



Impact Report

fiscal year 2018

COMMUNITIES CATALYZING CHANGE

OUR MISSION

Firelight builds the capacity of catalytic **community-based organizations** (CBOs) that are working to build smart, sustainable, and scalable solutions to the challenges faced by **children and youth in southern and eastern Africa**.

OUR VISION

African communities have the power to realize safe, strong nurturing environments where children and youth thrive.

131,981

children, youth, parents and caregivers, professionals, and community members were **directly impacted** by the community-based organizations we supported in the last year and

199,654

were **indirectly impacted**



Where did we work and who did we fund?

Firelight supported 8 geographic clusters of community-based organizations in 5 countries in eastern and southern Africa. These organizations tackled issues ranging from early childhood development (ECD) to secondary education to child marriage.

12

CBOs in **Tanzania**
fighting child
marriage

6

CBOs in **Rwanda**
empowering young
women

4

CBOs in **Malawi**
improving girls'
secondary education

7

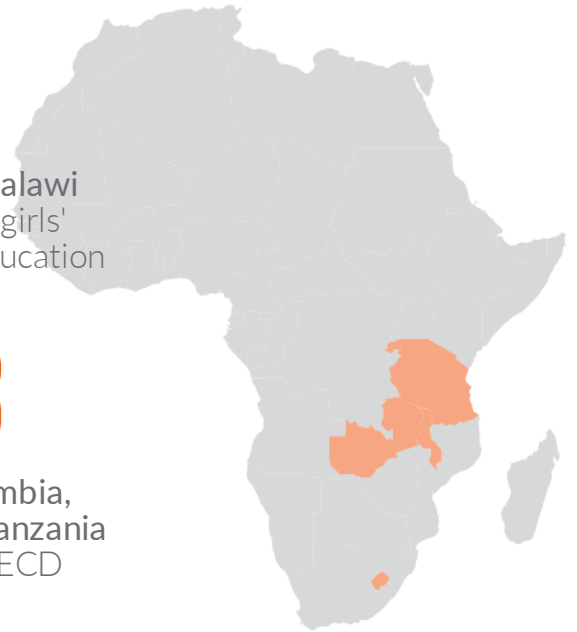
CBOs in **Lesotho**
developing stronger
child protection
systems

5

CBOs in **Tanzania**
improving primary
education and early
learning

18

CBOs in **Zambia,
Malawi, and Tanzania**
improving ECD
quality



What did we do?

Firelight provided our CBO grantee-partners with **flexible capital** as well as **tailored capacity building** in topics such as monitoring and evaluation, social accountability monitoring, communications, organizational development, programmatic/technical support, resource mobilization, and financial management, depending on their individual needs and priorities. Below, we are excited to share a few highlights from our initiatives:

Empowering adolescent girls | Rwanda



With funding from the NIKE Foundation, Firelight has been supporting a cluster of **5 community-based organizations** and **1 local community grantmaker** in the Gisenyi region of western Rwanda, an area deeply affected by the Rwandan genocide and nearby conflict in the DRC.

Our grantee-partners worked with 501 of the most vulnerable girls in Gisenyi —girls with disabilities, girls who live on the street, girls who have been forced into sex work, and girls who are very young mothers — to provide them with seed funding to start their own **businesses and savings collectives** or to help them **re-enroll in formal education**. Our grantee-partners complemented girls' financial empowerment with social empowerment by also ensuring that girls were educated about **sexual and reproductive health**, had access to **HIV and AIDS services**, and were supported with **psychosocial counseling and community mentors**.

Girls have reported **increased knowledge in how to save money and earn an income**, as well as **increased self-confidence, ability to speak up for themselves, and ability to take care of their health**.

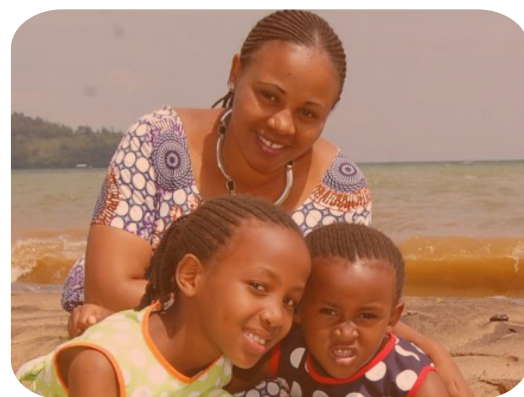
A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR GIRLS IN RWANDA

For International Women's Day, Firelight profiled **Julienne Bamurange**, founder and Executive Director of **Young Women Destination**, one of the CBO grantee-partners we support in Rwanda. *Julienne shared the impact YWD made this past year with our support:*

"With the \$10,000 grant we received from Firelight, I have already seen incredibly dramatic progress in the current cohort of girls. After receiving trainings in reproductive health, financial savings, and starting businesses, girls have taken their lives into their own hands.

Two girls are now on antiretroviral treatment after receiving a positive diagnosis for HIV. Seventeen girls received pigs or sheep as part of income-generating cooperatives. Fifteen girls were trained as hairdressers and nineteen girls were provided with materials to make and sell handicrafts. Some girls who dropped out of school have returned. Now girls in our program get married when they are ready, and their children's fathers are involved in the household. The future holds promise for YWD. We have come so far already, and we will continue working hard to support the women and girls in our community.

I have worked hard, but I could not do it without the support of Firelight."



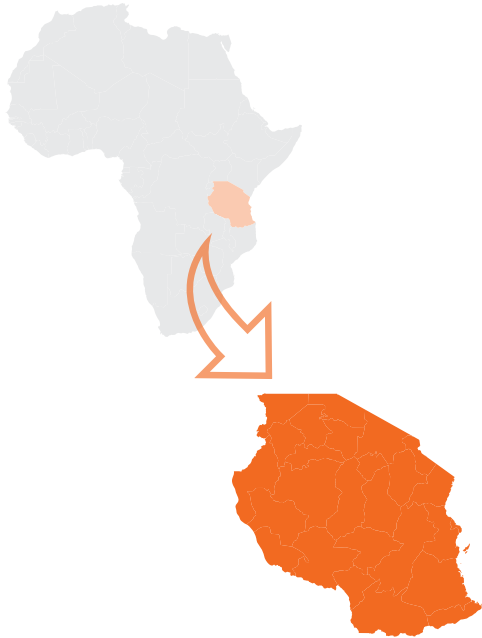
Julienne Bamurange, founder and Executive Director of Young Women Destination, and her two daughters

501



young women **directly** empowered by the six CBO grantee-partners we supported in Rwanda

Ending child marriage | Tanzania



With funding from the Oak Foundation, Dorothea Haus Ross Foundation, and an anonymous donor, Firelight has been supporting a cluster of **12 community-based organizations** that are fighting to systematically eliminate child marriage in the Shinyanga region of Tanzania, where 59% of girls under 18 are still forced into marriage.

Our grantee-partners are deploying a variety of holistic approaches to end child marriage in the region. Their approaches include **economic strengthening** for families, **psychosocial support for children** rescued from child marriage, **educational support** for children rescued from or at risk of child marriage, **skillful parenting assistance** for families, **cultural awareness** raising, **law enforcement** interventions, strengthening local **child protection teams**, establishing **youth clubs for children in school**, and **training teachers** on child protection.

Communities have already reported **reductions in child marriages and pregnancies** and have seen a significant **increase in local understanding of the problems of child marriage** and in the communities' desire to stop this practice. Over **78,000 children, youth, professionals, parents and caregivers, and community members** were directly impacted by CBOs' programs in the past year.

A SECOND CHANCE AT AN EDUCATION

The Tanzanian government opposes re-entry into school for girls who have become pregnant - the current president has explicitly stated that these girls should not be allowed to re-enroll in school after giving birth. This "pregnancy ban" deprives girls of their fundamental right to an education and keeps young women, often the survivors of child marriage, entrenched in a cycle of poverty and domestic violence. The inability to re-enroll in school is also considered itself a driver of child marriage.

One of our CBO grantee-partners we support in Tanzania, Agape AIDS Control Programme, understood the gravity of this situation and wanted to give girls a second chance. Out of this understanding, the Agape Knowledge Open School, an integrated, informal secondary school, was born. With funding from Firelight, the school offers these girls an invaluable opportunity to either prepare for continuation of their secondary studies or to actively contribute to their family's economic prosperity through vocational training in areas such as welding, tailoring, or carpentry.

In the past school year, prepared by the teachers at Agape's school, 54 young mothers were able to sit for their Form 2 national examinations, and 80% of them passed - a huge success for the school and an illustration of the powerful resiliency of young girls forced into marriage.

159

girls forced into marriage reunited with their families by the CBO grantee-partners we supported in Shinyanga, Tanzania



1311

parents attended and completed 12 sessions in skillful parenting



Protecting vulnerable children | Lesotho



Firelight has been supporting **1 community grantmaker** - Touch Roots Africa (TRA) - and **6 community-based organizations** to respond to the multifaceted needs of vulnerable children in Lesotho. Lesotho, a landlocked country in southern Africa, has the second highest prevalence of HIV in the world, with over 25% of the population infected with HIV. Due to the tragic impact of the crisis, thousands of children have been orphaned and left vulnerable to HIV and AIDS, child abuse, malnutrition, and poverty.

Sub-grants that community grantmaker Touch Roots Africa makes to smaller, local CBOs range from \$6,300 to \$8,500 and are used to strengthen each community's child protection systems. Approaches to improving child protection systems range from **case management and reporting**, to meeting basic needs of children through **nutrition programs** and **education**, to **counseling and support groups** for children, to sustainable **income-generating activities** (such as catering or livestock business) for families, to **community awareness** campaigns, to improvement of **parent/caregiver involvement**.

CBO grantee-partners have seen **increased management capacity and ability to mobilize resources** and better outcomes for children: **increased resilience to vulnerability**, **increased school attendance**, and **reduced stigma for children living with or affected by HIV**.

GRANTMAKERS OF THE FUTURE

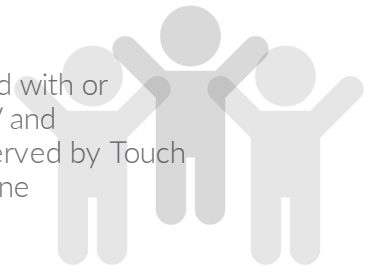
Firelight's tiered mentoring model deploys the expertise of our Africa-based program and learning staff, specialized technical experts, and lead partners or community grantmakers to strengthen our CBO grantee-partners. Lead partners are strong indigenous organizations that fund and mentor smaller local organizations, provide essential lived experience in organizational development, and tailor contextually-appropriate technical guidance to each CBO.

Since 2009, Firelight has been supporting the role of Touch Roots Africa (TRA) as a lead partner and community grantmaker for smaller local organizations, meaning that they can thereby fund and build the capacity of smaller CBOs that have strong relationships with the individual communities they serve. These smaller CBOs are essential community resources - often the first point of psychosocial support in communities devastated by HIV, a training platform in income-generating activities for families, and a referral point to external social services.

Firelight made a final exit grant to Touch Roots Africa this year, which TRA used to prioritize capacity building for its six sub-grantees in areas from resource mobilization to business plan development in order to ensure that they planned for long-term sustainability.

627

children infected with or affected by HIV and AIDS **directly** served by Touch Roots Africa alone

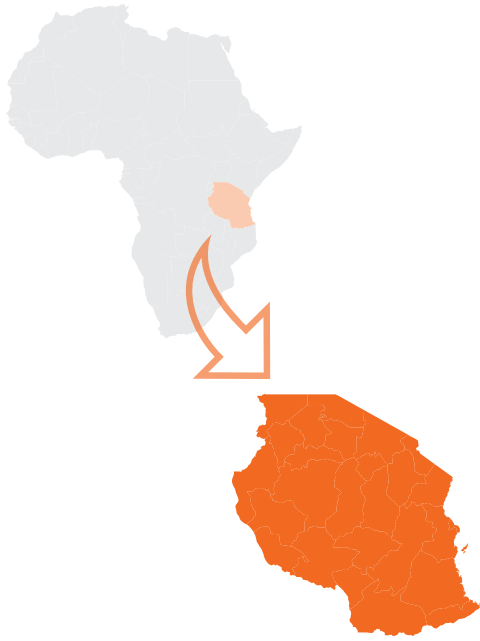


“I see an improvement in the community because people are taking responsibility for caring for children. Public gatherings are held in the community to raise awareness on issues of child protection and psychosocial support.

The trainings have been very helpful as they made us understand and act on the situation of vulnerable children in our communities.”

- Member, Hlalefang Makaota Support Group (sub-grantee of Touch Roots Africa)

Strengthening primary education | Tanzania



With funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Flora Family Foundation, Firelight has been supporting **5 community-based organizations** and **5 youth groups** to improve children's school readiness, literacy, and numeracy outcomes in Tanzania. Although Tanzania has made impressive strides to increase enrollment at the primary school level, the rapid increase has not included sufficient investments to improve education quality, leaving children without age-appropriate reading, writing, or arithmetic skills.

Our CBO grantee-partners in Tanzania are piloting and iterating on a variety of **innovative models** to support young children's learning, from establishing **in-school remedial classes**, to running **community-based afterschool learning centers**, to training **out-of-school youth as academic tutors** for primary school children. Because of the link between early learning and primary school outcomes, two of our CBO grantee-partners are also supporting **community-based early childhood development programs**.

CBO grantee-partners have reported **teachers' use of more child-centered teaching methods**, **increase in children's engagement in learning**, and **increases in children's mastery of basic literacy and numeracy skills**.

COMMUNITY DEMAND FOR POLICY CHANGE

Firelight believes that systemic change happens when communities themselves demand this change. Since 2015, Firelight has partnered with Tanzanian education advocacy expert Haki Elimu to train our primary education grantee-partners in social accountability so that they can more effectively monitor government expenditure, hold governments accountable for what they should be providing to citizens, and advocate for policy change. Already, these grantee-partners have begun to apply social accountability strategies in their communities.

This past year, Safina Women's Association (SAWA) has empowered eight village communities to engage with the local government's allocation of the Ministry of Education and Sports' capitation grants, which designate funding to each child in pre-primary and primary school.

Deploying ten social accountability monitors to engage with community members through outreach meetings, SAWA has empowered village leaders and ward development committees to advocate for increased resource allocation to their early learning programs. Communities have already submitted full proposals to the local council for increased resource allocation to their students and will continue monitoring expenditure and performance of the Ministry's capitation grant.

6,157

children in primary school directly served by the CBO grantee-partners we supported in Tanzania

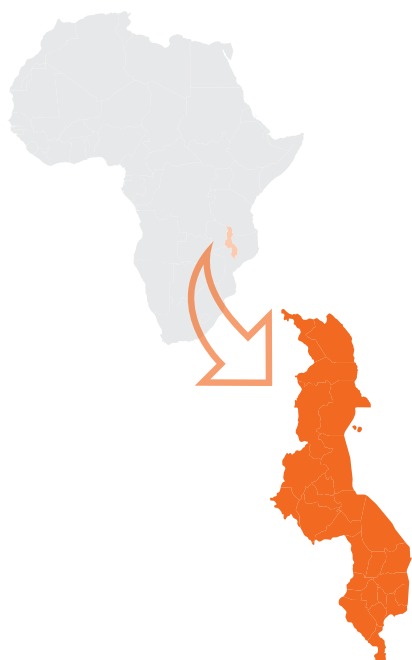


VUTAMDOGO

"PULL THE LITTLE ONE"

Tanzania Home Economics Association (TAHEA) has seen immense success from its Vutamdogo program, which trains unemployed, out-of-school youth to tutor children in primary school. In 2017, over **3,992 primary school students saw visible increases in their literacy and numeracy skills as a result of the Vutamdogo program**.

Elements of the program have already been adopted by two of our other early learning grantee-partners.



Firelight partners with the Mastercard Foundation, Dubai Cares, and the Flora Family Foundation to support **four local organizations** in Malawi to develop community-driven ideas that improve the transition, persistence, and exam pass rates for vulnerable girls in Malawi's public Community Day Secondary School (CDSS) system. Today, CDSSs face significant challenges, from poorly trained teachers, to limited teaching and learning materials, to an outdated curriculum. Parents, students, and communities are skeptical of the value of schooling at the CDSSs, and thus early marriage for girls is often prioritized over secondary school enrollment.

Firelight's grantee-partners were supported to use **human-centered design-thinking techniques** to uncover the root causes that kept adolescent girls out of the CDSS system and to then build innovative, community-driven programs that support families to support their girls' education. Each partner has developed a different model to improve girls' retention and progress in secondary school, from **entrepreneurship training in schools**, to a dedicated **social fund to support young girls**, to a **multi-faceted cultural program to shift community attitudes** towards secondary schooling, to dedicated **livelihood development for families** supporting young women through secondary school.

We have already begun to see significant results: **reduced school dropout, teenage pregnancy, and child marriage rates**, **increased girls' participation in class, improved educational outcomes, increased parent contributions** to their girls' education, and **improvements in boys' attitudes** towards girls in school.

SUSTAINABLE FUNDING FOR GIRLS' EDUCATION

When communities see the value of secondary education for their girls, then they begin to invest more of their own resources into their girls' education. Firelight secondary education grantee-partner Foundation for Community Livelihood and Development (FOCOLD) understands this deeply.

FOCOLD's model to improve access to secondary education for girls involved many spokes. For the most needy families, FOCOLD provides basic bursary support for their girls to attend secondary school. However, they couple this bursary support with training in livelihood skills and income-generating activities through community-based economic support groups. Families, with their higher incomes, are able to then pay for their girls' school fees, as well as make a contribution to a community social fund, which exists to pay the school fees of other needy girls in the community.

This past year, FOCOLD successfully managed eight economic support groups for families - involving over 100 parents - and has already reported a noticeable increase in the number of girls attending secondary school in their community.

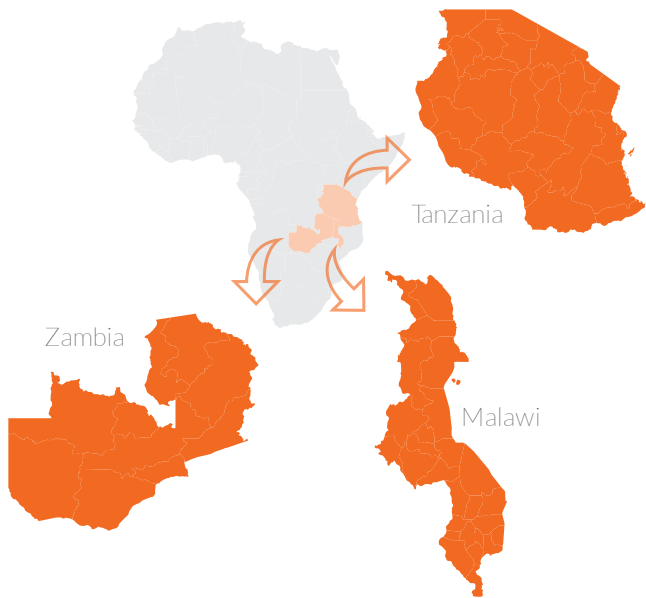
1,387

young women **directly** supported to attend secondary school and **3,652** youth and community members indirectly impacted by the CBO grantee-partners we supported in Malawi

"Since GENET [Firelight grantee-partner Girls' Empowerment Network] started giving me education support material and monthly counseling by mentors and GENET staff, my performance has improved. **In my first term I failed my exams but in my second term my scores put me in 28th position in a class of 40 girls. I am able to work wholeheartedly towards my future.**"

- Nduuzani Davis, Form 1 at Dziwe CDSS

Supporting early childhood development systems | *Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia*



With funding from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and the Bainum Family Foundation, Firelight has been supporting **18 community-based organizations** in Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia to strengthen early childhood development (ECD) centers and family-based training programs that promote children's holistic development, especially in areas that are affected by HIV. ECD is critical to children's ability to thrive in their early years and also impacts their ability to succeed in school, but only **12% of children in sub-Saharan Africa currently have access to quality early childhood services**. And even where ECD centers do exist, they often operate more as a daycare for parents during work hours, rather than a robust support to children's cognitive, emotional, and social development. In 2017, Firelight concentrated on two major areas: **improving ECD center quality in Malawi**; and **empowering families of children from birth to age 3 in Tanzania and Zambia**.

In late 2017, Firelight secured a two-year

\$2.1 MILLION

partnership with UK-based foundation

COMIC RELIEF

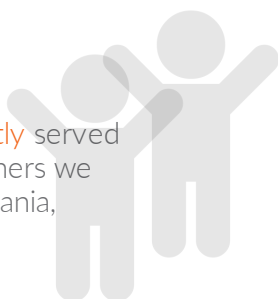
to continue supporting our CBO-grantee-partners to improve ECD center quality and expand family-based care programs in Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia

Our grantee-partners in Malawi are establishing and **strengthening ECD centers** – including building basic infrastructure, creating **supportive learning environments**, and **training ECD caregivers** – to serve the needs of children from birth to age 5 and of their families. In Malawi, we are also piloting a **training program of ECD personnel** that includes classroom coaching and ongoing mentoring from local experts in child development.

In Tanzania and Zambia, our grantee-partners are piloting the **Care for Child Development curriculum**, a program developed by WHO and UNICEF to empower parents and caregivers to strengthen their children's cognitive development. Our grantee-partners have also integrated a variety of holistic programs that serve children's and families' multi-faceted needs, including **savings and loans groups** to promote families' economic empowerment, **feeding programs** to provide basic nutrition to children at ECD centers, **voluntary counseling and testing for HIV and AIDS** through community health activities, and **income-generating activities** to sustain some of the expenses involved in running the ECD centers.

6,493

children ages 0 to 5 **directly** served by the CBO grantee-partners we supported in Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia



USING DATA TO INFORM ECD PRACTICE

In Malawi, where our grantee-partners have been working to improve quality at **51** local community-run ECD centers (called community-based childcare centers, or CBCCs), Firelight has been engaging the technical expertise of the Madrasa Early Childhood Programme - Uganda, supported by the Aga Khan Foundation, to help them ensure that these centers are serving as active learning environments.

At Firelight, in order to make sure our CBO grantee-partners are equipped with the right training, resources, and evidence to enable young children with the best start in life, one of our key tools is information.

Data are collected for the purpose of helping them to better understand where they are performing well and where their gaps and challenges are. These findings also influence program improvement, as well as feeds back into Firelight's own understanding of how to provide more support.

After a baseline conducted in 2016, Firelight engaged independent academic evaluator Dr. Amina Abubakar and her team to conduct a midline evaluation of 12 CBCC's quality in 2017.

Results from the midline evaluation showed that while major challenges still existed – including CBCC caregiver turnover – our CBO grantee-partners were making great strides in areas such as:

- Improvement of **CBCC physical infrastructure and program curriculum**
- Improvement in **adult-child interaction and inclusiveness**
- Increased **presence of locally-made learning and playing materials**
- **Motivation from parents and community members to improve quality at their CBCCs**

16,529

parents and caregivers **directly** served by the CBO grantee-partners we supported in Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia



All CBOs in Tanzania and Zambia using the **Care for Child Development curriculum** have reported strong increases in critical measures for children and families, such as:

- Increased **parental engagement** with children
- Increased **understanding of child brain development**
- Increased **commitments at the household level to play, nutrition, health, and engagement**



8,513

community members **directly** served by the CBO grantee-partners we supported in Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia



To our foundation and individual donors -
on behalf of our CBO grantee-partners and the children they
serve, the Firelight team sincerely thanks you.
This impactful work would not be possible without you.

Though we have made incredible progress, we still have a long way
to go to addressing the systemic challenges facing children and
youth in eastern and southern Africa.

If you would like to learn more about Firelight's work and/or how you
can support us, please e-mail Executive Director Nina Blackwell at
nina@firelightfoundation.org.

[Donate Now](#)

Visit blog.firelightfoundation.org to learn more about the progress made
by our CBO grantee-partners.

