



2023

Impact Report



We want to see communities thrive through building sustainable and locally-owned solutions that maximize existing resources.

BY

**LOVE
AND
HANDS**

Table of Contents

01 — Message from Erica, CEO

02 — INTRODUCTION

03 — Key Lessons From 2023

Key Highlights for 2023

04 — Umugandathon 2023 Graduation

05 — Umugandathon's Expansion

07 — Upskilling Program

08 — Community Stories

09 — Acknowledgements



MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERS

Allow me to start by quoting one of our program participants: "I am very happy because even if I have not reached the finish line, I have overcome some challenging parts." This sentiment resonates deeply with us at Love and Hands. While we acknowledge that we still have a long journey ahead, we are proud of the progress we made in 2023. We faced challenges, implemented new learnings, and ventured into uncharted territories, marking significant steps forward.

Expanding our programs to five additional districts, targeting rural youth, we successfully trained over 1000 youth who established approximately 70 community-led enterprises. It has become increasingly clear to us that directing our efforts towards rural communities is a positive and strategic approach. Presently, over 90% of the communities we partner with are situated in rural areas, located far from district centers. In addition, we are dedicated to ensuring that at least 70% of women can fully participate in all our programs. We firmly believe in the capacity of rural communities to drive their change and In 2023, we witnessed firsthand how rural communities in Rwanda effectively utilized their resources to overcome challenges and provide solutions.

A key lesson learned in 2023 was the importance of enhancing post-training support for community enterprises to minimize dropout rates. We introduced community-based mentors who live within the communities and regularly visit teams to provide coaching and support. This initiative has significantly boosted team morale and cohesion. As advocates for continuous learning, we are pleased to share more of our learnings widely in this report.

In light of these accomplishments, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to the individual and collective efforts of our team, partners, and communities. Each person plays a vital role in transforming community lives, and we eagerly anticipate further collaboration in 2024.

Erica Gateka, CEO



In 2023, we witnessed firsthand how rural communities in Rwanda effectively utilized their resources to overcome challenges and provide solutions.

Introduction

Love and Hands is an organization committed to enabling sustainable, community-driven solutions. We achieve this by connecting community-owned local resources to the challenges the community faces. Through comprehensive training and support, we empower communities to identify, mobilize, and utilize their own resources, skills, and capacities to tackle the issues that matter most to them.

Our fundamental belief is that communities possess significant yet often overlooked resources and capabilities. Thus, by challenging the notion that external resources are indispensable, we guide communities towards a mindset that emphasizes utilizing their existing assets to address their needs. This approach, known as Asset-based Community Development, forms the core of our approach and promotes community agency and self-resilience within communities.



KEY LESSONS FROM 2023

01 A fit to rural the context

ABCD has proven to be more effective in rural and peri-urban communities compared to university settings or urban settings in Rwanda. In Umugandathon cohort 1, out of 20 youth teams trained in universities, only one remains active, while in community trainings, 25 out of 33 teams are still active. This discrepancy can be attributed to the uncertain nature of university life, where students are less inclined to invest resources and time in initiatives when their future is uncertain. In contrast, rural communities exhibit lower risk aversion and a stronger commitment to investing resources due to their sense of belonging and long-term commitment to their communities.



02

A foundation for other programs:

ABCD is proving to be a solid foundation for other community development initiatives such as skills development, entrepreneurship and access to finance. This is because it instills confidence in local communities by encouraging them to become co-investors in their own solutions.

03

A need for extended programs:

There is a need for a sustained multiple year commitment to communities to allow sufficient time to adopt the ABCD mindset and develop their initiatives. This also allows adequate time to include additional support such as skills development and access to finance.

04

Follow-Ups reduces dropout rate:

The dropout rate within teams experiences a notable decrease with consistent follow-up and support from community based mentors.



UMUGANDATHON GRADUATION

On January 27th, 2023, we marked a significant milestone with the graduation of our inaugural cohort from the Umugandathon program, a collaborative effort with the Mastercard Foundation. This cohort underwent training between 2020 and 2022, with a total of 775 young participants trained across 5 districts in Rwanda, including Huye, Kamonyi, Kirehe, Ruhango and Nyarugenge. Among these, 25 dynamic youth-led enterprises were formed, with about 90% of them focusing on agricultural initiatives.

During the graduation ceremony, we provided micro grants to 10 deserving teams worth \$500. Representatives from all districts were present and they took a moment to reflect on their journey and share valuable insights, highlighting the program's impact on their communities.





UMUGANDATHON'S EXPANSION

In April 2023, we had the privilege to be selected among 10 youth led organizations to participate in their Youth led organization pilot in the Mastercard Foundation. Under this program we decided to extend Umugandathon to more than 1000 more youth in the Eastern and Southern Province of Rwanda.

Between June and end of August we successfully trained 1122 youth in ABCD in existing communities Kamonyi, Ruhango, Kirehe and two 2 more districts as an addition to more districts Rwamagana and Nyagatare.

With the initial plan of reaching to Kirehe Refugee camp "Mahama" we were not able to reach to the camp however, we are still making considering training early 2024



1122
Participants

71.57%
Female

28.43%
Male

Unlike the first cohort of this program ,the expansion was fully designed for rural communities and this shift was inspired by the learnings of the first phase



UPSKILLING PROGRAM

TEAMS IN NDUBA TURN 5 YEARS

This program aims to enable the community teams to start off their journey of scale by improving their skills. This stage falls under the Scaling phase, as explained in our core approach to development. By the time teams reach this phase, they are matured, and understand how to use the resources they have within and around them for the benefit of their businesses and communities

The longest standing women teams are based in Kigali, Gasabo in Nduba sector. These teams have been active for more than 5 years, and have proven that with commitment to using local resources, they can develop themselves and their communities.

We came alongside them to upskill their existing initiative by connecting them with a local expert who is skilled in professional hand knitting as a way of supporting them improve their skills and also gain market share. About 8 women were trained and look forward to a continued partnership with.



LEON LOCAL MENTOR
MUNYAGA-RWAMAGANA

“A team that is doing very well in making soap started with one member who knew how to make liquid soaps. When she attended the training she got inspired to start with what she had which was the skill of making liquid soaps. She then taught her team members how to make them, started contributing to buy materials and sent out trials to different places to get feedback.

Now they have secured 2 schools and a local bar in their sector to which they deliver soaps periodically.

They are working on how they can get more clients, the sector office inclusive”

EMMANUEL LOCAL MENTOR
KAYENZI-KAMONYI

“There was a major change in mindset however, in the beginning, there was a hard time understanding how ABCD works for the community because they did not receive any capital as they were expecting and every time I wanted to visit they would lie to me about the meeting time and I would not find them (this happened several times). But one time I told them testimonials of other teams (previous cohort) and how they started and they understood that they own their challenges which pushed them to start saving.

We now have 15 active teams, those in agricultural activities such as planting pineapple, fruits and vegetables, and others in rearing of chickens, pigs, goats and rabbits. Others are still in the saving phase.

Those in agricultural activities take their harvest to the marketplace every Wednesday and Friday for selling.

COMMUNITY STORIES

MAURICE LOCAL MENTOR
MATIMBA-NYAGATARE

After the training of Love and hands among other teams, there’s a team that joined farming as their major activity. 10 of them were together however 4 dropped out and 6 continued their activity. They started planting different kinds of vegetables like cabbages, eggplants and others. They are the first team that has started taking their harvest on the market place.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Love and Hands extends heartfelt gratitude to our invaluable partners whose unwavering support has propelled us towards impactful change. A special thanks to the **MasterCard Foundation** and **Segal Family Foundation** for their generous contributions, empowering us to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve. Our success this year is a testament to the dedication and hard work of our remarkable team. Their passion and tireless efforts have been instrumental in realizing our mission. Together, with the support of our partners and the commitment of our team, we continue to build a better, more resilient world.



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