



Impact Strategy

The Institutional Imperative for Impact

In 2018, The Mastercard Foundation undertook four profound shifts in its strategy and operating model. With a vision of a world where everyone has the opportunity to learn and prosper, the Foundation began a transformation from a highly centralized

organization based in Toronto, Canada, to decentralized operations in seven countries in Africa — Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Ethiopia, Ghana, Senegal and Nigeria — and expanded programming with Indigenous communities in Canada.

Our strategic & programmatic shifts

A singular focus on youth

We are focussed on enabling young women and men to engage in dignified and fulfilling work. We will enhance and enable their voices and agency to more fully participate in managing their present circumstances, and more fully shape the future of their communities.

Country-based engagement

We are shifting staff and resources, and delegating authority to the country level where we operate in Africa, and among Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Transformational systems change

We are aligning Foundation investments, program portfolios and strategies with country, and community-owned and -led strategies. We view systems change as the means of transformation at scale.

Partners for scale

We are engaging with government, public sector institutions, businesses and the private sector. These partners have the capacity to deliver tangible benefits for young women and men, and potential for achieving transformational change at scale.



Regina, a graduate of the U-Learn training and apprenticeship program, created in partnership with Swisscontact, is working as a mechanic in Uganda.

A secondary school student in Tamale, Ghana participates in a Mastercard Foundation program with partner Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.



The programmatic priorities of the Mastercard Foundation currently include: the Young Africa Works Strategy and Program; the flagship Scholars Program; and the EleV program initiative in Indigenous communities in Canada; and the co-creation of several other regional and continent-wide initiatives that address youth employment and the creation of dignified and fulfilling work opportunities focusing on African youth.

As a result of our new strategic drivers, programming is increasingly: demand driven; country-owned and country-led; built on democratic leadership; partnered with mandated public and private sector institutions. Foundation strategies are now being aligned with national strategies, and with priorities set by Indigenous communities in Canada.

To deliver this work effectively, the Foundation's program partners must be rooted in local contexts and respected as leaders and change-makers capable of transforming systems at national levels, as well as cross-nationally (especially in pan-African initiatives), in a manner that catalyzes impact at scale.

A learning partnership supports Indigenous youth at Vancouver Island University, Canada.



New Opportunities to Drive Impact

The bold shifts in our strategy and operating model create new and exciting opportunities for the Mastercard Foundation and its partners to learn more about what matters to young women and men, the difference dignified work means for them as individuals, and the ripple effect on their families and communities, at scale and at a country level.

The Impact function has been reshaped to:

Advance a holistic approach to impact at all levels of the Foundation including our overall mission, strategies as well as at the program portfolio and program levels.

Elevate new approaches to understanding impact, and new ways of honouring Indigenous knowledge, evidence and insights to tell the story of the life journeys of young people.

Lead the transition beyond output-oriented measurement to an outcome- and impact-oriented approach at all levels of the Foundation, starting with a more expansive understanding of change at the base of the Foundation's program investments.

Our Understanding of Impact

Elevating new approaches

Advances in Indigenous evaluative knowledge, reflected in emerging notions of “Made in Africa Evaluation” and deepening of Indigenous ways of knowing, will be elevated in our approach to impact. We will also build on advances in systems change evaluation, technology enabled data and evidence as reflected in innovation in the [MERL Tech field](#).

The Mastercard Foundation understands impact to be “sustained improvements in the quality of life for young women and men, and the socio-economic ripple effects for their families and communities, as reflected in the overall health of the economy and society at a national level.” Working together with other key players, the Foundation seeks to make a significant contribution at the country level. Thus, we do not seek direct attribution for our work.

The Foundation seeks to contribute to impact through intentionally designed country strategies and program portfolios that catalyze medium and long-term sustained changes (outcomes) in:

- The knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior — capacity and capability — of young women and men as they seek, create, and take up opportunities for dignified and fulfilling work, and the ripple effects on their families and communities.
- The institutions, social and economic systems and mindsets as they intentionally respond to youth-focused demand through policies, practices and the allocation of resources.

Understanding the life journeys of young people is central to understanding impact

We will put the perspectives and life journeys of young women and men at the centre of our effort. Their narratives will guide us as we define and measure dignified and fulfilling work, make sense of monitoring and impact data, and guide country strategy and program investments. Together with young women and men, we will co-develop measures of dignified and fulfilling work and shape new ways to gather data and synthesize knowledge. Together with conventional data, these new approaches will help us form robust, inclusive impact narratives.

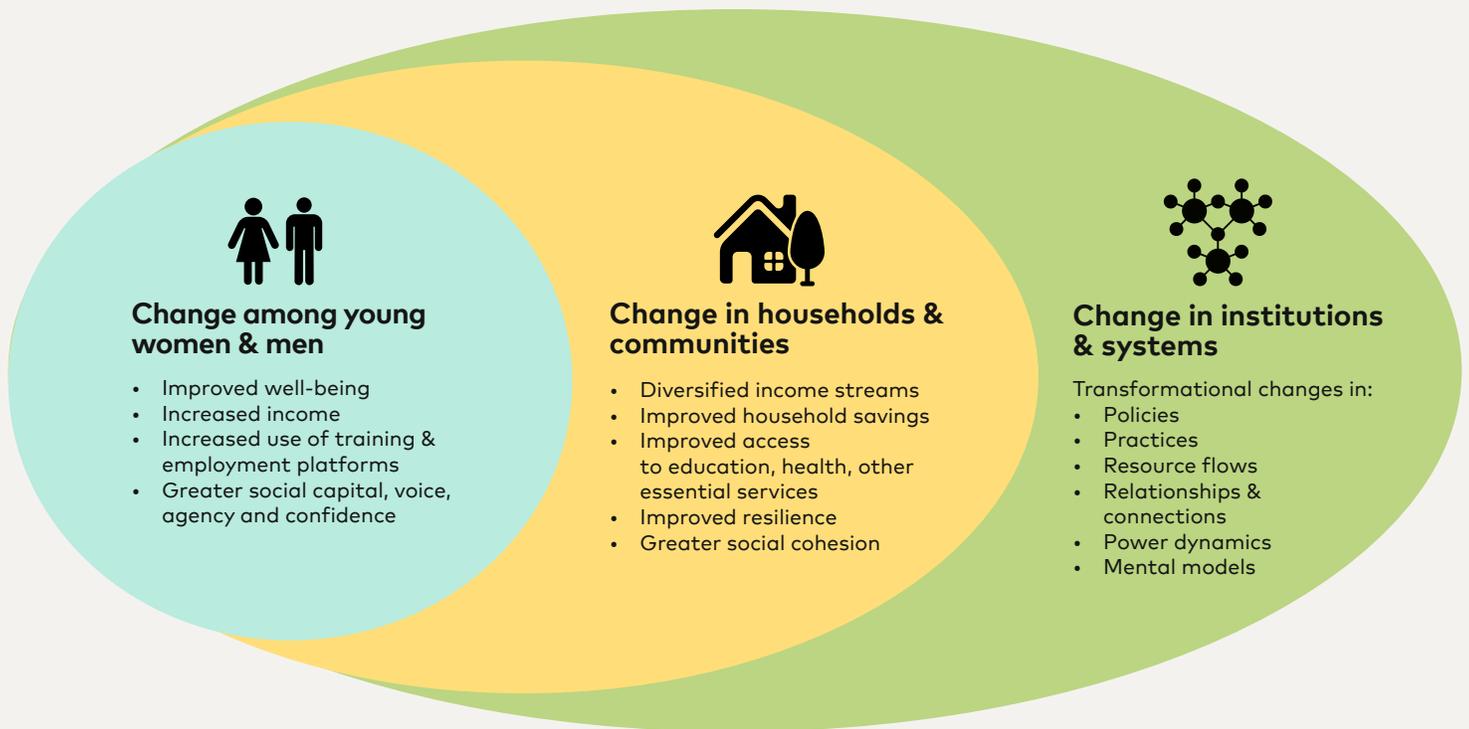


Figure 1: Ripple effects from the Foundation's investments

Figure 1 illustrates examples of the ripple effects that we expect to see unfolding as the Foundation and partner-led investments build from individual impacts to transformation and impact at scale in the societies and communities with whom we work.



Kevin Kibet Mochama, an Anzisha Fellow, runs a cooperative commercial avocado farm enterprise in Kenya.

The Impact Function

Within the Mastercard Foundation, Impact function's purpose is to:

- 1** Inform the Foundation's strategic investment decisions by ensuring that the Foundation's Board, leadership, and managers and partners have timely, inclusive and culturally appropriate impact data and evidence on the extent to which:
 - The Foundation's investments support, catalyze and sustain improvements in the quality of life for young women and men, and the associated socio-economic create ripple effects for their families and communities;
 - National strategies and systems (e.g. social, economic, technological), mindsets, institutions and policies are transformed to catalyze, incentivize and sustain dignified and fulfilling work opportunities for young women and men, and the associated ripple effect benefits for their families and communities.
- 2** Strengthen the voice and agency of young women and men in Africa and in Canada.
- 3** Contribute to effective and impactful philanthropy in Africa and Canada.



Figure 2: The Impact function at the Mastercard Foundation

Impact's role within the Foundation

Impact is a Foundation-wide function that works at three levels, as shown in Figure 2:

At the Program Portfolio level

We will evaluate the extent to which Program Portfolio investments are improving the lives of young women and men, their families and communities, through securing and sustaining dignified and fulfilling work. We see Program Portfolios as the 'engine' to drive scale and transformation at a national level.

At the National Strategy and Systems level

We will evaluate the extent to which country level strategies are being, or have been, transformed to sustain improvements in the lives of young women and men through dignified and fulfilling work. This includes assessing whether strategies have been intentionally designed to transform systems and influence national policies.

At Mission level

We will assess the niche, comparative advantage and value-addition of the Foundation to the public good in education, in the financial inclusion of young, vulnerable women and men, and in enabling young people to access or create and sustain dignified and fulfilling work.

The Impact team works across programs, strategies and geographies of the Foundation to perform its functions. These include:

- All programs, including the Young Africa Works Strategy and Programs in Africa, the Canada Program (EleV), and the flagship Scholars Program
- Special initiatives launched in response to urgent, emerging needs, such as the Mastercard Foundation COVID-19 Recovery and Resilience Program
- Other undertakings approved by the Board that relate to achieving the Foundation's Mission.

The Work of the Impact Function

1 Commissioning independent evaluation, evidence and insights

Impact commissions independent evidence of, and insights on the outcomes and impact of the Foundation's work at Mission, Strategy and Program Portfolio levels. Impact leads and has direct accountability for this work, including:

- Annual impact reports for each country in Africa and for Canada
- Strategic reviews of mature country strategies
- Operational, functional or peer reviews of any aspects of Foundation work as may be determined necessary by the President/CEO, Executive Committee and senior management for the purpose of adaptive management and rapid decision-making
- Strategic review of the Foundation's overall strategy and model of operation
- Other Board requested reviews
- The training and readiness of youth cohorts of young evaluators to work with experienced evaluators in delivering these products.

2 Supporting program, data, knowledge and technology functions

Impact supports other parts of the Foundation in the design and assessment of measurable investments and program portfolios for sustainability, transformation and scale. It also supports the development of data systems for reporting on progress. Illustrative examples include:

- Transition support to enrich monitoring measures (KPIs) by integrating quantitative and qualitative measures that reflect the narratives and life journeys of young women and men to dignified and fulfilling work, and the ripple effect on their families, communities and ecosystems. This support is critical, for the Foundation's Grants Management & Reporting System, and for the more complete reporting on progress and associated rewards of Foundation investments implemented by partners.
- Support to ensure intentional design of program portfolios for transformation, scale and national systems-level change, including guidance to refine measurable outcomes.
- Support to internal country reviews as needed.
- Collaboration to ensure that research serves program needs as well as providing insights for measuring success.

3 Providing oversight and quality assurance

Impact provides oversight, quality assurance and risk assessment support for the impact-related processes and products in the Foundation. Impact leads and has direct accountability for:

- Standards for outcome and impact measurement at Program Portfolio, Strategy and Systems levels
- Standards for independent evaluation
- Quality-at-entry standards and risk assessment
- Validation of results.

4 Strengthening the field of impact evidence and insights

Impact supports and strengthens the field of impact evidence and insights, particularly in new areas needed for the impact work of the Foundation — incorporating Indigenous knowledge/new ways of knowing, thought leadership, training young female and male evaluators, and developing innovative approaches to impact, evidence, insights. Impact has direct accountability for this work, sometimes in collaboration with other Foundation teams and external partners. Examples include grant support for:

- Infusing Indigenous knowledge relevant to the work of the Foundation in Africa and Canada.
- Impact labs to co-design and innovate with young people new ways of knowing, narrative generation, technology enabled MEL data gathering and storytelling.
- Training cohorts of young evaluators to be part of ongoing data collection, analysis and interpretation and to build voice and agency during this process.

Types of Impact Reviews

ANNUAL IMPACT REVIEWS

These reviews will seek to answer the extent to which portfolio outcomes are being achieved, and their potential or actual achievement in transformation and scale at a country level. Reviews will be based on quarterly or semi-annual impact monitoring of program portfolios against baselines to present an annual impact report on expanding opportunities for dignified and fulfilling work for young women and men and the ripple effects on their families, communities, socio-cultural, and economic systems and norms.

STRATEGIC REVIEWS OF COUNTRY STRATEGIES

These reviews will assess the extent to which country program portfolios are driving innovation and contributing to institutional, policy and systems change at scale in countries.

MANAGEMENT-INITIATED REVIEWS

Management-driven demand for impact services may include peer reviews of strategic partnerships, for example.

STRATEGIC REVIEWS OF THE FOUNDATION'S STRATEGY AND OPERATING MODEL

These reviews will assess the effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the Foundation's new strategy and operating model to understand the extent to which the new operating model is generating impacts relating to mission-level strategic goals. They will assess the comparative advantage and positioning of the Foundation in the countries where we work and in the philanthropic field in order to provide an opportunity for the Foundation to adjust its strategy and operating model.

Guiding Questions & Principles

In designing and implementing the work of the Impact function we are guided by the following questions:

- How do we know if young people are in dignified work and are empowered to exercise voice and agency?
- What does this mean for longer-term sustainable change/transformation at scale?
- What are different ways of knowing this? Through whose eyes, whose voice?
- What do we need to do to empower young women and men to create these insights and evidence?
- What roles/actions are required?

Our approach to impact is principles-based and intentionally focused on elevating the voices of young women and men in what is counted, why and how.

Our principles speak to our intentionality to enable new ways of gathering data and synthesizing knowledge, that, together with conventional data, will provide robust, inclusive impact data and narratives. These principles are:

- Elevating the voices of young women and men in evidence
- Co-creation of knowledge and evidence
- Building on what we know
- Meaningful collaboration with partners for scale
- Advancing public policy

Phenny Omondi and Purity Kendi, Mastercard Foundation alumni, established the Kilimo Jijini community enterprise and urban farm in Kibera, Kenya, where youth learn about agriculture practices and entrepreneurship.



Creating a New Generation of Indigenous Evaluators

One of the potential game changers of the Impact Strategy is the establishment of impact labs in Africa and Canada. Impact labs will work with respected local and Indigenous impact thought leaders and knowledge specialists in Africa and Canada to incorporate Indigenous knowledge, world views, philosophies, and experiences of former colonized and historically marginalized communities.

The labs will catalyze dynamic engagements with young women and men, and create new approaches, methods, tools and innovative practices. This, in turn, will build a new cohort of young evaluators across Africa and among Indigenous people in Canada. New youth-focused evaluation and insights training will launch a new generation of culturally relevant evaluation specialists to provide a much-needed counterbalance to the current market of western-trained data providers.

What Success Looks Like

The outcomes we strive to achieve

- 1 The Mastercard Foundation and its partners in Africa and Canada have data, evidence and insights on the factors and strategies that enable effective and sustainable dignified work, and clarity on how this is achieved.
- 2 Young women and men in Africa and Canada are engaged in co-generating culturally appropriate evidence and insights into the extent to which their cohorts are engaged in dignified and fulfilling work. They use impact evidence to build their skills, voice, social capital and confidence to increase their opportunities and choices for a better life for themselves, their families and communities.
- 3 The Foundation Board of Directors, senior Program and Operations management embrace and act on impact evidence and insights to adjust Foundation strategies and models of operation, in order to optimize transformation and scale.
- 4 Country partners and mandated institutions embrace and use impact data, evidence and insights as part of their efforts to transform country-level policies, programs and systems to improve the lives and livelihoods of young women and men.
- 5 A new generation of young African and Canadian Indigenous evaluators provide leadership and inspiration to the monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) and development fields. This new generation inspires the adoption of new ways of knowing, and new approaches to data and measurement, which elevate young people's voices and knowledge in decision-making in Africa and Canada.
- 6 The Impact function provides leadership in the Foundation and externally in philanthropy to grow and mature Indigenous evaluation and to reverse asymmetries of power, knowledge and voice in Africa and Indigenous Canada.
- 7 The Mastercard Foundation provides inspiration and leadership on impact in philanthropy and by example inspires other Foundations to make similar shifts in their strategies and impact functions.

Our journey is just beginning. We are living a narrative articulated by our Board of Directors that “impact is everybody’s business in the Mastercard Foundation.” Impact is what defines our oneness in purposeful planning and coordinated implementation of investments to catalyze the voices and agency of young women and men, in Africa and among Indigenous communities in Canada, to enhance their capacities to access dignified and fulfilling work.

Our mutual commitment to impact enables our partners — private sector and public institutions — to make significant changes that improve the conditions, policies and incentives that accelerate opportunities for millions of young women and men. Ultimately, they become engaged and working citizens who transform their own communities and countries.
