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MAGAZINE

FINANCIAL AND IMPACT REPORTING FOR GOOD

THE SECOND ISSUE OF A TWO-PART SERIES

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BEYOND THE NUMBERS – EVIDENCE THAT UNLOCKS CAPITAL FOR GRASS-ROOTS CHANGE: A CASE STUDY

LINDA LATSKO LOCKHART – WWW.GLOBALGIVEBACKCIRCLE.ORG

Twenty years ago, I wasn't trying to build an organisation. I simply wanted to meet a need: to support women and girls with no voice, no power, and no viable path forward, by opening doors to education, skills-building, opportunity and financial security. What began as a mentoring program for ten at-risk girls in Kenya evolved into a comprehensive model spanning education, workforce readiness, and economic empowerment, delivered through partnerships with community-based organisations that deeply understand the women they serve. Today, Global Give Back Circle runs Kenya's largest skills-building and economic empowerment program for hard-to-reach rural young women.

STARTING SMALL, SCALING IMPACT

In March 2024, at the Forbes 30/50 Summit in Abu Dhabi, I met Suze Orman, whose work on money, fear and self-worth has shaped generations. I asked her permission to adapt her teachings for rural women living on less than two dollars a day, who are far from formal banking, but not from the emotional power money holds. Suze distilled what mattered most: courage, boundaries, self-worth and understanding the emotional forces behind financial decisions. That conversation became a blueprint for change.

Together, we designed a women-owned credit union and economic empowerment program in West Pokot, Kenya, serving 700 women who had never previously accessed formal banking or credit. Suze contextualised her iconic money lessons to reflect these women's lived realities. To bring this innovative concept to reality, we partnered with Perur Rays of Hope, a community-based organisation with deep ties and earned trust. Today, all 700 are members of the HER Financial Freedom Program, meeting quarterly to learn more than financial planning and entrepreneurship. Through 'Suze-adapted' workshops, they also learn about the 8 qualities of a wealthy woman and are guided in how to have the courage to be rich. Within months of launching, 72 per cent had started or expanded businesses, 59 per cent were saving consistently, and 87 per cent reported confidence in setting financial boundaries. These are not marginal gains. There are shifts in agency, dignity, and power.

This model is being replicated as a natural extension of the HER Lab ecosystem. HER Lab is scaling up in Kenya through a partnership with Mastercard Foundation. HER Lab is a one-year bridging program for rural young women, where 87 per cent of graduates enter paid work, start businesses, or pursue higher education. Microsoft, KPMG, SAP, and individual investors, including Forbes 50 Over 50 honourees Flora Mutahi and Wandia Gichuru, have invested time, talent and treasure in this approach. Together, these partnerships demonstrate a simple truth: when capital meets credible evidence and community-rooted solutions, transformation follows.

WHY REPORTING MATTERS IN CAPITAL ALLOCATION

Why do donors, social investors and impact investors choose to allocate capital to certain initiatives over others? Increasingly, the answer lies in evidence. Philanthropic giving prioritises social good without expectation of financial return. Social investment seeks measurable social outcomes, often alongside capital preservation. Impact investing goes further, targeting both measurable impact and financial return. Across all three, robust impact reporting has become central to capital allocation decisions.

The OECD and the Global Impact Investing Network highlight that funders now demand credible, comparable evidence to assess risk, additionality, and effectiveness. Organisations that adopt recognised frameworks, such as IRIS+ or SDG-aligned metrics, and provide transparent, consistent reporting are more likely to attract and retain capital. Without clear data, even the most impactful grass-roots initiatives struggle to compete for funding.

BEYOND THE NUMBERS

Traditional reporting often fails to capture the nuanced transformation that occurs when working with hard-to-reach populations. In response, Global Give Back Circle developed Beyond the Numbers, a multi-layered reporting approach to impact reporting designed to make evidence accessible, human, and actionable.

Every 60 days, we publish concise reports that translate complex data into clear insights for diverse stakeholders. But data alone is insufficient. Stories enrich and energise the impact. Through Media Salons, HER Lab participants are trained to tell their own stories on camera, choosing whether and how they are shared. High-quality imagery complements quantitative findings, while participant-led podcasts, which are recorded in purpose-built studios, explore core learning questions. Our first question: how do marginalised young women in rural Kenya define dignity, fulfilment and respect and how do these values shape their personal and professional goals?

We also use structured journaling, with weekly prompts that capture not only outcomes, but aspirations. This combination of quantitative data, qualitative insight, and participant voice strengthens accountability, deepens transparency, and places those most affected by programs at the centre of evaluation.

BRIDGING THE REPORTING GAP

Impact reporting is not without challenges. Inconsistent metrics, lack of comparability, conflicting government guidance and burdensome donor requirements disproportionately affect grass-roots organisations. For those working with the most marginalised, which in our case are rural women who comprise roughly a quarter of the world's population, even small data gains represent significant breakthroughs.

To address this, funders must support harmonised and simplified reporting standards. At Global Give Back Circle, we are deploying AI-enabled and digital reporting platforms to streamline data collection, allowing community partners to focus on delivery rather than administration. Real-time voice technology enables continuous data input from more than 700 HER Financial Freedom Program members, generating timely insights without adding operational burden.

This approach is not theoretical. Organisations such as the World Food Programme, UNICEF, and GiveDirectly have shown that treating digital reporting as core infrastructure, rather than a short term pilot, builds trust and informs capital allocation. We have embedded this commitment through Beyond the Numbers, our digitally-enabled impact reporting framework, and through a dedicated data function responsible for translating technical findings into clear, decision-ready insights.

LINDA LATSKO LOCKHART

Linda Latsko Lockhart is the Founder and CEO of Global Give Back Circle, a serial social entrepreneur focused on the empowerment of women and girls in Africa and beyond. Named to Forbes 50 Over 50: Impact List, she brings over 25 years of global leadership designing scalable, gender-based financial independence models. Through her organisation, Lockhart helps marginalised women and girls gain education, financial tools and lasting economic resilience.

INVEST IN EVIDENCE, INVEST IN WOMEN

Investing in African women and girls is not only a moral imperative; it is a strategic economic decision. Women reinvest up to 90 per cent of their income into families and communities, and closing gender gaps could add as much as $28 trillion to global GDP. The evidence is clear. The models exist. The returns, both social and economic, are proven.

What is needed now is alignment between capital and evidence. Funders must move beyond intuition or tradition and prioritise organisations that demonstrate transparency, accountability, and deep community understanding. When we invest in evidence, we invest in trust. When we invest in trust, we unlock capital. And when we unlock capital for women, we unlock resilient, inclusive, and lasting change. ■