Women, Water & Wisdom:

Mapping Ripple Effects of Conscious Social Change in Rural Rwanda

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Global Grassroots
CONSCIOUS SOCIAL CHANGE FOR WOMEN

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Wisdom Lab
A Project of Global Grassroots

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I used to spend all my time on water, but now I am concentrating on long-term growth.

~ Olive

INTRODUCTION

Since 2005, Global Grassroots has invested in teams of East African women who would like to lead impactful social change from within their own communities. Grounded in an approach called Conscious Social Change[1], the organization is shaped by beliefs, values, and a comprehensive theory of change that explains how *personal transformation* is a critical and often overlooked ingredient for achieving the deep and lasting shifts needed to create healthy, equitable and sustainable communities.

Women's Water Leadership Initiative (WWLI)

In 2014, Global Grassroots looked across its portfolio of teams that were working at the roots of gender inequality, domestic violence, health, and girls' education in rural Rwanda and Uganda. We realized that many teams and projects (called "ventures") were becoming financially and operationally sustainable, *especially those providing a clean water source* to their communities.

With this awareness, we launched our Women's Water Leadership Initiative (WWLI) to catalyze women-led, water-focused social change ventures in East Africa. Selected teams engaged in the organization's Academy of Conscious Change *incubator program*, including:

- 40 hours of training in personal development, social entrepreneurship, and mindful leadership
- Venture planning and implementation coaching for 18-24 months
- Seed money
- Participatory monitoring, evaluation and learning processes

A principal outcome of WWLI is for each team to create an independently operating, sustainable water + social purpose venture that positively

impacts the community without further funding or coaching needed from Global Grassroots.

In a Nutshell: Global Grassroots' Beliefs, Values & Theory of Change

- WOMEN: We believe when women lead, communities succeed.

- LOCAL WISDOM: We honor local wisdom and support community-led change.

- SOCIAL PURPOSE: We invest in women's teams and ventures that have a social purpose - a non-profit orientation and commitment to reinvesting any proceeds into their community.

- CONSCIOUS APPROACH: We support leaders to address their own personal development and wellbeing through mindfulness and awareness-based practices (aka "inner work") to bring greater value and compassion to their community.

Place-Based Development in Rwanda

Rwanda is divided into 5 provinces, each with multiple districts, sectors, cells, and villages. In 2015, nine women's teams in Rwanda were selected to participate in WWLI:

- 7 teams: Jali Sector, Gasabo District
- 1 team: Gatsata Sector, Gasabo District
- 1 team: Mutete Sector, Gichumbi District

By the end of 2017, all had completed Global Grassroots' Academy of Conscious Change and successfully launched their water sites and social purpose activities.

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[1] Learn more at www.conscioussocialchange.com.

Accelerator Ventures & COVID-19

By 2019, several teams had approached Global Grassroots with interest to expand or replicate their successful efforts. Some teams had been approached by women and men who saw their efforts and wanted to bring the effort to their own communities. Other teams were inspired to share what they had learned so their efforts could have even greater impact.

As an external NGO, Global Grassroots is committed to avoiding any possibility of creating dependency and historically chose to find new communities to serve rather than reinvest in existing teams. Yet after careful consideration of the requests coming from teams themselves, we decided to pilot a handful of "second round" seed grants with existing teams located in Gasabo District, Rwanda.

In this new initiative, once a water + social purpose venture is successfully operating for at least one year, the team may be eligible to receive another round of support (refresher training, seed money, coaching) to expand or replicate their efforts. These ventures are referred to as *accelerator ventures*.

When the global pandemic erupted in early 2020, the decision to reinvest in existing teams offered a vital pathway for leaders to continue their work even during lockdowns. Not only did they become first responders to the public health crisis by providing access (often free) to water and soap to the whole community, but they also slowly continued construction on their expansion sites as social distancing allowed.

By the end of 2022, Global Grassroots had invested in 19 women's teams and their more than 30 water + social ventures in Rwanda, the majority located in the hilly area of Gasabo District, east of the capital city, Kigali.

Impact Analysis by IPSOS

In 2020, we reached our 15th year of operations and took a step back to reflect deeply on our work and impacts to date. With the help of IPSOS, we analyzed 14 years of participant data and conducted qualitative interviews with 30 graduates of our programs. Several important learnings emerged from this deep dive:

- Among the many personal development outcomes measured, the most consistent and clear measure was an increased sense of *confidence or agency* among team members

- Team members reported using some of the "inner work" practices (e.g., mindfulness, meditation, breath awareness) introduced by Global Grassroots, but data were not available to link those with desired outcomes associated with mindful leadership (i.e., empathy, self-compassion, emotional regulation)

- Traditional monitoring and evaluation focused on specific and predictable outcomes may not effectively capture the changes happening at the team member, venture, and community levels – and the interconnections among them.

It was clear that there was great opportunity to learn much more from our team members and their communities about what is happening as a result of their water and social change efforts, especially those who now had significant experience implementing their programs over six years, and in different villages. As a result, we launched our newest initiative, Global Grassroots' Wisdom Lab, to elevate the stories of our participants and engage others in meaningful exploration of their work.

INQUIRY GOALS & METHODS

The Ripple Effect Mapping (REM) inquiry presented in this report is the first product of Global Grassroots' Wisdom Lab – a project that emerged from the organization's commitment to *collaborate with* its participants in creating and sharing insights into how "inner work for social change" may be unfolding in real time, with real ventures, in communities.

Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) is a participatory method for collecting and analyzing data on program impacts when the desired outcomes may be difficult to define or anticipate. The process engages researchers and participants as collaborative sense-makers using elements from Appreciative Inquiry, mind-mapping, group discussion, and qualitative data analysis.[2]

In an REM session, the experiences and insights of participants are visually mapped to encourage broad engagement and to honor all voices as key to understanding the overall picture of a program's effects. REM is a flexible approach which allows for adaptation to different contexts and cultures, making it a good fit for our purposes.

Global Grassroots' 2022 REM process was initiated by Wisdom Lab Director, Sara Taggart, MPA, and co-designed, coordinated, and implemented by the organization's East African staff based in Kigali, Rwanda.

The purpose was to assess ways in which Global Grassroots' investments in *women as leaders* of Conscious Social Change may have affected team members and the communities where they operate their water + social purpose ventures. We wished to map a timeline of events from the perspective of participants and to collaboratively identify the most significant changes that have taken place – expected or not – since the teams launched their first efforts in 2015.

Ripple Effect Mapping sessions asked:

What has changed in communities because of Global Grassroots' investment in women as leaders of Conscious Social Change water ventures in Jali Sector, Rwanda? Which among those changes are most significant? Which can be attributed to our teams' women-led water + social purpose ventures?

We considered several criteria in the selection process. First, we wanted to focus on teams in the Jali Sector of Gasabo District where the organization had concentrated many of its investments over the past seven years. Next, we wanted to map the experiences and impacts of teams that had completed more than one venture (i.e., an incubator and at least one accelerator) as a way of learning more about the sustainability of their efforts over time. Finally, we were interested in learning from a comparison team outside of Jali Sector about how their experiences were similar or different.

A Total of 45 REM Participants

- 4 teams
- 13 team members
- 6 community partners
- 26 community members
- 27 females
- 18 males
- Average household size = 5

We conducted four REM sessions (one per team/community) in July 2022. A total of forty-five participants invited with help from each team President shared insights during the 4-hour, in-person session conducted in Kinyarwanda. Each

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[2] See Chazdon, S. et al. (2017) A Field Guide to Ripple Effects Mapping. https://conservancy.umn.edu/handle/11299/190639

session included 2-3 team members, 2-3 community partners, and 6-8 community members[3] with direct experience a team's efforts.

Each session focused on a series of activities designed to create a welcoming environment for sharing feedback – positive and negative – regarding changes in the community over the past six years. Lunch, transportation reimbursement, and a small appreciation was provided for participants.

The agenda included: 1) Ice breaker and mindfulness/centering activity; 2) Welcome and overview of the process; 3) Appreciative interview in pairs (getting to know one another); 4) Collaborative timeline-building; 4) Appreciative interview in pairs (reflecting on changes in self, household, and community); 5) Group sense-making and identification of most significant changes. A session agenda is in Appendix A.

Appreciative interviews were audio recorded while Global Grassroots' staff wrote key points on sticky notes and added those to each team's wall-sized timeline. At the end of each session, the team approached the timeline and, with support from staff for those who did not read, discussed the overarching themes they noticed. More ideas and stories of impact also emerged at that time.

After all sessions were completed, sticky notes - referred to as **comments** - were transcribed and translated into English. Staff carefully reviewed them for consistency with audio recordings and identified emerging themes across the sessions. They then coded all comments (486 total) using those themes and a list of key outcomes from the organization's monitoring and evaluation framework.
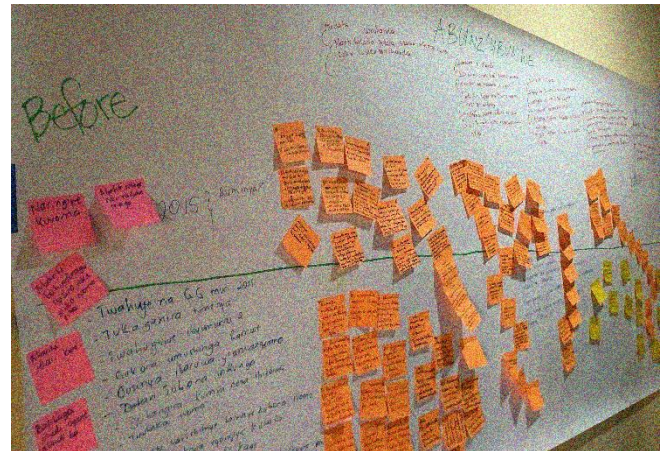
A second round of coding, consolidation of themes, and identification of illustrative examples completed the analysis.

In 2023, the themes and findings in this report will be translated into Kinyarwanda and shared with team members for additional discussion and collaborative learning.

They will also be compared with quantitative data being collected from current ventures through Global Grassroots' Team Member Survey (pre-post-follow up) and Community Impact Survey conducted at baseline and endline of each venture.

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[3] Individuals who participate in a team's activities are referred to as "community members" rather than beneficiaries.

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

Many ideas and insights were consistently shared across the four REM sessions, regardless of a team's location or number of ventures launched. Five overarching themes emerged:

1 Before teams began operating, *water scarcity* made daily life tough, even dangerous - especially for women, girls, children, the elderly, and vulnerable.

2 By creating a *water source* that is clean, close to home, safe to access, affordable, and ample (including availability during the dry seasons), all teams provided nearly immediate and intersecting benefits to an entire community, and those benefits persist after 6+ years of operations for the earliest launched ventures.

3 The impacts described by REM participants align with numerous *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs*): Water & Sanitation (SGD 5); Health & Wellbeing (SDG 3) and Zero Hunger (SDG 2); Gender Equality (SDG 6) and Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10); No Poverty (SDG 1); Quality Education (SDG 4); and Infrastructure (SDG 9).

4 Team members, community partners, and community members attribute the changes primarily to their improved access to *water*, but in no small measure to teams' *social purpose activities* and the *mindset shifts* they've experienced and witnessed in others.

5 An under-recognized benefit of Global Grassroots' model may be its impact on *social cohesion* and sense of hope for the future within the teams and the villages they serve.

Each finding will be further explored using comments and examples provided by REM participants.

1 Life before teams' ventures was more difficult than today

REM participants consistently and vividly described the serious challenges associated with very limited access to clean water prior to teams launching their ventures. The following comments from REM participants help illustrate the picture:

> *Before, we used to worry, asking ourselves, 'How will it go in the morning because we don't have a single drop of water left in the house all night?'*

> *Clean water was seriously needed since water constitutes three quarters of our body. Its lack hinders almost everything.*

This was especially noted for children, girls, women, and the community's most vulnerable residents who couldn't make the long and sometimes treacherous journey down steep hills or ravines to a local spring or river, or the tiresome climb back home carrying heavy jerry cans of water:

> *They (women and children) used to carry clothes for long distances for doing laundry at water streams.*

> *We used to fetch water downhills with no hope that you will get water since you are girl, woman or weak.*

> *Sometimes women could give birth when they had gone for fetching water or they could give birth prematurely because of the tiresome work and journeys.*

> *Children were abused; sometimes others were raped on the way downhill to the rivers.*

> *Before having this water site, allegators used to eat our children at Nyabarongo river.*

The time required to fetch water and return home took away from other important activities. Children were late or missed school entirely:

> *Sometimes we could prepare our food late or sleep with our empty stomach due to missing water.*

> *Before, children would miss school or go when they are sleepy from waiting longer for supper.*

Stress about water collection led to difficulties, even abuse, at home:

> *[There were] constant home conflicts for home chores were not done on time for water was scarce.*

> *Men used to beat up their wives for they have delayed to prepare meals.*

Life before teams' ventures was more difficult than today

Using dirty water for drinking, bathing, cooking, and housekeeping impacted health and wellbeing:

We used to get sick often due to waterborne diseases.

We had muddy water before, which you could bathe in and have skin rashes immediately.

Households with the means might purchase water from local sellers at 200-500 Rwf (about 20-50 cents USD) per jerrycan. But at that price, even the wealthiest had to prioritize the most essential uses of water. To nurture gardens and livestock, community members relied on rivers, springs, or rainwater, which meant little or no water during the dry seasons.

Watering our plants was impossible before. It was regarded as water wastage since little water available was reserved for the basic home activities.

Cattle lacked water for drinking hence reducing milk production.

"Lack of water was a big issue to us, to the extent we have put it in songs and poems to magnify its size."

~ Team Member

2 Ventures provided immediate and intersecting benefits

REM participants reported that, almost immediately, a team's new water site provided tangible and intersecting benefits to an entire community. These benefits persist even after 6+ years of operations and have been replicated by accelerator ventures as well.

New Uses of Water

Comments illustrated how participants are using clean water for purposes that were impossible or prohibitively expensive before the ventures began. Note: In the following charts, the percentages reflect how often a particular item or idea was mentioned in relation to all the comments about the overall topic.[4]

Figure 1. Uses of water since new sites launched (n=59 comments)
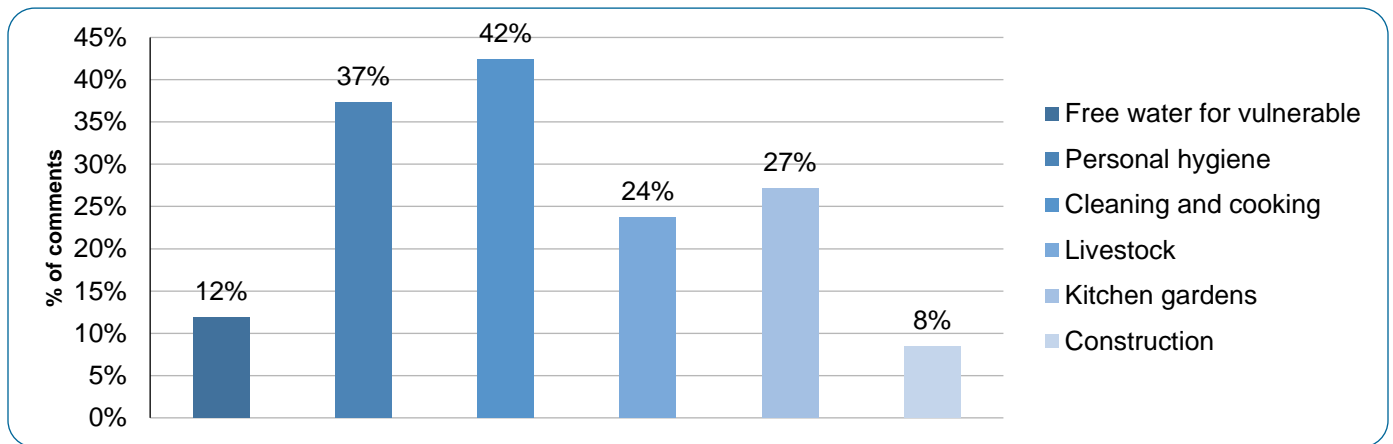
Five Keys to Water Venture Success

Five elements of the water sites arose as instrumental in driving improvements in hygiene and sanitation, health, education, financial wellbeing, gender equality, and overall quality of life:

CLEAN • CLOSE TO HOME • SAFE TO ACCESS • AFFORDABLE • AMPLE

When water is clean…

Participants reported that after teams initiated their water sites, health improved, and hospital visits reduced. These comments help tell the story:

Waterborne diseases are no longer an issue for us for we now have clean water.

Skin rashes due to dirty and salty water are now past history.

We seldom visit the hospital because we are using clean water.

Home cleaning and utensils hygiene has contributed to fewer hospital visit

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[4] The figures should not be interpreted as a percentage of people in the community who do "x" or think "y," but as the relative frequency with which an item was raised by participants across the four REM sessions.

Ventures provided immediate and intersecting benefits

When water is close to home…

Most comments (75%) about access touched on how the ***proximity*** of the water site made a difference in participants' daily lives. Related, over half (53%) of the comments noted the importance of ***time savings*** created by a significantly reduced round trip to the water site. Figure 2 shows how participants are using new-found free time to enhance themselves, their families, and the community overall.

Figure 2. Participants report new uses of time since water sites launched (n=125 comments)
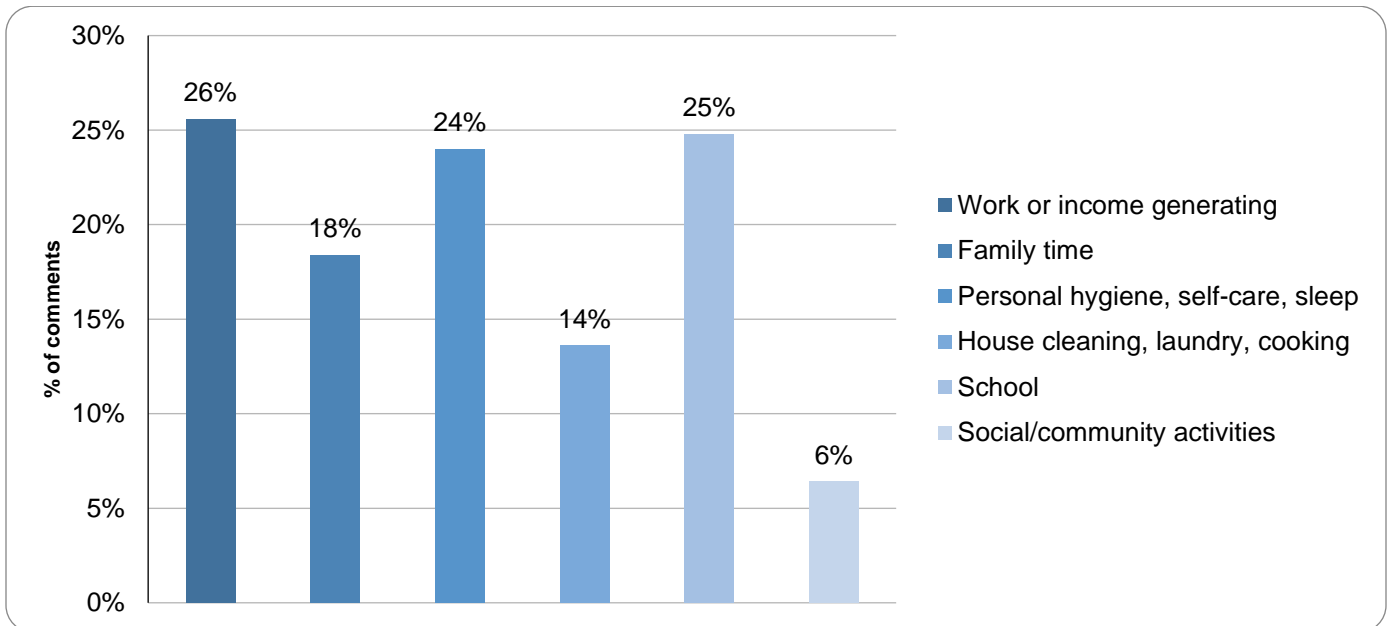
No more long journeys done by women and children looking for water.

We feel relieved from stress and long tiresome journeys we could encounter while searching for water.

Our children are no longer late for school since they get water easily.

We are able to do selfcare and home keeping since we have water near to us.
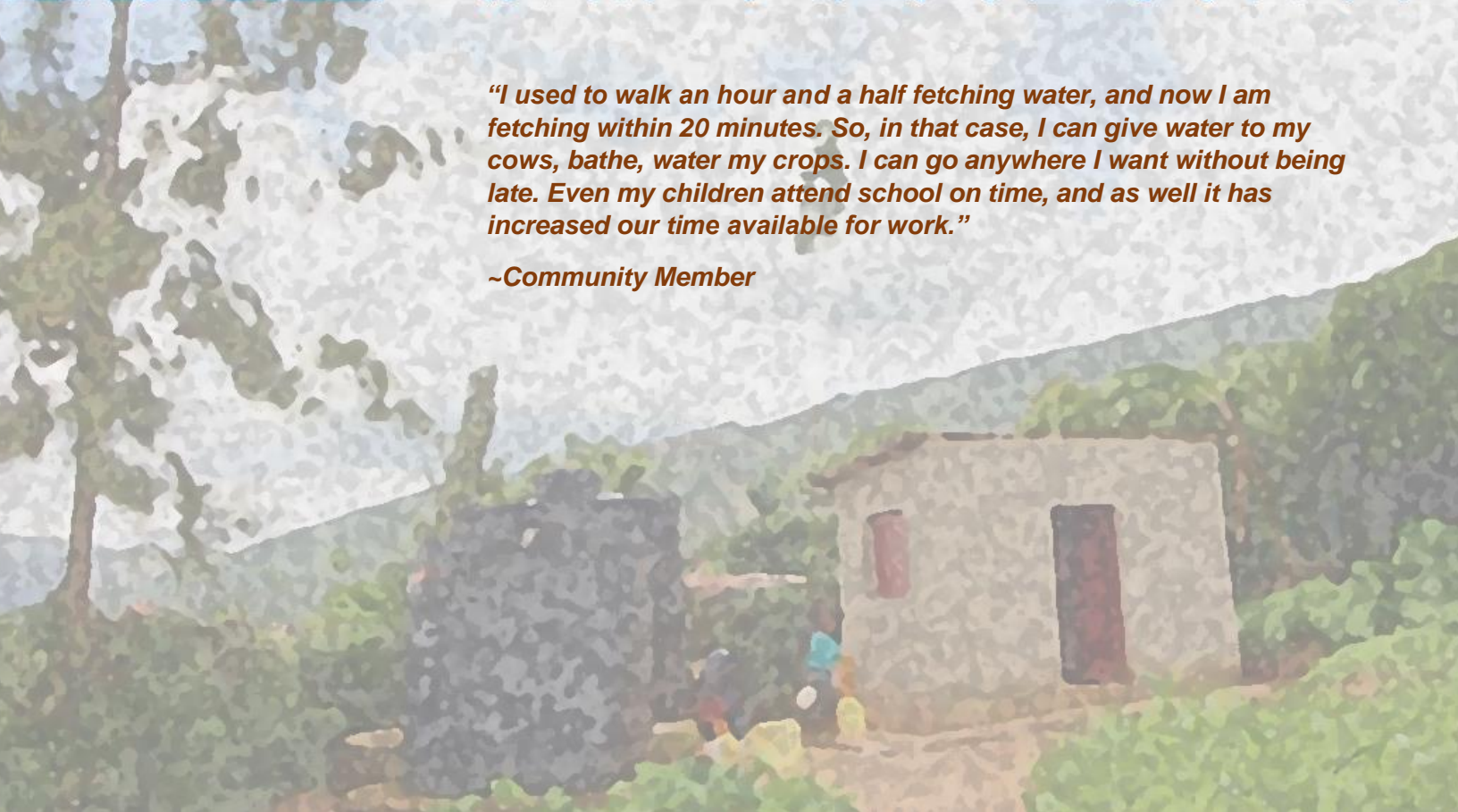
When water is safe to access…

According to participants, the incidents of injury, violence, and abuse related to fetching water dropped since the new water sites launched, particularly improving the safety of women, girls, and other community members for whom the journey had been dangerous.

All early mornings we could wake up searching for water. We have forgotten those days. We sleep well and our security is assured.

People are now safe; no recent case reported of children eaten by crocodiles or people drawn into rivers.

We no longer worry since violence once done unto girls at rivers was eradicated.

"I used to walk an hour and a half fetching water, and now I am fetching within 20 minutes. So, in that case, I can give water to my cows, bathe, water my crops. I can go anywhere I want without being late. Even my children attend school on time, and as well it has increased our time available for work."

~Community Member

When water is affordable…

Because teams charge a low fixed rate of 20rwf (about 2 cents USD) per jerry can, households are able to increase their daily water consumption to meet their needs and/or save money for other priorities. Participants reported that these benefits are also being enjoyed by businesses, particularly construction.

[Households] are able to save up money once used for paying water bills and reinvesting it in other income generating activities.

The cost of all manual work that necessitates water as an input (e.g., brickmaking) has been lowered.

When water is ample (especially, available during dry seasons)

Because each new water site includes at least one storage tank, communities can access water during the dry season or if the public utility (WASAC) turns off the taps. This helps reduce the lines of people waiting for water and the risks of conflict or violence over limited supply, adding to the benefits above. Participants reported that households can now maintain healthy livestock and gardens, year-round.

The problem of not having water was solved. We have water at any time of the day.

*A large aggressive crowd at the water site has been reduced.*

We now have adequate water to feed our cattle, particularly cows, who have boosted their milk production.

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Changes align with multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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Participants across all four sessions described a plethora of benefits derived from the teams' efforts to make clean water accessible to the whole community. Figure 3 illustrates some of the ways that they connected the dots among diverse changes they and their fellow community members have experienced over the past years.

Figure 3. How Participants Describe the Intersecting Benefits of Teams' Water Ventures
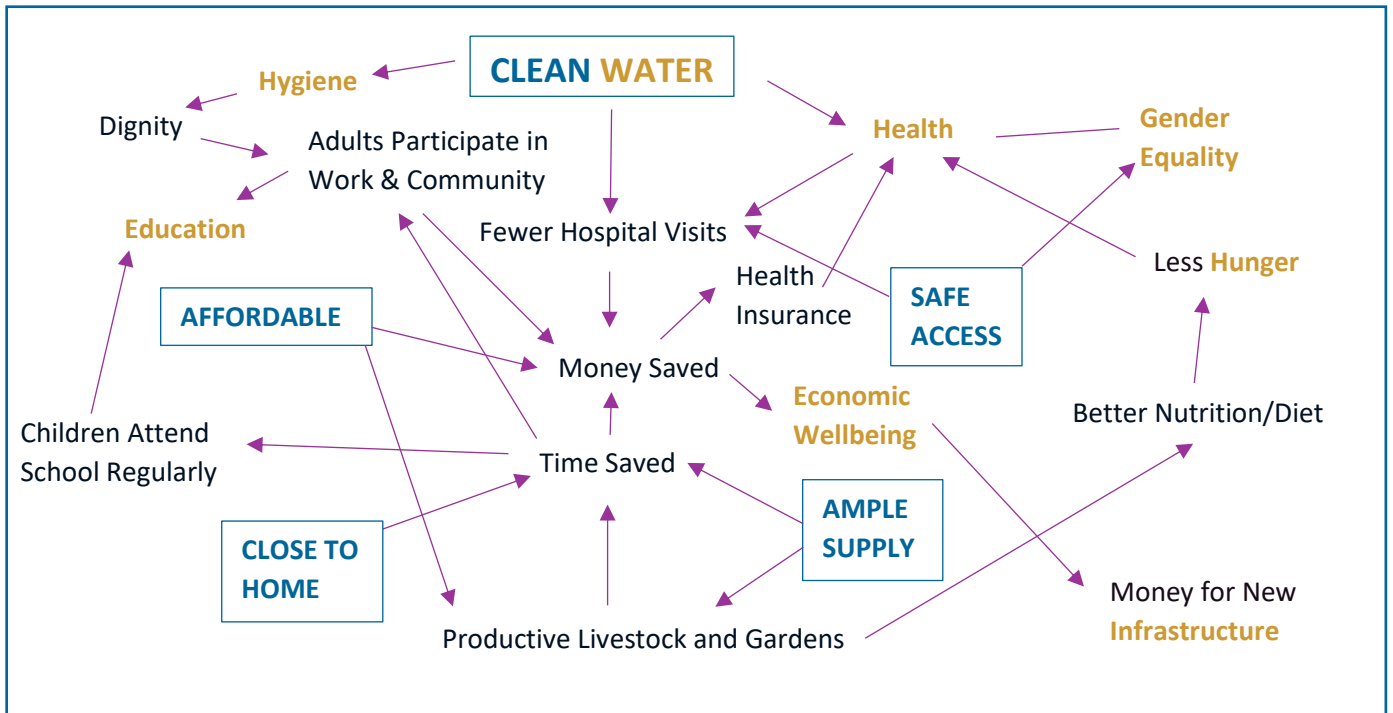
Participants' comments aligned thematically well with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this section, we will look more closely at the reported impacts in relation to the following:

- Health & Wellbeing (SDG 3) and Zero Hunger (SDG 2)
- Gender Equality (SDG 6) and Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10)
- No Poverty (SDG 1)
- Quality Education (SDG 4)
- Infrastructure (SDG 9)

Changes align with multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Health & Wellbeing (SDG 3) & Zero Hunger (SDG 2)

Not surprisingly, many participants focused on improvements they and others have experienced because of better hygiene and sanitation attributable to the new water sites. As one participant summarized it, "*Hygiene and sanitation have been adopted as a policy within our homes.*"

As Figure 4 shows, improvements in other areas of health and nutrition were also noted, along with the important ripple effect of reduced hospital visits that participants say results in additional financial savings.

Figure 4. Focus of comments about improved health (n=89 comments)
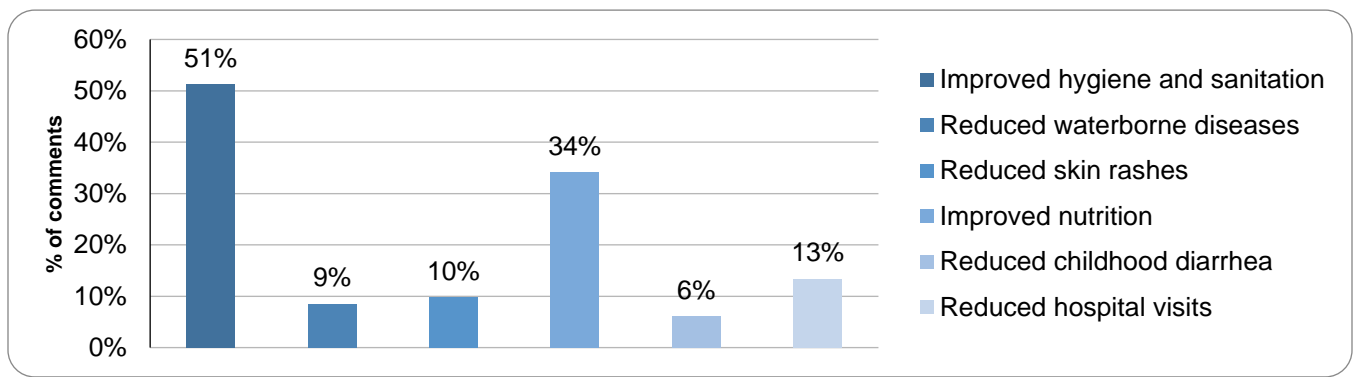
In all four sessions we heard about the benefits of having more productive livestock, especially cows to provide milk for children. While few comments specifically mentioned the teams' trainings on childhood nutrition, they cited ***kitchen gardens*** (a key strategy of some teams) as a contributing factor in their improved health.

> *We have created kitchen gardens, and now that water is closer, we can irrigate during the sunny seasons, and our living conditions are gradually increasing.*

> *Our living conditions are now improving because of kitchen gardens we are having in our homes because of trainings offered by the team.*

> *Generally speaking, our living standards are being leveled up since we are able to get all components of balanced diet from our kitchen gardens in their fresh raw form and full of nutrients.*

> *Malnutrition cases among our children have reduced since they are feeding on balanced diet from kitchen gardens.*

> *After the changes, we had good health, fed newborn children a balanced diet in their first 1000 days, and learnt the benefits of vegetables to our health.*

Changes align with multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Gender Equality (SDG 6)

Understanding the impacts on gender equality, including gender-based violence, and other inequalities was more complicated. On the one hand, participants spoke frequently and consistently about the reduction in violence against women, girls, and vulnerable people during the walk to water. Team members hoped for these improvements. But participants' comments highlighted other changes that one might not expect from "simply" increasing households' access to water.

Of all topics related to gender equality, they spoke most often about improved relationships at home.

Figure 5. Relative focus of comments about improved gender equality (n=68 comments)
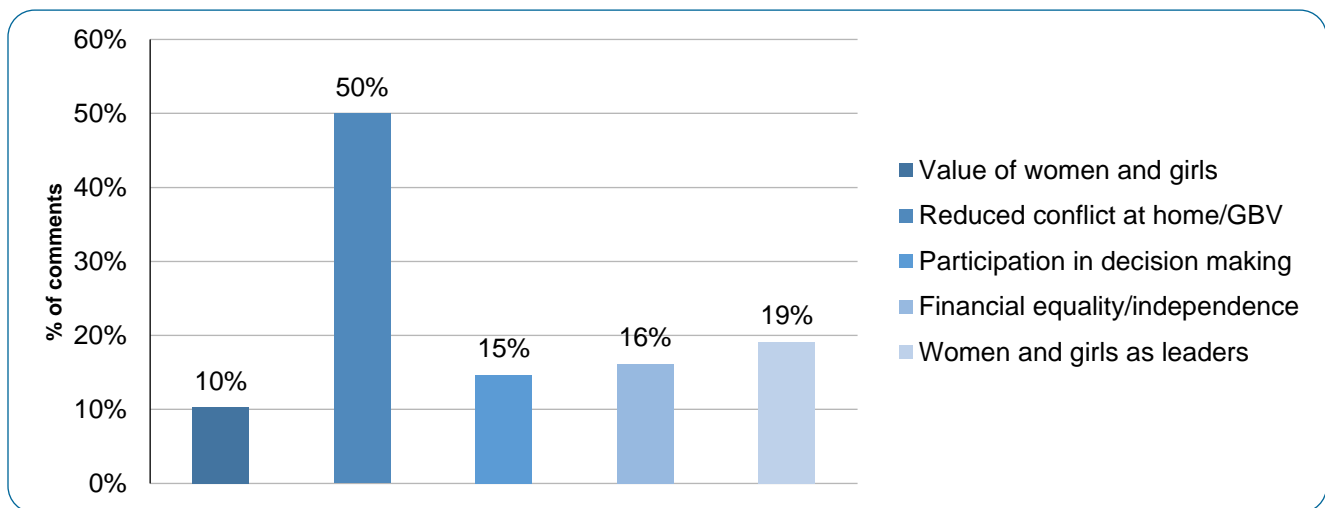
They spoke about reduced domestic violence and increased "family harmony" due to the proximity of water and time saved, but also due shifts in mindsets about gender roles.

Women are no longer beaten up because of delayed meals or dirty children since they get water on time and attend to home chores on time.

Couples' love has grown as women have become cleaner and men have gained the guts to approach them. Within houses, there is more closeness.

Domestic violence has reduced as home tasks are being done on time and couples are taking their decision together.

Home-based violence has reduced because both women and men are now focusing on family development.

Because of keeping time and changed mindsets about gender and equality within homes, we are able to have time for family dialogue and plan for it.

Changes align with multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Participants described women finding greater voice and power at home and in the community.

Women are not only housewives' materials. We are now self-confident to engage in other activities.

Women are now engaged in decision-making and understand their rights of property sharing and inheritance.

Women are now confident. They are able to stand in the amidst of people and express their minds and also able to learn from each other without criticizing.

They described how women are engaging in new and different activities, especially related to family financial planning and decision making.

Our wives have enough time to participate in saving clubs. She is able to take up loans and we build together our family's development.

Women and men are working together to improve families' financial capabilities.

Women are now confident to participate in income generating activities.

We are building our financial independence learning from others.

According to participants, the Global Grassroots women's' teams are taking on more leadership roles and being recognized as role models for others.

Women are now in policy and decision-making positions for they are now confident.

The team leader and the rest of team members are consulted by local administrators when they are to discuss to something crucial. They believe them to be experts and able to give tangible advice.

The team has now become a stakeholder to government in achieving its goals.

People in our village have been trained about different topics; they are being elected for leadership positions for they are self-confident.

Team achievements have been acknowledged and appreciated officially on Liberation Day as an outstanding liberating act, and that means a lot to us.

Because of tangible work done before, we are trustworthy and being entrusted with other projects.

Women on the team are taken as role models and exemplary by the other women for they are self-confident and able to speak up by themselves.

It was difficult to ascertain from participants' comments whether these changes apply primarily to Global Grassroots' team members or if substantial numbers of other women in the community are experiencing them as well. This may a fruitful area for deeper exploration using data from Team Member Surveys, Community Impact Surveys, and future REM sessions.

Changes align with multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

No Poverty (SDG 1)

As illustrated in Figure 6, participants spoke about the economic benefits they and others in the community have reaped because of the new, affordable water access. Half of the comments focused on participants' ability to use time and savings from the new water source to participate in work or invest in profitable activities, creating opportunities for even greater economic benefits.

Figure 6. Focus of comments about improved economic wellbeing (n=65 comments)
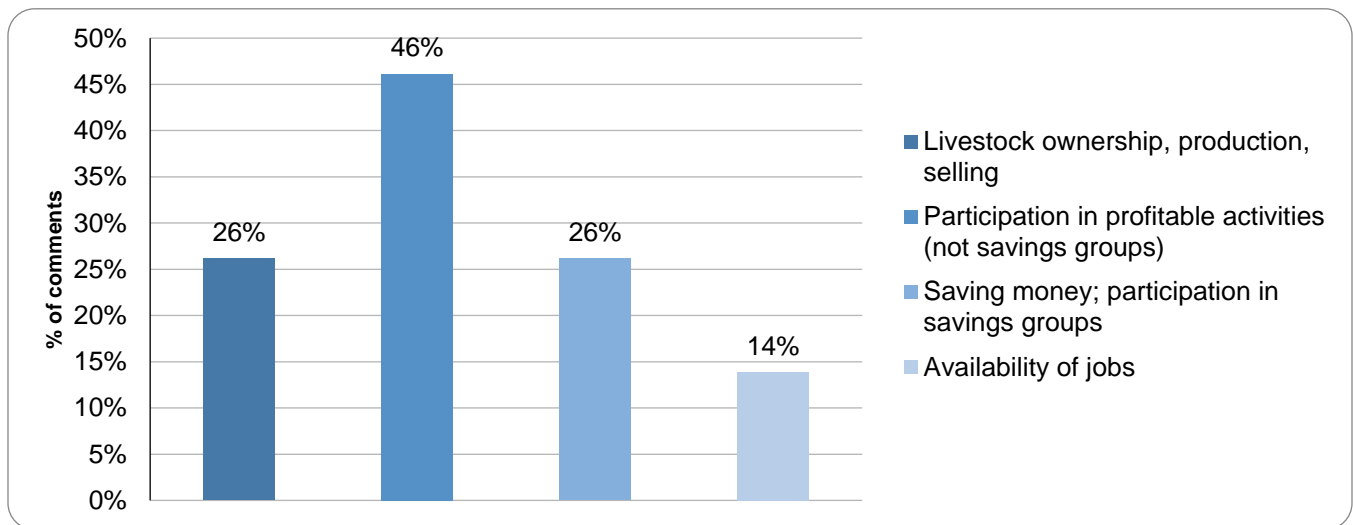
We are now able to attend to our works early since we no longer take hours and hours waiting for water. We are investing our time productively.

Our financial status has changed for we have saved up time once used for [fetching] water for other profitable activities.

Money once used for water is now saved up for profitable activities.

Poverty is getting away from us because of income generating activities we do, such as soap-making and saving.

We have gathered ourselves in saving and credit clubs, and we are now attending to our expenses and utilities like electricity and water on time.

We have bought sewing machines from our savings, and we are changing our lives toward financial independence.

Participants also discussed how they are now able to pay for **health insurance**, either themselves or because the team provided it as part of their social purpose activities.

While not a specific activity supported by Global Grassroots' teams, increased participation by women in **savings groups** appears to be positive ripple effect of their efforts. This may be worth further exploration as participants in all four REM sessions talked about the positive impact on households, particularly for women who, until the water venture launched, had not participated.

Changes align with multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Education (SDG 4)

Across the four sessions, participants commented on positive changes taking place with regards to children's education. Improved school attendance and reduced tardiness were most noted, and uniformly attributed to the proximity of the new water sites.

Figure 7. Focus of comments about improved education (n=31 comments)
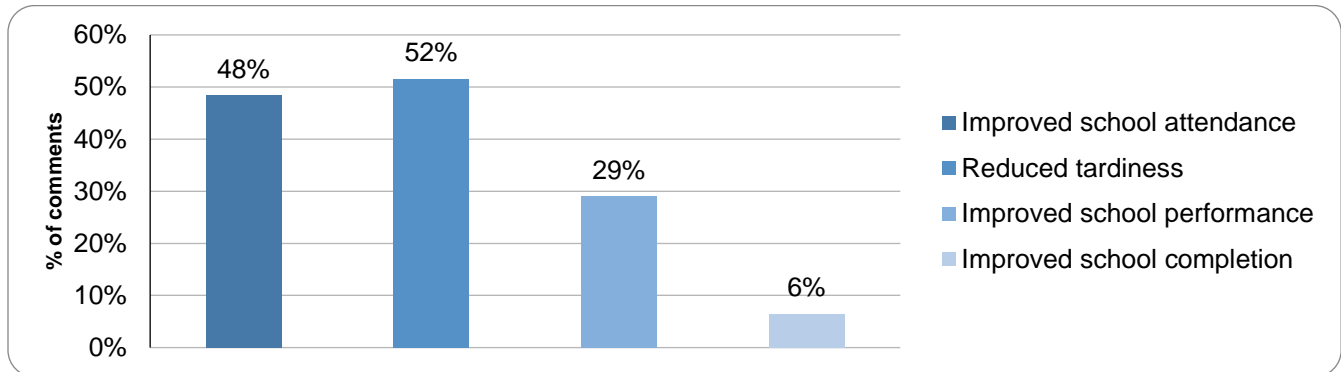
As explained in the section above, the time savings reaped by those who are tasked with fetching water has been considerable and directly impacts the flow of daily of household routines. With water nearby, children sleep more, complete chores in a timely way, and miss less school.

> *We are now able to prepare family meals on time and children gets to sleep early so as to attend schools on time, hence increasing their performance.*

> *At school, our children are no longer dozing in class since they get enough rest and that increases their performance. Students are excelling in school as they attend on time and without stress and tiredness from fetching water.*

Participants did not specify whether these benefits were impacting girls or boys in particular, nor did they note ways in which the teams' other social purpose activities (i.e, trainings, advocacy) may be contributing to increased school attendance or performance.

These are valuable areas for more exploration.

"In the morning, children could spend 4 hours getting water. They would arrive late to school and when they returned, they could spend another 4 hours getting water, causing them not to revise their lessons learned at school. Now pupils can study effectively."
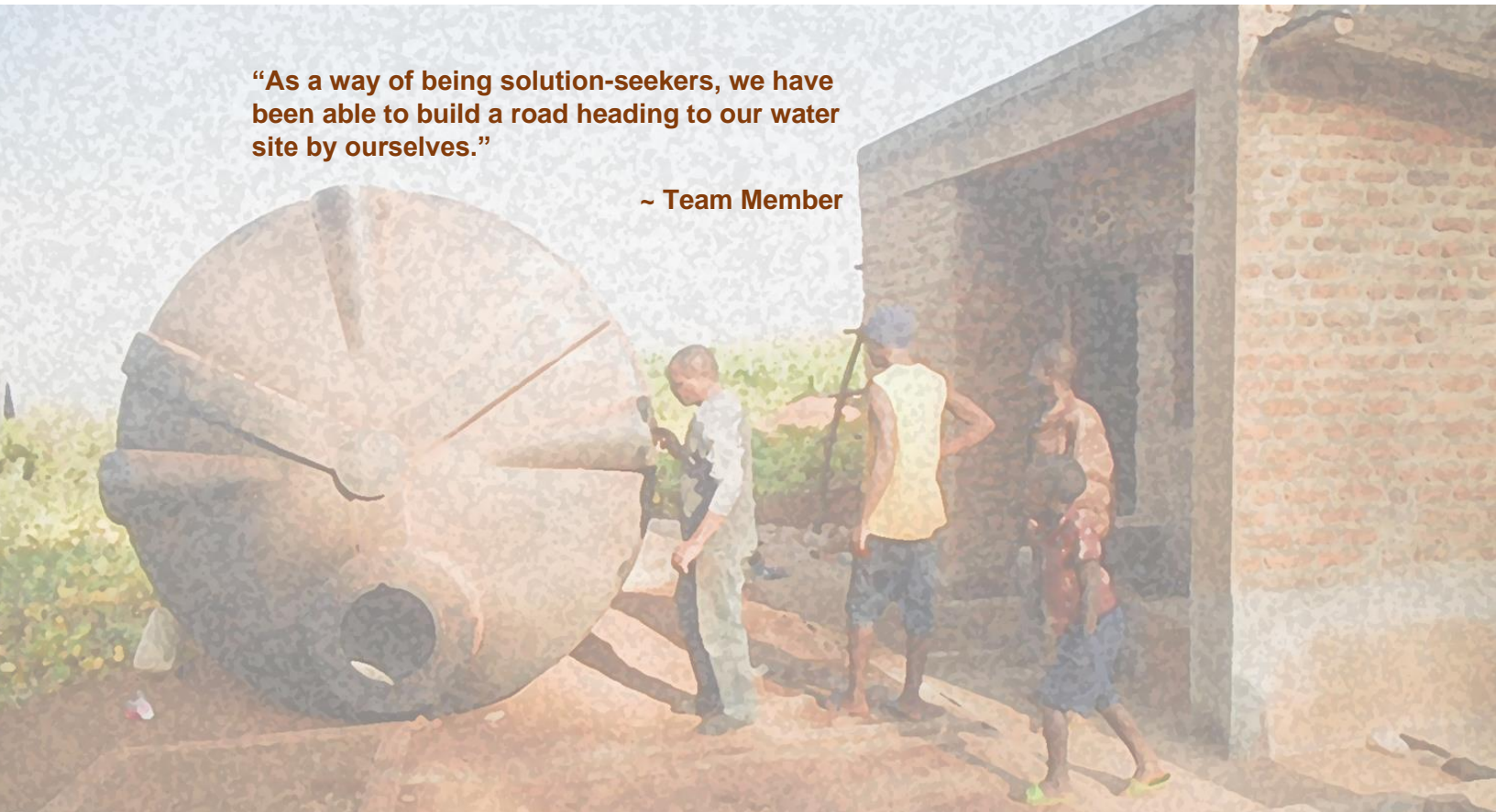
~ Community Member

Changes align with multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Infrastructure (SDG 10)

Some unexpected ripple effects that participants shared relate to the development of infrastructure - beyond a team's water sites themselves:

- In 2015, one team built a road so that construction vehicles could access the village and begin work on the new water site. Participants described how, since then, the community has continued to benefit from this investment. One said, "The road we built facilitated the exchange of goods and services as well as movements of people from one village to another. This road has fueled the establishment of a second water site, since vehicles bringing materials for construction passed through the first site to reach the second water site."

- Several participants noted, and Global Grassroots' staff confirmed, that some community members have been able to build their own homes, due in part to the availability of affordable of water for construction.

- Some community members have been able to build a direct connection between their homes and a team's water site, something that would have been prohibitively expensive if they had to connect with the main water pipeline.


"As a way of being solution-seekers, we have been able to build a road heading to our water site by ourselves."

~ Team Member

The diverse array of changes that participants described in all four REM sessions – from fewer skin rashes to deep shifts in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors around gender equality – underscore the complexities involved in assessing the impact in Global Grassroots' investments in women as leaders of Conscious Social Change in their communities.

One of the goals of this inquiry was to try to better understand to what extent different components of the model may be more important, or less so, in contributing to transformation experienced at the personal and community levels. This proves to be a very difficult challenge, as participants' comments underscore the deeply interconnected nature of the issues and strategies that teams are focusing on.

Nonetheless, a careful review of participants' comments points to three key elements of teams' efforts. Figure 8 illustrates that while access to water was the most likely "source" of these impacts, participants also recognized the way teams' other social purpose activities (i.e., trainings, advocacy, support for vulnerable households, etc.) and mindset shifts are reinforcing and amplifying the other more tangible impacts gained from the water site.

Figure 8. Comments about most significant impacts (n=422 comments)
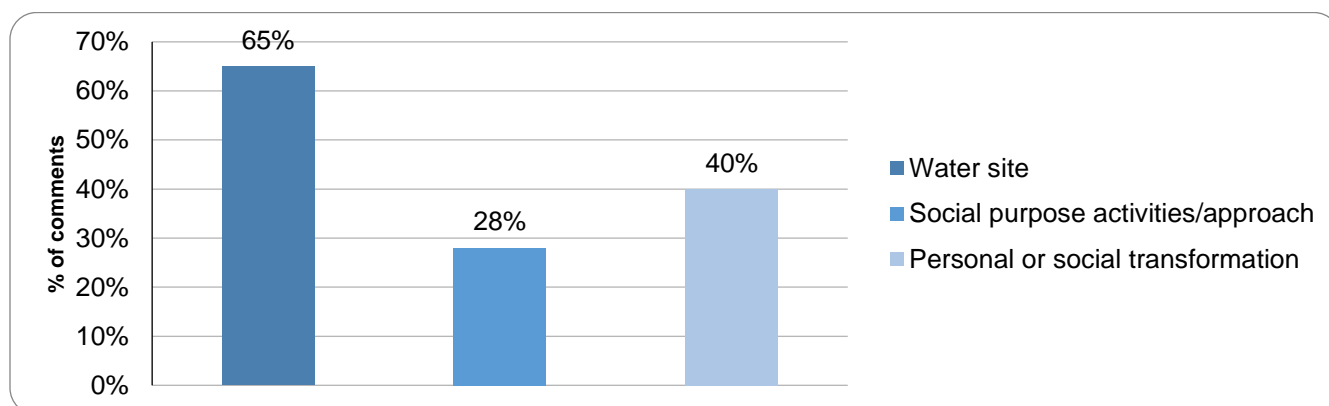
Empowerment with new knowledge and skills

Global Grassroots' model encourages teams to focus on a social issue most relevant to their own communities, and to think deeply about root causes and interventions.

Each team's mission reflects that priority (e.g., reduce violence against women and girls) and venture plans articulate how activities will impact the issue in a positive way. Access to clean water coupled with additional purposeful activities, then, form their holistic intervention designed to achieve their specific social change goals.

Team members are also introduced during the Academy for Conscious Change to numerous ways to engage in awareness-based practices (e.g., belly-breathing, perspective-taking, deep listening) to support their personal growth as a mindful leader. The aim of this integrated "inner work for social change" approach is to help the teams lead change that is deeply rooted in an appreciation of the needs of, and compassion for, their fellow community members while simultaneously tending to their own personal growth and care.

4 Participants attribute changes to water + social purpose activities and mindset shifts

Community members are unlikely aware of this larger Conscious Social Change approach, yet across the four REM sessions, participants consistently appreciated the new knowledge and skills they and others have gained from the teams' efforts, beyond the access to water itself.

Figure 9. Focus of comments about new knowledge and skills gained from teams (n=79 comments)
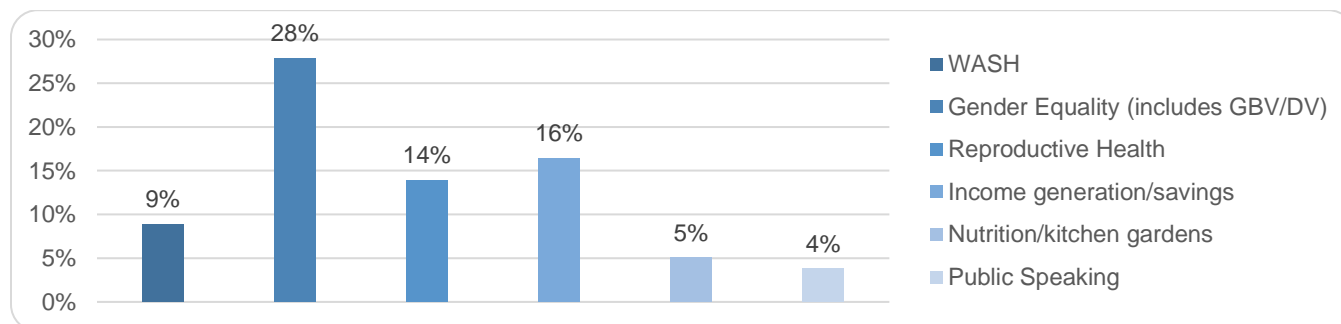
Trainings on "gender balance"[5] were most often noted, followed by comments about a team's efforts to encourage participation in savings groups and income generating projects, and then family planning. While team's efforts to share information about hygiene and sanitation (WASH) were not called out as frequently, it is possible participants were including these activities when they spoke about "having water" in general.

> *Having water nearer to us and together with different trainings offered, they have reduced vividly home conflict.*

> *Home conflicts have decreased after getting trainings about keeping our marriages safe and enhancing women's emancipation.*

> *Parents were trained about gender balance and equality and how to keep marriages safe, and that has contributed so much in reducing home conflicts.*

> *Gender balance and equality has been thoroughly explained to us through trainings. We are now at peace in our homes.*

> *All these impacts have been brought by having clean water nearer and skills got from trainings which have improved our lives.*

> *The team has advised us to belong to social and saving clubs and that has contributed to our self-confidence.*

> *Through trainings, people have opened up their minds and extended their thinking beyond their selves and their limitations, and life is not the same.*

---

[5] This includes information about gender equality, women's and girls' rights, gender-based violence, domestic violence, conflict resolution.

Participants attribute changes to water + social purpose activities and mindset shifts

Shifting Mindsets

Participants noted several ways that teams' efforts have contributed to shifting mindsets. Echoing findings from prior Global Grassroots impact assessments, the greatest number of comments had to do with increasing confidence, and/or a sense of agency, particularly among team members and women.

Figure 10. Focus of comments about mindset shifts (n=167 comments)
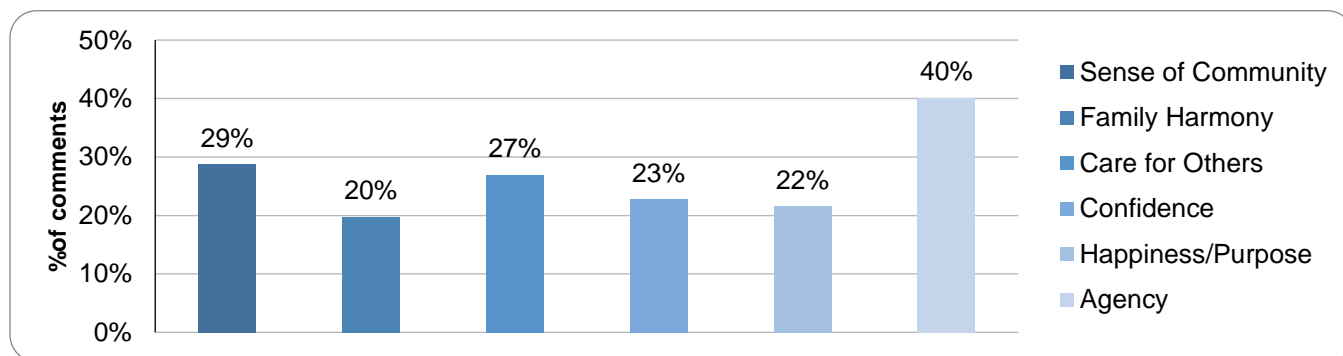
Notably, participants also spoke about a sense of pride in themselves and their families; feelings of dignity due to being able to practice better hygiene; a deepening sense of closeness and care for others as conflicts and abuse lessens; and an optimistic view about the future. This is remarkable considering the ongoing challenges that communities are contending with from population growth to climate change.

We appreciate the different trainings we had that has reshaped our mindsets. We now hope for our future to be positive.

The team and other stakeholders have helped to open our eyes and recognize our inner power and our capabilities. Now we have self-confidence, and we can speak our ideas.

Hope of life and future has increased through having good life and transformed mindsets.

Trainings offered by the team, be of family planning, gender and equality and even eating balanced diet, have left skills and knowledge that is propelling our families to next level of thinking.

Mindsets about gender and equality amongst families have changed, now we work together aiming for common goal of building family development.

These improvements result from tremendous effort in the team in collaboration with Global Grassroots, which has opened our eyes to unseen capabilities within us.

Partnering with Global Grassroots has created a spirit of believing in ourselves and our capabilities and having self-confidence.

Given the participatory nature of our inquiry, it is possible that participants comments were skewed towards the positive and hopeful. Of course, we acknowledge that exploration with more teams and communities, and insight from partners who are less "embedded" in the work, will be vital to further verifying the themes and details shared here.

Increasing social cohesion may be part of Global Grassroots' "secret sauce"

One of the unexpected themes that emerged from careful review of the REM data was the degree of social cohesion, or sense of community, that participants described. This theme did not stand out strongly when we considered participants' comments about the benefits of water access alone. But it became increasingly clear as we analyzed comments about teams' overall impacts.

We save time and become more involved in other socially transformative actions when we have access to clean water.

Participants noted how relationships within their households have improved as a result of greater water access, time and money saved, reduced stressors, adult participation in trainings on gender equality, and the mindset shifts as a result. Several participants noted greater "family harmony" to describe the new atmosphere within households.

Others described "solidarity" and "collaboration" happening within the community because of the social purpose activities and the role-modelling of team members as community-builders.

Solidarity and collaboration with community members has increased as our team took the first step in uniting the community members. It makes people live in harmony.

The benefits of this increasing sense of community were notably mentioned by participants who described themselves as "disadvantaged" or "vulnerable."

As elders and financially disadvantaged people, the team has thought about us and we were given free water. It caught our attention and we felt that we are part of this program.

As vulnerable people we had loneliness. This team has thought on us and we feel belonginess in the community.

It isn't possible to tell from this inquiry the causes of this new sense of solidarity and belonging. There are many possible sources, including several related to Global Grassroots' theory of change.

The Women's Water Leadership Initiative invests in *teams*, not individual change agents, to foster a sense of collaboration and shared social responsibility. Teams create social purpose ventures (rather than for-profit activities) which reinvest proceeds back into the community, and those teams practice shared management of water resources rather than piping water into individual homes. It's possible this approach nurtures existing tendencies of community members to look out for one another's wellbeing.

After we gained, we fought to share the benefits with others to have good lives and be happy.

Furthermore, Global Grassroots staff introduce team members to an array of research-based "inner work" practices evolved from ancient traditions to promote deeper awareness of our interconnectedness with one another and with nature. These may also be playing a role.

We have all became conscious social leaders. We all have the zeal to share with everyone we meet.

If teams' efforts are indeed resulting in meaningful increases in social cohesion and sense of community, any one of these "drivers" (as well as other forces outside our current awareness) may be contributing. This may be a very fruitful area of exploration for future Wisdom Lab research and learning.

CHALLENGES & HOPES

A vast majority of participants' comments depicted many positive impacts – intended and not – reaped by the teams' water and social purpose ventures. The only negative outcome mentioned was that local water vendors have found themselves largely out of work because of the new water sites. These individuals used to earn profits selling water at a price that was 10 times or more greater than the teams' fixed price.

When asked how the community and teams are approaching this challenge, one participant explained that they "keep talking" with the water vendors to help them understand the larger goals and benefits of the water venture. Another mentioned that they must remain vigilant and aware of the vendors' frustrations. Some teams use their venture income or partner with local leaders to obtain security for the water sites.

A second and ongoing challenge is population growth in the communities where teams operate. Gasabo District and Jali Sector have been rapidly developing over the past 7 years. New infrastructure, including government-provided housing for the area's most vulnerable populations, has increased demand for water. This is compounded when the local authority turns off the taps to conserve water or to distribute it to other parts of the region.

Across the REM sessions, participants uniformly confirmed that Global Grassroots' investments in accelerator ventures had made a significantly positive impact on the availability of water for the area, but team leaders acknowledge that they have not achieved all their goals related to access to water for their whole community.

One team is still struggling because their pipeline is connected to (and flow controlled by) the military base nearby. They are trying to negotiate with the military to alleviate this issue.

"People who depended on wage of selling water door-to door they have lost their job. Despite that, they are happy for the common community changes which are happening."

~Team Member

"We have not reached our target goal of having at least 500m between two water pipelines, but together with our skills and savings and good partnership with different stakeholders especially Global Grassroots. we look forward to hitting it soon."

~ Team Member

"Our greatest hope is to get a pipeline that is separate from the military's line."

~ Team Member

Women, Water & Wisdom: Mapping Ripple Effects of Conscious Social Change in Rural Rwanda

SUMMARY

Forty-five REM participants' reflections on Global Grassroots teams' efforts to make sustainable change affirm that meaningful and impactful shifts are happening within four different communities in rural Rwanda. Team members, community partners, and community members consistently described *tangible effects associated with increased access to water*. Five key elements arose related to teams' construction of new water sites to help produce immediate and intersecting benefits in safety, hygiene, health, nutrition, gender equality, household financial wellbeing, children's participation in school, and community infrastructure. When water is clean, close to home, safe to access, affordable, and ample, especially during dry seasons, the benefits described by participants are clear, consistent, and well-aligned with multiple Sustainable Development Goals.

But the REM sessions provided additional insight from participants into how these improvements in wellbeing were being *amplified by teams' social purpose activities and accompanying mindset shifts*. Some of the impacts aligned directly with teams' social purpose activities, such as building kitchen gardens and reported improvements in household diets and nutrition. Similarly, participants spoke frequently about how teams' classes in conflict resolution, gender roles, and family planning had had positive impacts on "family harmony," including reduced violence at home and increased participation by women in savings groups, financial decision-making, and leadership roles in the community.

One unexpected but hoped for finding was that participants described an increased sense of community, belonging, and hopefulness about the future now, as compared to before. This was especially notably when raised by individuals who described themselves as "vulnerable." Building community resilience in an inclusive manner is very difficult and this is an exciting area for further exploration with our existing and new teams.

Limitations

Ripple Effect Mapping is a powerful tool for understanding - through the eyes of diverse stakeholders-what is happening because of an intervention when outcomes are unpredictable. As a participatory research process, REM provides a framework that can be adapted to fit the cultural and other contextual needs of a project, and it can be structured to allow for analysis across REM sessions.

There are limitations to REM, our inquiry, and this report. As with all research, REM offers opportunities for unconscious bias to influence the process, questions, how participants respond, and how data is analyzed.

We tried to be mindful about our choices (i.e., whether to hire outside interpreters or use Global Grassroots' staff; whether to include a welcome from each teams' president; how much time to provide participants to get to know one another; how to include team members in the data analysis process, etc.). Sometimes, we erred on the side of collaborative learning over keeping a "pristine" research environment. Other times, we swayed towards a more traditional researcher-led process.

We take responsibility for any shortcomings of this inquiry or errors within this report. Please reach out to Sara Taggart (staggart@globalgrassroots.org) if you would like to provide feedback of any kind.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING

Some of the questions that this inquiry touched on, but could not fully answer, and deserve deeper study include:

1) **How widespread are the changes described?** Each REM session included a cross-section of 11-12 people representing the perspectives of 2,000-3,000 individuals living in each venture's focus area. Past quantitative surveys of 40-45 individuals per venture area have produced similar information. It would be valuable to poll a larger sample within each geography to verify the breadth and depth of impacts within diverse households served by each venture.

2) **What else might have contributed to the shifts described by participants? While** we probed for this, we did not learn of any other significant input or events that occurred during the six years of operations covered. This may indicate that the teams' efforts were far and away the most impactful activities to occur, but we cannot say for sure. Nevertheless, the consistency from team to team confidence that the shifts are in large part attributable to the teams' efforts.

3) **Did the clustering of Global Grassroots investments in teams located close to one another make a difference?** While each team and venture's "story" was unique, as mentioned the themes in this report were consistent across all four, including our comparison venture located outside of Jali Sector. According to Global Grassroots' staff, there have been several benefits from the clustering approach:

   a. Teams located near one another have grown to know each other, creating a sense of camaraderie and mutual respect for their efforts. This has evolved in part because Global Grassroots would occasionally convene gatherings or refresher trainings where team members from different areas would meet and learn together.
   b. Community members living in villages on the edge between two different ventures have discovered that they can access water from either location, even though the water site may be led by two different teams. This is the result of team leaders discussing the situation and agreeing it was best for the communities to share in this way, especially if water is running low or pipelines are turned off by local authorities in one location.
   c. Global Grassroots have been able to develop strong and lasting relationships with local authorities and leaders who serve several of the women's teams in Gasabo Sector. This makes it easier and faster to support teams as they learn how to navigate the administrative systems and challenges related to their water + social purpose ventures.

4) **What do these results tell us about the role of "inner work" in Global Grassroots' Conscious Social Change model?** This is a question of great interest as we move forward with our Wisdom Lab initiative. We feel confident that this REM inquiry affirms that positive and lasting shifts are taking place in communities at both the tangible (reduced skin rashes, more family harmony, increased family savings, increased participation in school, etc.) and less tangible (greater confidence of women and in women as leaders, increased dignity, increased sense of community, etc.).

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING

But as noted above, we don't know with confidence how widespread those changes are. And we cannot yet tell:

- Are Global Grassroots teams leading change differently than other social entrepreneurs working toward similar goals in similar contexts?
- Are our teams having different impacts (deeper, more lasting, etc.) as a result?
- If so, is that difference driven by learning about and/or practicing "inner work," including awareness-based frameworks and practices like mindfulness, trauma healing, non-violent communication, etc. that are central to Global Grassroots' Conscious Social Change model?
- If so, what are they connections between inner work and the social change outcomes?

As a learning organization, we are eager to engage with others in these inquiries. The following are just some of the questions we would love to hear from you about:

- What are your takeaways from the data and analysis presented in this report? What rings true based on your lived experience? Where do you feel skeptical or curious to learn more?
- How do the findings help clarify or challenge Global Grassroots' theory of change? What can this inquiry teach us about the "most important" elements of Global Grassroots' model?
- How can we continue to learn alongside our teams about the possible role of inner work in the achievement of critical social, economic, environmental, and political changes needed for all communities to thrive? What and how are you learning about this in your endeavors?

APPENDIX A: REM Session Agenda

Time	Activity
8:45	Staff Arrival & Set Up
9:00	Participants' Arrival Breath-Body-Mind© or other activity for participants
10:00-10:05	Welcome & Introductions
10:05-10:15	Overview of session and objectives
10:15-10:25	Informed Consent
10:25-10:45	Introductions ● Explanation of Activity (2 min) ● Introductions in Pairs (6 min) ● Whole Group Harvest (12min)
10:45-11:00	Venture Overview and Timeline ● Brief overview of who, what, when, where, why of Team X and their ventures
11:00-11:15	Highlights of Transformation 1st Person in Pair Shares ● Explanation of activity (3 min) ● Participants work in pairs ● One person shares while other listens (10 min) *Share with your partner 3-5 ways that you or your community has been impacted by Team X's efforts to improve this community.*
11:15-11:30	1st Sharing Highlights as a Whole Group ● Ask each pair to share 3-5 highlights they discussed ● Continue until all have been captured and recorded
11:30-11:45	2nd in Pair Shares ● Explanation of activity (3 min) ● Participants work in pairs ● One person shares while other listens (10 min) ● At end, pair decides who will share with whole group
11:45-12:00	2nd Sharing Highlights as Whole Group ● Ask each pair to share 3-5 highlights they discussed Continue until all have been captured and recorded
12:00-1:00	LUNCH
1:00-1:15	In Whole Group: Review the Map Ask the group to look at the map: Is anything missing? Any corrections to be made?
1:15-1:45	In Whole Group: Sense Making & Most Significant Change What are your takeaways from looking at the map? Are there any key moments or "critical events" or strategies that made a big difference in impacts? What are the most significant change(s) that you DIRECTLY link to Team X's efforts? What are the most significant change(s) that you INDIRECTLY link to Team X's efforts?
1:45-2:00	Closing Appreciations and Evaluation. Thank the participants for engaging in the Ripple Effects Mapping exercise.
2:00	Reimbursement for Transport & Social Time

"What has brought these changes forth is people who took initiative to be solution-seekers."

~ Community Member
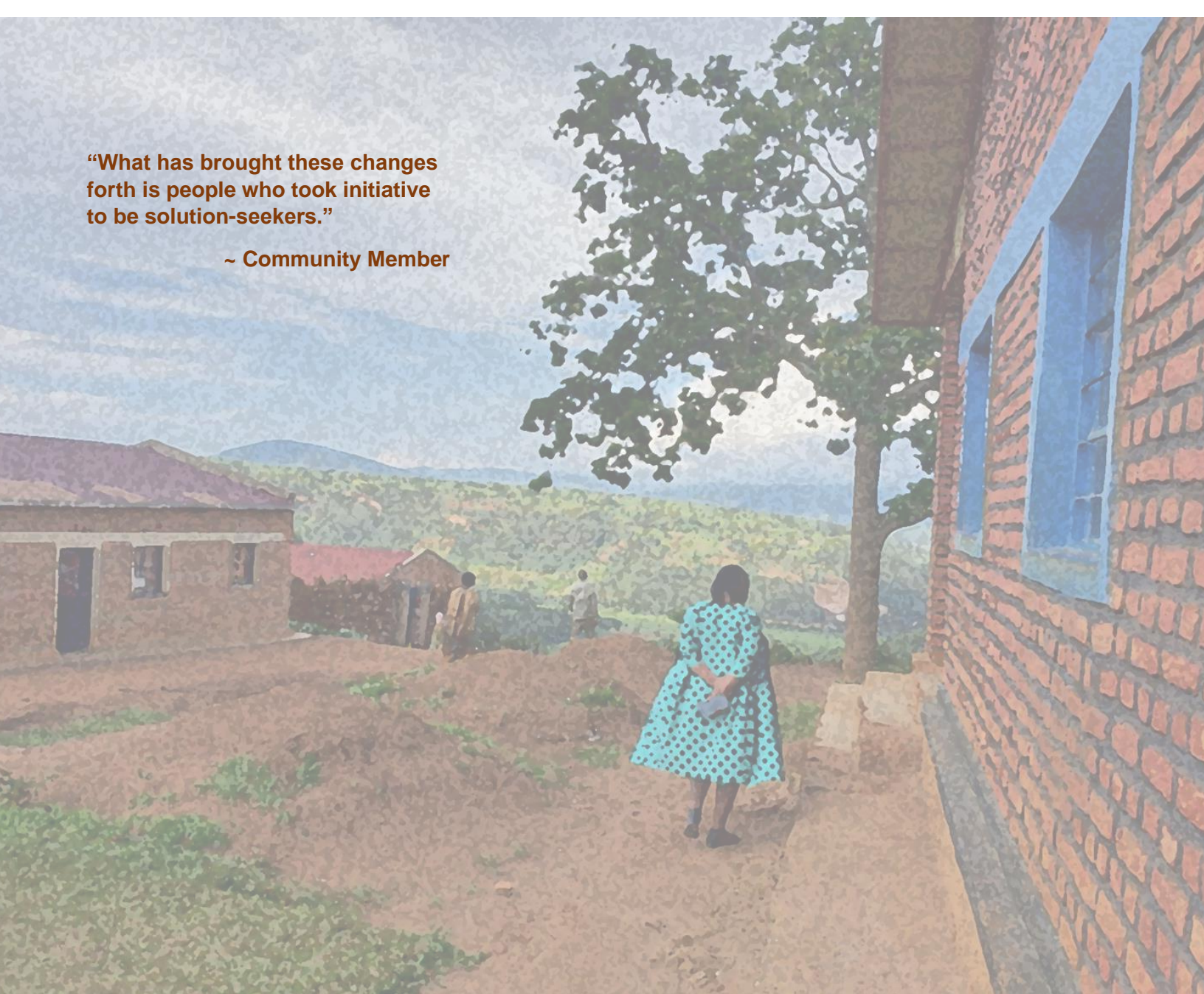
For more information about this report and other projects underway,

reach out to us at wisdomlab@globalgrassroots.org.

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CONSCIOUS SOCIAL CHANGE FOR WOMEN