

2024 ANNUAL REPORT





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OUR VISION

**Empowered adolescent girls
break the cycle of poverty in
Southern Africa.**

A MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER AND CHAIRPERSON

Priscilla Plummer

Nearly two decades ago, a small group of us set out on a journey. I was emerging from the international development world—grateful for all I'd learned, but disheartened by how often the work was driven from the top down, leaving too little room for local wisdom and leadership. And the voices heard least of all? Girls and women. We wanted to change that.

I hadn't set out to start an NGO. I had started a travel company—Global Sojourns—to bring people to Africa to experience its landscapes, wildlife and cultures; to step into nature, gain perspective, and connect more deeply. Over time, travelers began asking how they could help. But when I looked for organizations truly empowering local people in meaningful, respectful ways, I didn't find what I was hoping for. So, a few of us came together—and the Global Sojourns Giving Circle was born.

From the beginning, we focused on depth over scale, and trust over quick fixes. We sought out local changemakers—those with “umph” and vision—and supported them in creating change in their own communities, especially for girls. It didn't happen overnight. Like any grassroots effort, we experimented, listened, adjusted and built something grounded and lasting.

Today, with deep roots and a model shaped by the communities we serve, the results are unmistakable. Girls who once questioned their worth are finishing school, earning certificates and degrees, getting formal employment and launching businesses—most being the first in their families to do so.

Boys, too, are engaging in new ways—learning to see girls as equals and themselves as part of the change. Our network of Mentors and community partners continues to grow, building on consistency, relationship, and trust.

What so inspires me is how those in the communities are noticing—elders, parents, teachers, business leaders and others. I'm also quietly proud that we have waiting lists at all of our clubs, even though we don't give out material goods. What we offer is mentorship—and it works.

And now, we're at a pivotal moment.



Thanks to a generous sustainability grant from a longtime donor who passionately believes in our approach, we're entering a new chapter—one that brings greater structure and support to what we've built, and allows us to share this model more widely. I'm thrilled to introduce Tara Lee Casey, who is taking the baton to lead us forward. I feel truly blessed to be passing the administrative leadership to someone so well-suited for this next phase. Tara brings years of experience in the development sector in Africa and a unique ability to weave together the strong, organic pieces we've built. Besides structure, she also has a natural talent for relationship-building—an invaluable strength as we continue to grow our circle of support.

We're ready to grow, but we'll do so with care. We remain committed to what makes this work powerful: relationships, dignity and community-led change. We'll support more mentors, help new clubs take root, and share what we've learned with others seeking lasting, meaningful impact.

In my many years of living and working in Africa, I've never felt more inspired about the future. Our partners, mentors, youth, and alumni are shining with energy and purpose. It's a tremendous life blessing to witness, and I hope you can feel the spark of what you've helped make possible.

As I pass the daily baton, I am more excited than ever about what lies ahead—I'll be staying on in my role as Chair of the Board, and continuing to serve as a Strategic Advisor and Global Ambassador.

I'm still very much part of the fabric of GSGC and deeply committed to supporting this next chapter. I'm deeply proud of what we've built together. This success is possible because of people like you—those who believe that real, lasting change comes from within and are willing to be patient, stay committed, and hold true to our values. The payoff is extraordinary, and I couldn't be more grateful.

Thank you—for your trust, your patience and for walking alongside us.

With deep gratitude,
Priscilla Plummer



STRENGTHENING THE ROOTS, WEAVING THE THREADS:

*A Message from
Tara Casey,
Executive Director*



When I first connected with Global Sojourns Giving Circle last year as a consultant, I was immediately struck by the depth of heart and humanity that runs through every part of this organization. From the grounded, life-changing mentorship taking place in Zimbabwe and Zambia to the passionate, long-time supporters who form our extended community, it was clear I had encountered something rare and remarkable.

I came on board to support the development of GSGC's first formal Sustainability Plan. It was a time of reflection and alignment as the team, board, mentors and donors collectively asked: How do we preserve what makes this work so special while building the structure and strength needed to carry it forward? I was honored to facilitate that process, and as the work deepened, so did my connection to the people and purpose behind it. On my journey as a consultant, I came to feel rooted in the community and the work—and so when I stepped into the role of Executive Director in September, it felt like a natural and wholehearted next step.

This is a meaningful moment in GSGC's journey—one that builds on years of learning, listening, and growing together. What began as a bold, relationship-centered experiment has matured into a model grounded in local leadership and global partnership. Priscilla's founding vision and ongoing presence have been instrumental in shaping who we are. Her ability to connect people across cultures, and her unwavering belief in the power of mentorship and community-led change, continue to guide and inspire us.

What makes GSGC unique is the reciprocity at its core. Whether it's a girl in a rural community discovering her voice, a mentor guiding her journey, or a donor or volunteer thousands of miles away feeling a profound connection to this circle, transformation moves in both directions. That is the power of what we are building together.

With our 2025-2027 Sustainability Plan, we are nourishing the roots and weaving the threads of this work with greater clarity, cohesion and intention. The plan was co-created over many months through dialogue with mentors, team members, volunteers, the board, and our wider circle of support. Just as our partners practise community buy-in, we have done the same. We are not only moving forward together, we are creating a new level of impact. This is where the full vision of GSGC begins to take shape: reducing poverty through consistent, relational mentorship; advancing gender equity by supporting girls and boys to stay in school, thrive and lead; and investing in locally led change that transforms not just individuals, but entire communities over time.

This next chapter is about strengthening what works while building the structure and systems needed to sustain and grow our impact. It is about balancing soul and strategy, making sure that the essence of this work is never lost.

Already, we are beginning to see the long-term impact of our efforts, with the transformation becoming visible not only in the clubs but in the lives of alumni who are stepping into adulthood with purpose and confidence. In 2024, we laid important groundwork for this next phase, launching a pilot scholarship program for club graduates and developing regional Youth Mentorship Centres to support their ongoing growth. Strengthening these alumni pathways is becoming a vital part of how we carry mentorship forward.

This focus is deeply aligned with our Sustainability Plan, which calls for us not only to invest in strong foundations but to expand the arc of support beyond school—ensuring that the values and relationships cultivated through mentorship continue to guide our youth into their futures.

I look forward to continuing this journey with you.

Thank you for being part of this circle.

Tara Lee Casey



GLOBAL SOJOURNS GIVING CIRCLE: SUSTAINABILITY PLAN (2024–2027)

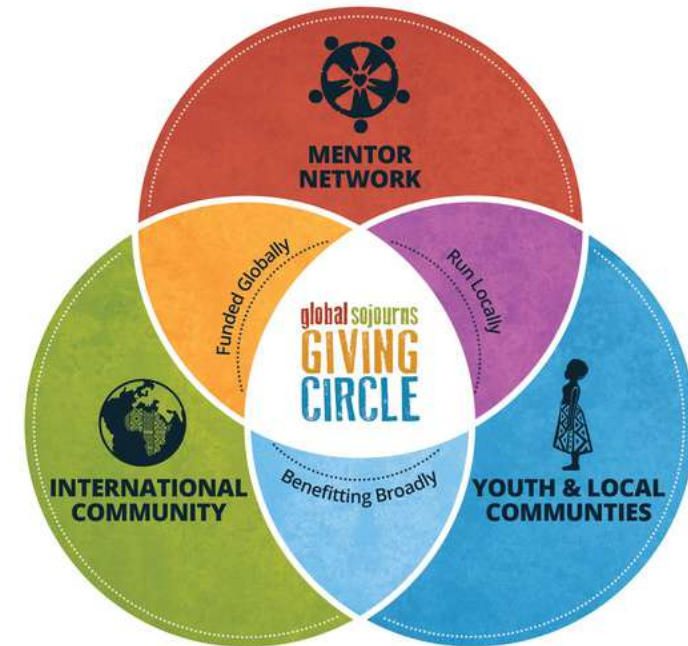
Our Mission

GSGC supports community-led organizations in Southern Africa to empower adolescent girls through continuous mentorship of youth in their local communities. We believe mentorship is the bridge to education, empowerment, and long-term opportunity.

We believe girls are not a strategy for development—they are individuals with rights, dignity, and power. GSGC exists to ensure that girls and boys grow up in communities where they are seen, heard, and supported—not just because of who they might become, but because of who they already are.

Our Core Beliefs

- Mentorship is transformative when it is consistent, relational, and locally led.
- Empowering girls transforms families and communities.
- Gender equity must be inclusive of boys and men.
- Change is strongest when it grows from within.
- True partnership is grounded in trust, respect, and long-term commitment.
- As a funding organization based outside the communities we serve, we are mindful of our influence and privilege. We commit to a trust-based, locally led model that centers on the wisdom and leadership of Mentors and youth.



**AT THE HEART OF OUR WORK IS:
I SEE YOU • I HEAR YOU •
I BELIEVE IN YOU**

Our Values

The work of GSGC is anchored in a clear set of values that shape how we operate and relate. They are:



Respect

Honoring the unique strengths and cultural backgrounds of all team members, Mentors, and communities.



Integrity

Practicing transparency, accountability, and ethical behavior in everything we do.



Empowerment

Supporting youth and Mentors to lead, grow, and take initiative for long-term change.



Relationships

Building trust through presence, collaboration, listening, and connection.



Gratitude

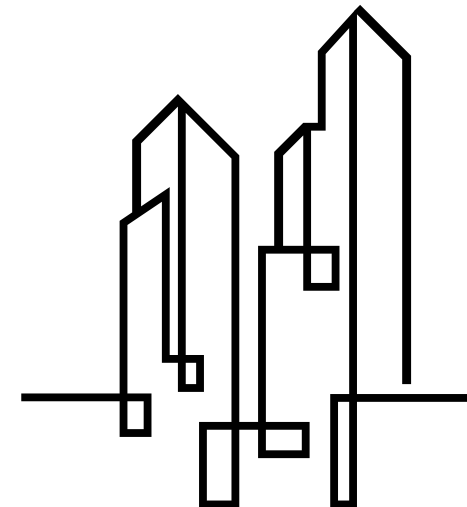
Recognizing and celebrating the contributions of all who make this work possible.

Why Now

Over the past 15 years, GSGC has grown organically in response to the powerful work of local Mentors and the trust of individual donors. What began as a grassroots effort now supports more than 40 clubs in Zimbabwe and Zambia, a network of passionate Mentors, and hundreds of youth.

As we've grown, so too has the demand for support, structure and sustainability. This plan responds to that call. It is rooted in the experience and feedback of our Mentors, clubs and youth—and co-developed with our board, team and supporters.

This is our moment to go deeper—to formalize what works, extend support beyond school, and position GSGC for long-term sustainability. The demand is growing. The youth are ready. So are we.



What we're building

Our 2024–2027 Sustainability Plan is a bold next step toward our long-held vision. It is not just about expansion—it's about ensuring that the mentorship journey continues beyond the club and into the future lives of the youth we serve. It's about holding the soul of GSGC while giving it the structure to thrive.

Stronger Clubs: We are working closely with Mentors to build a consistent, values-driven curriculum that makes club planning easier, youth engagement deeper, and storytelling more powerful. Our 10 Club Fundamentals remain at the heart of the model, anchoring each club in safety, belonging, purpose and voice.

Mentors have described this new curriculum approach as a game-changer. Youth are showing up with greater curiosity, participation is increasing, and Mentors are feeling more confident and connected. We are supporting these efforts with structured onboarding, training and improved tools that help clubs learn, adapt and grow.

Alumni Pathways: This is where our vision meets impact. We are building clear, structured pathways for alumni to access scholarships, internships, employment support and continued mentorship beyond school. We are intentionally investing in alumni success because we know that the true measure of our work is not just whether girls stay in school—but whether they thrive after.

With two Youth Mentorship Centres now in place—one in Victoria Falls, one in Livingstone—we are creating spaces where alumni can meet, learn and lead. These centres are becoming vibrant community anchors—spaces of possibility that reflect our belief in long-term, relational support.

Storytelling & Communications: We are putting the voices of our youth and Mentors at the center of our storytelling. With a growing team and creative energy, we are launching new storytelling platforms—from books to video to campaigns—that highlight the real, lived impact of mentorship. Our Creative Expressions Contest, Book Dash project, and upcoming explanatory video are all part of this effort to amplify what matters.

Fundraising & Sustainability: We're diversifying our income, strengthening donor care, and growing partnerships with hospitality and philanthropic sectors. From exposure visits and gratitude campaigns to structured donor engagement models, we are laying the foundations for a resilient and values-aligned funding base.

Governance & Leadership: Behind all of this is strong governance and leadership. We are documenting systems, investing in leadership development, and ensuring that our board and field teams are connected, capable and aligned. We are also deepening alumni participation in decision-making, and listening more closely to what youth and Mentors need to thrive.

Our Strategic Pillars

Mentorship & Curriculum

Alumni Pathways

Storytelling & Communications

Financial Sustainability

Governance & Systems

Each of these areas is anchored in a clear intention: to deepen what works, ensure long-term impact, and hold true to our values.

What Success Looks Like

- **Alumni who are thriving**—not just surviving—beyond school
- A **strong and growing scholarship program** with deeper support structures
- **Youth Mentorship Centres** that are vibrant, accessible, and well-utilized
- **Mentors who feel supported**, connected, and confident in their roles
- **Stories and data** that clearly show transformation
- A **growing donor community** that feels aligned and engaged
- **Systems that strengthen** our integrity, visibility, and impact

This plan is a living document. We will continue to reflect, learn, and adapt in partnership with the Mentors, youth, and communities we serve. Together, we are building not just programs—but pathways to agency, dignity, and long-term change.



IN 2024 WE REACHED

1006 in **57** run by **28**
total youth clubs Mentors



65%
female

35%
male



1005
stayed in school



1656
club sessions



744

youth received SRHR lessons



242

boys performing girls chores



674

youth gave presentations on menstrual hygiene and girls empowerment



Only

2.9%

of girls became pregnant*

*This is significantly lower than the national average which stands at 29% for Zambia and 22% for Zimbabwe. **None of the boys impregnated a girl.**



69

alumni supported in 4 clubs

Empowering Girls and Strengthening Communities in Southern Africa

GIRLS TIME
Victoria Falls (Urban)
Zimbabwe
2 Clubs: 34 Girls
1



ITHUBA
Victoria Falls (Urban)
Zimbabwe
1 Club: 12 Alumni
2



SISONKE TRUST
Victoria Falls (Rural)
Zimbabwe
4 Clubs: 15 Girls,
30 Boys, 6 Alumni
3



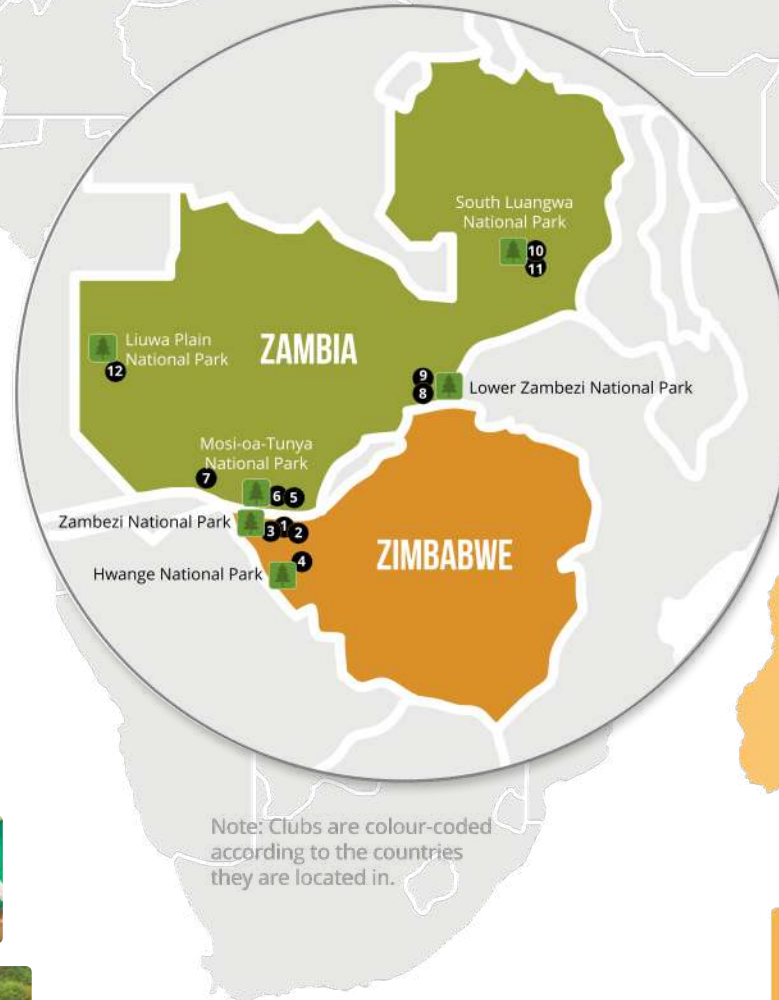
TIKOBANE TRUST
Dete (Rural) Zimbabwe
4 Clubs: 35 Girls,
25 Boys
4



YOSEFE & MATULA
South Luangwa
(Rural) Zambia
4 Clubs: 54 Girls
11



SIBEMI GIRLS CLUB
Liuwa Plain (Rural)
Zambia
1 Club: 18 Girls
12

BELIEVE
Livingstone (Urban)
Zambia
4 Clubs: 49 Girls,
51 Alumni
5



SUNGOMUKOSHI & FRIENDS OF CHANGE
Livingstone (Urban)
Zambia
4 Clubs: 15 Girls, 23 Boys, 17 Alumni
6



ISEPE
Mwandi (Rural)
Zambia
4 Clubs: 23 Girls,
15 Boys, 8 Alumni
7



KUCHENGETEDZA BOYS CLUB
Lower Zambezi
(Rural) Zambia
1 Club: 20 Boys
8



MUGURAMENO GIRLS CLUB
Lower Zambezi
(Rural) Zambia
1 Club: 20 Girls
9



PROJECT LUANGWA
Mfuwe (Rural) Zambia
32 Clubs: 325 Girls,
285 Boys
10



NOSY ANKAO GIRLS CLUB
Antsiranana (Rural)
Madagascar
4 Clubs: 48 Girls
13



Pretent from Girls Time Club in Victoria Falls,
Zimbabwe, reads her bio poem to the rest of
the group in their safe space.



FROM FREESTYLE TO ORCHESTRA: MY REFLECTION ON THE GSGC JOURNEY

*By Nyika Muyambo
Mentor Representative &
Youth Mentorship Centre
Lead*



I joined GSGC in 2011 after meeting Priscilla, our founder. She's someone with deep passion and a heart for young people, especially girls. At the time, I didn't fully grasp her vision. In many African communities, it's not common for men to get involved in girls' empowerment, and I'll be honest, it felt unusual to me at first. But I joined out of respect and curiosity, and I stayed because I saw something real taking shape.

Over the years, I've witnessed how GSGC transforms lives. I saw firsthand how mentorship, when it's consistent and relational, can create lasting change. What started with a handful of clubs has grown into a vibrant network across Zimbabwe and Zambia. Mentors were showing up week after week, sharing skills, encouragement, and love. But as more clubs and young people came into the fold, we also started to feel stretched.

Back then, everything was done freestyle. We worked from the heart, but we didn't have systems. There were no departments, no written processes, just people doing their best. Priscilla would often ask, "Where do we go from here?" I knew we needed to build something stronger, but I wasn't sure how to go about it.

In 2024, things began to shift. GSGC brought in Tara as a consultant to help us pause, reflect, and build structure. While we were caught up in our everyday work, what she called "being in the weeds," Tara stepped back and listened to everyone. She brought a bird's eye view and helped us see what was really needed.

Together, we co-created GSGC's first formal Sustainability Plan. For me, this was a milestone moment. We finally had a clear guide to help us grow with unity and focus. It wasn't just a document, it was a foundation. That plan clarified my role and gave me two main areas of responsibility: leading the Mentors Network and developing the Youth Mentorship Centre (YMC) in Victoria Falls.

Strengthening the Mentors Network: Tools, Training and Confidence

One of the biggest steps forward has been helping mentors move from freestyle to something more like an orchestra. Before, we were all doing our part, each playing our own tune with passion and commitment, but there was no conductor, no shared score. Now, thanks to the Sustainability Plan and the support of the GSGC team, we are learning to work in harmony. We still bring our unique voices, but now we are part of something more coordinated and powerful.

The training support from the GSGC team has made a huge difference.

Proposal Writing

Mentors were taught how to identify needs and turn their ideas into structured proposals. Many of them had never done this before. The confidence it gave them was visible.

Bookkeeping and Financial Reporting

We received training in financial literacy and learned how to report properly and manage funds responsibly.

Monitoring and Evaluation

A new system of weekly reports helped us better track our progress and reflect on the impact of our work.

This wasn't just about paperwork. It gave us language, structure, and tools to do our work with more impact and clarity. The training empowered mentors to speak to donors, track outcomes, and lead with greater confidence. We're seeing clubs become more consistent and organized. Mentors feel proud of their professionalism.

We also worked closely with a specialist contractor Dorothy to develop a proper senior club curriculum. Instead of everyone teaching different things, we started co-creating a structured program that builds life skills in a consistent and meaningful way. The senior curriculum is currently being piloted in 2025, and the response from Mentors is very positive. They say it helps sessions run smoother- and stay focused, and it engages youth in new ways. We are now moving into the alumni curriculum and continuing to gather feedback to refine it.

Growing the Youth Mentorship Centre (YMC): A Hub for Growth, Visibility and Belonging

The YMC, also known by its local name iThuba (meaning "opportunity"), has grown into a vibrant hub for our alumni. It's a place where young people come for mentorship, career guidance, academic support, and encouragement as they transition into adulthood. This year, it's also become a space of visibility for travellers, professionals, donors, and stakeholders to witness the power of mentorship in action.

We proudly launched the iThuba Alumni Club, and the energy is incredible. Through the Alumni Curriculum developed with Denise, youth are learning practical skills like CV writing, interview preparation, digital literacy, workplace etiquette, and financial planning.

One of our standout stories this year is Lumuno. After taking a gap year, she thought her dream of studying was over. But thanks to GSGC's Scholarship Program, she's now studying Finance at Chinhoyi University of Technology and interning at Shearwater Adventures. She says iThuba taught her how to use MS Word and PowerPoint, helped her master job interviews, and gave her the confidence to thrive. "It taught me to think like an entrepreneur," she shared. "I'm now building my future with purpose."



Lumuno is now studying Finance at Chinhoyi University of Technology and interning at Shearwater Adventures thanks for iThuba and the GSGC's Scholarship Program



The Centre has also:

- Helped alumni secure internships and job internships
- Connected us with local companies to discuss Corporate Social Responsibility partnership
- Engaged visitors, both international travelers and local professionals, to inspire, share and witness our work

We've hosted guests such as Mr. Phillip Nine, Human Resource Manager for the Palm Hotels Group, who led a powerful discussion on professionalism and workplace ethics. These sessions are part of a bigger effort to expose our youth to the real expectations of the professional world.

Travelers coming through Victoria Falls are also welcomed at the Centre. They hear directly from alumni, learn about the challenges youth face in our communities, and witness how mentorship is transforming lives. Many of them leave inspired and stay connected through our new quarterly iThuba newsletter.

With the support of the GSGC team, we also brought on Ratidzai, who was hired through the Young Professionals Initiative. Her full-time presence has allowed us to keep the Centre open consistently, support job-seekers, and follow up with alumni who need one-on-one guidance. She's also been instrumental in producing the newsletter and strengthening alumni outreach.

A Network Rooted in Relationship

What I've seen over the past year is the power of structure rooted in relationships. GSGC didn't bring in outside systems and impose them on us. Instead, we co-created tools and plans together, building something that reflects who we are and how we work. The result is that we are stronger, more stable, and more ready to grow.

The mentors feel heard and respected. The alumni feel supported and seen. The community trusts us. And visitors walk away understanding that this is not charity. This is transformation.

I believe the system is now in place. As long as we keep following the Sustainability Plan, listening to one another, and sharing power across the network, GSGC will continue to grow with heart and purpose.

“ITHUBA OPENED DOORS. I SECURED AN AMAZING INTERNSHIP AND I FEEL READY FOR MY FUTURE.”

– Nqobile, iThuba Alumni

We've come a long way from freestyle. Today, we are becoming an orchestra—different instruments, different voices, but working together to make something beautiful.



LISTENING DEEPLY, SPEAKING BOLDLY:

Why Storytelling Matters at Global Sojourns Giving Circle

Listening First: How Our Story Began

Everything that is Global Sojourns Giving Circle started with listening. Founder Priscilla Plummer didn't arrive in Southern Africa with a fixed notion or ready-made solution; she came to listen. Sitting with local women, youths and community leaders, she heard powerful stories: girls forced to leave school, boys pulled into dangerous cycles, fractured families coping with limited resources.

Those early stories became the foundation of what was distilled into GSGC's approach to girls gaining confidence, independence and agency. Rather than rushing to find quick fixes for long-standing societal problems, GSGC built a sustainable model rooted in mentorship, relationships and deep listening. The words we live by — "I see you. I hear you. I believe in you." — come from the belief that the first act of empowerment is to acknowledge one's humanity and value..

For nearly 20 years, storytelling has quietly shaped our work. Mentors listen to their youths' stories in spaces where girls and boys feel comfortable and safe. The conversations build trust and help Mentors understand what support the young people truly need. Storytelling is not just a tool, it is how we connect, how we build resilience, and how change begins.

In 2024, GSGC made the deliberate decision to put our stories, long celebrated within our community, on wider, more diverse platforms for the world to see and appreciate.

We are working harder than ever to share our news so that more like-minded people also can see, hear and believe in GSGC-sponsored clubs and Mentors. The goal: gender equity, healthier communities, breaking the cycle of generational poverty. Together, we are working to make the world a better place.

Sharing Stories, Shaping Futures

One big step we took this year was to bring in storytelling coach Lisa Pantani of Cape Town, South Africa. She helped our Mentors and youth learn to recognize their own stories, understand the power of sharing their experiences, and see the connections and change they can create.

Through this process, we learned that storytelling is as much about listening as it is about sharing. It's about slowing down, hearing the emotion beneath the words, and capturing moments of transformation. One such moment was when Mentor Ndlela Ncube, Tikobane Club, realized he needed to move his community's attitude about wildlife to one of protection, not confrontation. Another was when Ratidzai Matumbura, a club alumna in Victoria Falls, revealed how she felt to have someone say they believed in her and her dream of graduating from university.

We also began to lay the foundation for a new project: to turn some of these stories into culturally relevant books for teens.

We'll adapt stories into versions for younger children, too, creating a library of inspiration where youths see themselves reflected in stories of courage and possibility. In a region where books are scarce, these stories will serve as powerful mirrors and windows, showing what is possible. Your contributions on Giving Tuesday will be instrumental in bringing this project to life. We will keep you updated on our progress!

Storytelling also is strengthening our connection with donors and supporters. By sharing stories of why people give, what inspires them, and what change they hope to see, we're reaffirming and widening a circle of shared purpose that is vital to the work on the ground.

A Future Built on Listening and Sharing

GSGC's mentorship model is about walking alongside youth, creating space for their stories, their dreams and their growth. Our Mentors see it every day: the girl who finds the confidence to return to school; the boy who chooses conservation over poaching; the alumni who take time to mentor others.

These stories of life experience are proof that change is happening. ***Our work is not loud, but it is lasting.*** In a world full of noise, we believe that listening quietly, then helping someone see their own power, is one of the most radical acts we can take.

Looking ahead, storytelling will remain central to GSGC's impact. We will continue to collect, honor and share stories in clubs, books, conversations with partners and correspondence with donors. We will invest in tools and training that ensure life stories are shared ethically, respectfully and with the storyteller's voice leading the way.

WE WANT EVERY GIRL, BOY, MENTOR, VOLUNTEER AND DONOR IN OUR CIRCLE TO KNOW THAT THEIR STORY MATTERS

We want every girl, boy, Mentor, volunteer and donor in our circle to know that their story matters. We want them to know that when we listen deeply and share stories with intention, we create lasting change. Through storytelling, youths claim or reclaim their narratives, Mentors' journeys become lessons of compassion and examples of resilience, and supporters and volunteers reap the joy and rewards of walking alongside one another, erasing the miles between us.

Sharing stories is at the heart of what we do. It's how we shift attitudes, build empathy and show the world what's possible when you believe in youth. We've told you success stories for years, but because the stories of growth, educational success, societal shifts and personal achievement are more abundant and evident than ever, we have redoubled our efforts to share them—because the world needs to see them, hear them and believe them.





Mentor Kangwa at Friends of Change Boys Club discuss what healthy and unhealthy relationships look like in their lives.

FROM HARDSCRABBLE TO GRADUATION STAGE: RATIDZAI'S JOURNEY



Growing Up in Mkhosana

At 23, Ratidzai Matumbura has defied immense odds to achieve what once felt impossible. Born and reared in Mkhosana, an economically challenged neighborhood of Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, her life was far removed from the images of luxury hotels and breathtaking waterfalls associated with the city.

"My parents worked so hard to put food on the table," she recalls.

Life in Mkhosana was challenging. Without electricity, families relied on firewood for cooking, and they carried water from the river in buckets when the tap yielded nothing. Resilience and determination were her family's daily companions.

At school, Ratidzai struggled with low self-esteem. "I couldn't help but compare myself to other kids who seemed to have everything: fancy clothes, quality stationery and delicious food," she says. "I felt invisible."

She often sat at the back of the classroom, afraid to speak, even when she knew the answers.

The Power of Mentorship

In 2016, everything began to change. Friends invited Ratidzai to join Girl's Time Club, a safe environment where girls could learn, grow and dream. Though hesitant at first, her life took a major turn when the club leader, Mentor Procedure Mlanga Chikosi, noticed her potential.

"I froze on my first day when they asked me to stand up and introduce myself. I even considered running away," Ratidzai said. "But unlike the teacher who once punished me for being quiet, my mentor came looking for me when I didn't return. She told me, 'I want to help you. I see so much potential in you.' Those words stayed with me."

Such a simple act, but one of compassion and insight.

"I started to see someone who cared about me and believed in me," said Ratidzai. "She showed me that I wasn't invisible, and that made all the difference."

Encouraged, Ratidzai returned to the club and began to build her confidence.

"Over time, I learned leadership skills, goal setting and life skills like sewing and braiding," she said.

"My mentor emphasized academic excellence, and she made sure we had the support we needed to succeed."

Turning Dreams into Reality

One day during a goal-setting session at Girl's Time Club, Rati stepped up.

"I stood up in front of everyone. I told everyone I see myself wearing a gown, a graduation gown, walking across the stage and making my parents proud," she said. "That day, I started to believe it was possible."



“I STARTED TO SEE SOMEONE WHO CARED ABOUT ME AND BELIEVED IN ME. SHE SHOWED ME THAT I WASN’T INVISIBLE, AND THAT MADE ALL THE DIFFERENCE.”

With the club’s support, she excelled academically, passing nine subjects at the lower high school level that allowed her to move to more advanced levels.

Ratidzai’s hard work culminated in a partial scholarship to study Business Administration in India. The joy was short-lived, however, when her family couldn’t afford the remaining fees. “I was devastated, but my Mentor told me to believe in myself and hang in there.”

Eventually, Ratidzai was able to cover the remaining expenses thanks to a new GSGC scholarship program.

In India, Ratidzai faced cultural challenges, language barriers and financial strain. She turned to the skills she learned at Girls Time to support herself. Through it all, she remained focused on her goal.

A Dream Fulfilled

In June 2024, Ratidzai’s dream came true — she walked across the university’s graduation stage, wearing her gown and making her family proud.

“I cried because I thought of where I came from and all the challenges I overcame,” she said. “The dream I had in 2016 came alive.”

Now back in Zimbabwe, Ratidzai works as an intern who continues to inspire other GSGC alumni.

“Seeing everyone who believes in me keeps me going,” she said. “I want to show other girls that it’s possible to achieve your dreams, no matter where you come from.”



FROM FEAR TO CONSERVATION ADVOCACY



Growing up in Dete, a wildlife-rich community adjacent to Zimbabwe's huge Hwange National Park, Ndlelela's childhood was marked by the fear of wildlife. "As a young boy, we were told stories... scary stories about wildlife," he recalls.

Stories of danger, not beauty or fascination: elephants wiping out harvest-filled fields, lions killing livestock, and people being trampled by elephants or attacked by large cats. Caution and fear were ingrained in every aspect of daily life.

Much of the large local wildlife was viewed not as part of nature's harmony but as threats. On the way to school, Ndlelela, or Ndlela for short, would often encounter safari vehicles filled with tourists.

"We were told they were going to the national park to see the same animals that were scaring us," he reflects.

To Ndlela, these animals were a nightmare, and the idea of people visiting them for leisure was baffling.

A Transformative Experience

One incident deeply marked Ndlela's fear. He and his mother encountered an elephant while walking along a forest path. "I was so scared," he recalled. "What will this elephant do to us?"

The chance meeting could have turned tragic, but they passed safely. Rather than feeling relief, however, Ndlela was overwhelmed with anger about what could have happened.

"What if the elephant trampled me and my mother to death?" he wondered.

At the time, he could not fathom why these creatures were allowed to exist so close to his community, causing so much distress. When Ndlela had the opportunity to study in a more urban setting, he got away from the wildlife he so feared.

An Opportunity for Change

Years later, in 2004, Ndlela was back in the national park he had feared growing up. It was a time of rampant poaching, with elephants being killed at alarming rates. "At one time, 104 elephants were killed through cyanide poisoning," he said.

Witnessing the devastation caused by poaching, and seeing poachers he knew either shot or arrested, Ndlela's perspective began to shift.

"I had mixed feelings, but I volunteered to go and clean up the national park," he recalls.

This experience stirred a deep sadness in him, both for the animals lost and for the poachers who were his friends and relatives. And it ignited in him the need to find a solution.

The Conservation Club Forms

In response to the urgent need for conservation education and peaceful coexistence between wildlife and local people, Ndlela and others decided to establish a club dedicated to conservation. They called it Tikobane Trust. Tikobane means "let's share". The initiative, which GSGC supports, began by recruiting 20 girls and 15 boys from the Dete community.

"We decided to establish the Tikobane clubs to educate youth about conservation and the importance of living in harmony with wildlife," Ndlela explains.

With this initiative, these youths would be exposed to wildlife conservation through safaris, mentorship and learning about the environmental importance of animals.

Melikhaya's Path: A Story of Transformation:

Melikhaya is a boy from a Dete family of poachers. Growing up, he was expected to follow other men in his family and continue subsistence hunting. After participating in Tikobane's mentorship program, however, Melikhaya's perception of wildlife changed.

"One day we visited a conservation area, and Melikhaya was so moved, he said, 'When I finish school, I also want to protect wildlife'," Ndlela said with pride. "Melikhaya decided to be a ranger."

Melikhaya is one of the youngest rangers protecting wildlife in and around Hwange National Park and advocating for conservation.

Shifting Perceptions in the Next Generation

The impact of Tikobane's mentorship program reaches beyond Melikhaya. The lessons have shifted the perception of wildlife from threats to valuable members of the ecosystem. "Through stories, youth understand why they must coexist peacefully," Ndlela explains.

He remembers a moment with his young son while they were collecting water near their home. Seeing elephants in the distance, Ndlela's son exclaimed, "Look at them, they are so beautiful."

The fear that once defined Ndlela's view of wildlife had transformed into appreciation.

"This is my story, but it can be the story of all youth if they experience wildlife in a peaceful and relaxed way," he said.

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Project Luangwa and Time and Tide Clubs celebrate Menstrual Hygiene Day.

THE TRANSFORMATIONAL POWER OF MENTORSHIP

Why Global Sojourns Giving Circle's Mentoring Model Matters

*By Holley Gilbert and Suzanne
Firth, GSGC Supporters*

"I am unique. I matter."

These five words seem simple. But when a young person believes them—really believes them—everything can change.

At Global Sojourns Giving Circle, helping youth get to a deep-seated self-confidence is at the heart of everything we do. Our mentorship model is not a curriculum or a checklist; it's a relationship built on presence, consistency, listening and caring. Our model sets up the slow, steady process of transformation that happens when a trusted adult says, "I see you. I hear you. I believe in you." And then demonstrates that belief again and again.

Mentorship: A Lifeline

Most of GSGC's 57 youth clubs are in rural areas of Zimbabwe, Zambia and Madagascar, often close to protected wildlife habitat and safari camps. In these more isolated regions, patriarchal traditions persist, and girls in particular face immense barriers. Many girls are expected to care for siblings, do chores and marry rather than pursue education. Both girls and boys grow up in communities impacted by intergenerational poverty, fractured families and few healthy role models.

In Zimbabwe, only 14% of girls and 17% of boys complete high school. More than 60% of girls with only a primary school education marry before age 18 compared with just 6% of those with a secondary education. In Zambia, where education is now free through high school, 29% of girls still marry before age 18.

Many children are reared by grandparents because parents must find work in other communities or countries. Many live without reliable access, or any access, to radio, television or the internet, let alone knowledgeable mentors or positive role models. Add the legacy of HIV/AIDS, food insecurity and economic instability, and it becomes clear: mentorship is a critical need.

The potential of African youth is profound, despite these challenges. GSGC taps into that potential, not through charity or handouts, but through relationships rooted in trust, compassion and mutual respect.

Mentorship, the GSGC Way

Around the world, mentorship is often described as a more experienced person guiding someone with less experience. But in the GSGC network, mentorship is far more than skills-sharing or career advice; it's a holistic, community-driven process of empowerment.

Our Mentors are local leaders, women and men who know their communities' needs, values and traditions. Each founded a club of 15-20 youth, small enough to allow for deep personal connections.

Weekly sessions focus on life skills, hygiene, reproductive health and rights, the importance of education, leadership, gender equity and community service — all building a foundation for lives of opportunity, self-sufficiency and dignity.

The trust, belief, confidence and change are nurtured in the in-between moments: the shoulder to cry on; solving a problem; the home or school visits. They all demonstrate the unwavering belief that each young person matters.

Girls Time Club Mentor Mercy Sibanda puts it simply: “Mentoring is a voice that is willing to take each step with you, guiding you into becoming the best version of yourself.”

Each Mentor is empowered to bring his or her own interests, creativity and wisdom to the work, so each club is unique. Shared values, goals and practices unite them.

GSGC’s mentorship model is not imported or outsourced. It is built from the ground up by local change makers, a process that is organic, constantly evolving and continually improving. GSGC comes alongside them, supporting but not directing them.

Our role is one of coaching, connection and resources.

The approach embodies the African proverb: “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

And it works because when young people feel seen and supported, they rise, not just for themselves, but for their families and communities.

As early club member Pinky Ncube puts it, “We always say that when one makes it, it’s like the whole community has made it.”

“WE ALWAYS SAY THAT WHEN ONE MAKES IT, IT’S LIKE THE WHOLE COMMUNITY HAS MADE IT.”

Meeting Youth Where They Are

The cultural history of mentorship in Africa is both ancient and sacred. As Burkinabé writer and healer Malidoma Patrice Somé explains in *The Healing Wisdom of Africa*, “A mentor is not a teacher... but a guide... someone who helps a young person remember what they already know.”

This belief is woven into the fabric of GSGC’s approach — an approach that does not impose solutions but uncovers strength from within. Young people are not empty vessels to be filled; they are full of potential waiting to be unlocked.

Take Ratidzai Matumbura. When she first arrived at a GSGC-sponsored Girls Time Club in Victoria Falls, she was too shy to speak. The moment she was asked her to introduce herself, she froze. She didn’t come back the next week. But Mentor Procedure Chikosi noticed and went to find her. “I see so much potential in you,” she told Rati.

That simple act changed everything.

Rati returned. She began learning life skills, setting goals and discovering her voice. Her academic performance soared.

She earned a scholarship to study Business Administration in India, then another from GSGC to help with expenses. In June 2024, Rati graduated with a bachelor’s degree. She now works at a GSGC alumni center, helping others reach their potential.

“It wasn’t just about practical guidance,” she says. “It was also about emotional support, knowing someone believed in me when I didn’t believe in myself.”

“WHAT HAS EMERGED IS MORE THAN JUST A NETWORK. IT IS A FAMILY.”

Mentoring’s Collective Power

In the early years, GSGC Mentors worked primarily independently, each leading a club in their community, learning as they went. Over time and with a growing sense of shared purpose, these local leaders began connecting regularly through technology, then in person. Now they meet regularly. What has emerged is more than just a network. It is a family.

Together, they began shaping a common understanding of what makes mentorship work. Not a formula, they agreed, but a living, evolving set of guiding principles drawn from experience.

Mentors found that transformation happens in private welcoming spaces, where youth feel safe and known. Confidence grows best in intimate settings that foster meaningful relationships. Weekly meetings build consistency and trust. Sessions can begin with open check-ins and end with dancing, drawing, storytelling or games — activities that spark joy while deepening connections.

Over time, Mentors noticed that real growth came when youth were not only supported academically but invited to explore their values, their sense of purpose, their dreams and their responsibility to others. As youth gained confidence and self-awareness, they were encouraged to lead, serve and give back, sending ripples through their communities.

“AS YOUTH GAINED CONFIDENCE AND SELF-AWARENESS, THEY WERE ENCOURAGED TO LEAD, SERVE AND GIVE BACK, SENDING RIPPLES THROUGH THEIR COMMUNITIES.”

Raising a greater awareness of the natural world through wildlife education, community clean up events and tree plantings grounded the work with a deeper sense of place.

Mentorship Beyond the Clubs

GSGC's work does not end when a young person finishes high school. As the club network has grown, so has the number of alumni, many of whom still

need guidance and support as they navigate the paths and decisions of early adulthood.

To meet that need, GSGC launched the Youth Mentorship Centre in Victoria Falls and is supporting iThuba, the centre's alumni club that provides resources and mentorship to those pursuing university, vocational training or entrepreneurial paths. iThuba connects youth with professionals for job shadowing, assistance with writing CVs or job applications, and building networks of mutual support.

GSGC also now supports five other clubs serving approximately 60 club alumni.

Join Our Circle

At its core, GSGC is not just a nonprofit. It's a community, a growing chosen family of people who believe in the power of mentorship to change lives and shift systems.

SOURCES

- Zimbabwe Education Fact Sheets, MIC-EAGLE, UNICEF
- African Youth Mentoring Network
- Zambia Ministry of Education
- UNICEF Economic and Social Council Data
- World Food Programme
- WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme
- Girls Not Brides
- Somé, Malidoma Patrice. The Healing Wisdom of Africa



SHARING GRATITUDE FOR OUR DONORS, SUPPORTERS & VOLUNTEERS

At Global Sojourns Giving Circle, mentorship is the heartbeat of our work — but it's your generosity that makes it possible. In 2024, you helped raise more than \$115,000 through individual contributions, with an additional \$16,000 from our dedicated monthly donors. These contributions have ensured that youth clubs in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Madagascar remain safe, inspiring spaces where young people can explore their potential, get support to stay in school, grow as individuals, and feel seen, heard and believed in.

Last year marked the launch of the GSGC Scholarship Program, which raised more than \$23,000 to propel promising young leaders on their journey to higher education. We are deeply grateful to all who contributed to this new effort, and we extend special appreciation to [Maria Manetti Shrem](#), a generous supporter whose passion for education and opportunity established a separate scholarship fund and inspired others to give.

Your support is especially significant during a time when international development funding is unpredictable and often driven by shifting priorities.

As government aid and institutional grants become less reliable, [the model of a Giving Circle](#) becomes even more vital. By pooling resources and placing trust in local changemakers, GSGC is responsive, nimble and deeply grounded in the needs and priorities of the communities we serve. It is a funding model rooted in empathy and long-term relationships—and it's working.

We're especially grateful to our monthly donors, whose steady support reflects a clear understanding of our commitment. Consistent, sustained mentorship is what creates lasting change, and your monthly contribution—no matter the size—helps ensure that our clubs, Mentors, and youth are supported year-round.

In addition to our donors, we owe an enormous thank you to the generous volunteers who give their time, energy, and talents to help us build something bigger than any of us could do alone. Whether working behind the scenes or directly with Mentors, you help bring this vision to life.

We are deeply grateful to Denice Harvey for her guidance of our Mentors, especially in helping shape a curriculum that is relevant, compassionate and practical. To Daron Deonier-Clemons, whose love of creativity and youth shone brightly when she hosted the Creative Expressions 2024 Pre-Launch Party, making that event a success. To our incredible communications volunteers, Suzanne Firth and Holley Gilbert, thank you for your generous contributions of time, expertise and care, from writing and editing key stories to helping shape our messaging with heart and integrity.

We also thank founding board member Paige Hasson, whose tireless work through donor care, event organizing and Creative Expressions remains a bulwark for GSGC's dedication to youth and the community's well-being.

Our Giving Circle exists because of the passion and generosity of many individuals who share their time, talent, and treasure. An essential part of that circle is the GS Giving Circle Board, which provides governance—and so much more. Today, we extend our deepest thanks to Erin West and Jean Tucker, who brought wisdom, skill, and heart to their board service. You helped guide and ground us, and we are so grateful that you continue to walk alongside us in this next chapter.

To every donor, volunteer and supporter, thank you. Together, you are helping to shape something powerful. Your generosity results in greater hope, dignity and opportunity – all ripples of change toward gender equity and the alleviation of poverty.

Together, we are investing in the future—and it's brighter because of you.



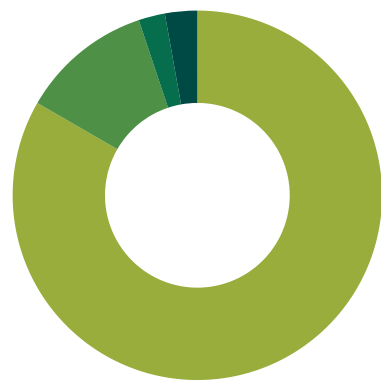
[Watch the video](#)



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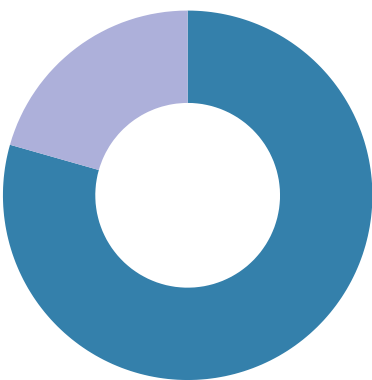
2024 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

INCOME



Corporate & Foundation Support	\$685,147
Individual Donor Support	\$94,842
Investment Income	\$19,032
Alumni Scholarship Fund	\$23,222

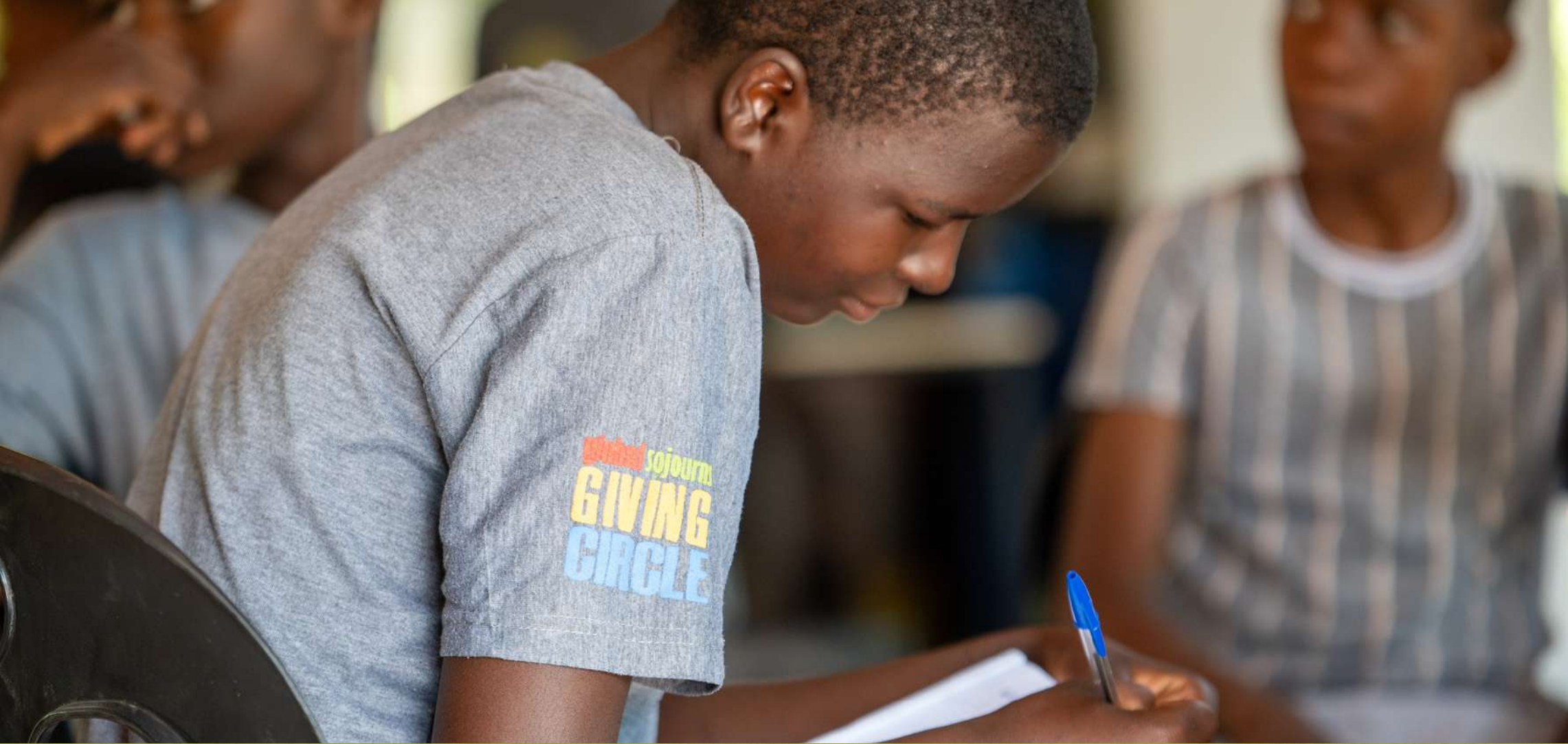
PROGRAM EXPENSES VS
OPERATING EXPENSES



Total Program Expenses	\$315,023
Operating Expenses	\$81,679

BOARD MEMBERS

Heidi Johnson Bixby, Treasurer, Washington; Holley Gilbert, Secretary, New Mexico; Paige Hasson, Oregon; Priscilla Plummer, Founder/President, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Washington; Jean Tucker, Washington, DC; Erin West, California



THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF THE GSGC FAMILY



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