiel (Programme Officer at the Ford Foundation Kenya, which funds SHOFCO's work).

We also engaged SHOFCO's frontline staff including Catherine Gathura (Director of SHOFCO Urban Network – Kibera), Johnstone Musau (Director of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene – Kibera), Repemta (Principal of Kibera School for Girls), Monica (High School Programme Officer at Kibera School for Girls), Rachel (Deputy Head Teacher at Kibera School for Girls), Julius (Director of Sustainable Livelihoods Programmes), Caroline Sakwa (Head of Gender Department – Kibera), Elisha (Case Worker at Gender Department – Kibera), Margaret (Gender Programmes – Kibera), Victor (Deputy Manager of the SACCO office – Kibera), Judy (Credit Officer at the SACCO office – Kibera), Purity (Accountant at the SACCO office – Kibera), Ibrahim Maina (Senior SACCO Manager – Kibera), Caroline (Social Worker). We spoke to SUN staff (Bailey, Victor, Eyas, Tabetha, and Tracey) as well as SUN community leaders (Rispa, Egress, Toran, Benity, and Alia) and members of the zonal committee. We had in-depth conversations with community members Julia Njoki (SUN Vice Chairperson – Mathare) and Elisa (SUN Chairperson – Kisumu). We spoke to parents on the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) at Kibera School for Girls (Odom, Jarred, Sharon, Caroline, Dunkan, and PTA Chair Michael).

Ubuntu Pathways

We spoke to Jacob Lief (CEO and Co-Founder), Malizole "Banks" Gwaxula (Senior Advisor and Co-Founder), Tarryn Mthimkhulu (Managing Director), Gcobani Zonke (Deputy President), Ziyanda Ndyoko (Manager of External Relations and Job Skills Training Programme), Sarah Whitaker (Ball Family Foundation, which funds Ubuntu Pathways), Domensa Zunga (Community member in the Job Skills Training Programme), Nomthle Kala (Teacher in the Job Skills Training Programme), Rorisang Mhlaba (Primary School Principal), Fezeka Mzalazala-Tyutyu (Outreach Manager), Thabisa Vusani (Case Worker), Sihle Ntlangu (Clinic Psychologist), Nomawethu Siswana (ECD Manager), and Kobus Froneman (Chief Financial Officer).

We also visited the Ubuntu Pathways campus and clinic, as well as the Ubuntu School facilities, two of the Ubuntu Pathways COVID-19 vaccination sites, and various parts of the Gqeberha township.

Appendix D. Bibliography

We reviewed existing literature on community-driven approaches to social impact and conducted secondary research. Key references, some of which are noted in the report, include:

Chase, Richard. "Community Led Solutions – Building Evidence that Counts." Minnesota Compass. September 26, 2018.

Community Driven Systems Change. Firelight x Dalberg. 2021.

"COVID-19 Turns Spotlight on Slums." The World Bank. June 10, 2020.

Hodgson, Jenny, Barry Knight and Susan Wilkinson-Maposa. *New Horizons for Community-Led Development: Recommendations for Funders.* The Global Fund for Community Foundations. March 2019.

Kayemba, Florence, Ese Emerhi, and Charles Kojo Vandyck. *Community as a Response: Communities organizing for their development*. Trust Africa. April 2021.

Mansuri, Ghazala and Vijayendra Rao. "Community-Based and Driven-Development: A Critical Review." The World Bank Research Observer. Vol. 19, No. 1 (Spring, 2004), pp. 1-39.

What Does It Mean to be Community Led? Community Leaders' Perspective on Principles, Practices, and Impacts: Part 1. Global Giving and Global Fund for Community Foundations. (November 2020).

Additionally, SHOFCO, Ubuntu Pathways, YUVA, and CORO provided Bridgespan with internal data and documents to assist in writing this article.