

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023





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# A WORD FROM THE FOUNDERS

We write this to you from a place of gratitude and pride, reflecting on our five-year journey and how far we have come.

Dear Friends,

In December 2018, we officially became a registered non-profit organisation in Kenya with a vision to impact lives through the power of dance. Starting with 20 students in Kibera, without a structured curriculum or strategic plan, we continued and thrived on our unwavering passion and dedication.

It took many steps, from designing, testing, falling and getting up again to creating a program that supports our communities and creates impact. It was no secret that the Covid-19 pandemic was both a struggle and an opportunity to push forward. And luckily, we did! Through the years, we crafted our mission, redefined our programs and expanded into new areas. Who thought that dance could transform lives? Well, we did. We are happy that the world is catching on to our ideas as we keep on pioneering dance as a transformative and creative solution to mental health and well-being for children across Kenya.

In a world where youth well-being is a growing concern, with increasing cases of depression, anxiety, and behavioural disorders, we recognize the need for holistic solutions. By addressing both symptoms and root causes, our approach, centred around dance, is a powerful method for overcoming mental health obstacles.

This year, we expanded to new geographies and communities, and we listened to and learned tremendously from them. From the rural schools in Kenya to refugees in North Uganda, we were humbled to hear the stories of youth who want to change their community and, through chezaCheza, could create change.

As we grow, we promise to keep on listening to the communities we serve and bring the resources to ensure children and youth can be the change they want to see in this world.

With Gratitude,

*Cherrelle & Franco*

Co-Founders of ChezaCheza





# IMPACT OVERVIEW

We want to create safe spaces where you feel like you're growing, where you belong and can make mistakes. We cannot change the environment, but what we can do is build strong minds. Everything starts with the mind.

**1,872**

ChezaCheza classes provided

**1,785**

Children reached across Kenya

**152**

Professional counselling sessions provided

**208**

Parents reached on the importance of mental health

**53**

Safe spaces created across Kenya

**34**

ChezaCheza trained youth across Kenya and Uganda





# WE ARE ON A MISSION

We need to embrace culturally sensitive approaches to mental health where communities are the center of transformation.

ChezaCheza pioneers dance as a creative solution to mental health and well-being for children and youth. Drawing on our love for dance and understanding of its therapeutic effectiveness, we crafted a unique solution: combining dance movement therapy with social-emotional learning and mindfulness meditation within a community-based framework.

**Our mission** is to create access to safe spaces for children in marginalised communities where dance supports their mental health and well-being. We envision a world where we equip every child with the capacity to make responsible life choices and realise their full potential.

**It's important** to understand that children living in unstable environments, where poverty, conflict, or abuse is common, are at heightened risk of developing mental health problems or other risky behaviors - comprising their chances of a healthy future.

**We build** communities with and for children where they find healthy relationships, helpful support systems, and positive environments to feel good and mentally healthy. Supporting children through their teenage years can really make a big difference in their lives.

## 1 DANCE THERAPY CURRICULUM

We equip children with skills of coping, managing stress, building self-esteem, and enhance decision-making abilities using dance movement therapy, social-emotional learning, and mindfulness meditation.

## 2 INSPIRING DANCE COACHES

We identify and train talented and inspiring youth from the same disadvantaged community. They are role models to the children and passionate to create social change and uplift their communities.

## 3 THERAPEUTIC DANCE SESSIONS

We provide weekly therapeutic dance sessions in communities where children from 10 to 18 years old have a safe space in to experience the joy of dancing while building essential life skills.



**A new generation is resilient with healthy coping mechanisms for a healthy and harmonious community**

# COMMUNITY DANCE PROGRAM



Child dancing  
with joy in a  
ChezaCheza  
class



**599**  
children



**208**  
parents



**10**  
safe spaces



**17**  
coaches



# INTRODUCING OUR NEW COACHES

A true sense of belonging includes the ability to feel you are a part of the community as your true self. Community is critical for us to thrive.

In 2023, we created 10 safe spaces across two communities, Kibera and Mathare. We provided weekly therapeutic dance sessions, during which 599 children experienced the joy of dancing while flourishing into young adults with strong minds, high self-esteem, and responsible approaches to life's challenges.

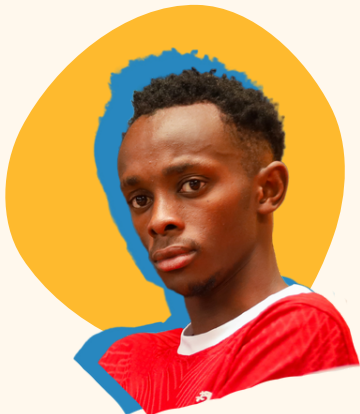
In preparation for 2024, we discovered seven talented dancers from different parts of Nairobi. With our new group of Community-Based Dance Coaches, we will start the ChezaCheza programs in 17 locations across Nairobi at the start of the new year.

These new leaders are committed to helping others develop their skills, bringing people together, and improving the lives of everyone around them.

During a five-day program, they learned about dance therapy techniques, counselling methods, and child safety rules. This helps them to create safe for weekly therapeutic dance workshops.

After community outreach and home visits, we can open the new locations in January 2024 and conduct weekly therapeutic dance workshops that are both accessible and transformative.

## MEET TWO INSPIRING ROLE MODELS



“Growing up, I didn't have a platform or someone who believed in me or supported me in ways that I needed despite knowing I have a great potential for growth and improve my life and those around me. I want to be that person to someone else. ChezaCheza supported me in improving my life and that of others.

*Brian*



“The ChezaCheza training helped me cope with daily challenges that I encounter as a youth in my community. And now, I can support the children to ensure they are the change they want to see. ChezaCheza encourages me and the children to create the most positive version of ourselves.

*Maureen*







# SCHOOL PROGRAM



Breathwork during the emotion check-in



ChezaCheza



1,235  
children



43  
schools



10  
communities

# BUILDING HAPPY SCHOOLS

When learners are happy, their overall learning experience improves leading to better retention, motivation, and cognitive abilities.

At ChezaCheza, we believe in making schools happier places. We know that when students feel good emotionally, they do better in their studies. That's why we've teamed up with partners to make mental health a priority in education. Our team of Community-Based Dance Coaches brings our special program to schools. The results are impressive: students report feeling better about themselves, understand their feelings better, and are more excited to learn and go to school.

We see more confident learners in our classrooms and schools. For us, it's not just about getting good grades; it's about helping students become strong and happy people who love to learn. We imagine a future where happiness is a big part of every school day, not just a rare occurrence.

**“In the ChezaCheza classes, dance inspires me. I feel good when I dance because I get to express myself and my talents. In the classes, we also learn life skills such as how to build one's self-esteem and teamwork. I use these life skills, such as teamwork, to help me finish my assignments that we do as a group.”**

Wendy, 13 years old  
FAFU School in Kibera

Happy School,  
Happy Children





# LISTEN TO OUR STORY



“These lessons we are taught during our community dance classes, such as stress management, coping with emotions, and self-awareness, are helpful to me. I used to be a very hot-tempered person. I used to get angry easily. Ever since I joined Chezacheza and learnt all of these skills, I have been able to control my temper by using skills like mirroring. I get to speak to myself in front of the mirror and share how I feel. I can also release my emotions through crying, dancing and singing.

**Dorcas, ChezaCheza student from Vuma**

“Before my children joined Chezacheza, they did not know how to relate to other kids well. I was once called to school because of one of my kids' bad behaviour, but when he joined Chezacheza, I got very positive feedback from the teachers about his behaviour. I wish ChezaCheza would get into partnerships with schools and institutions that do rehabilitation to help those who are lost in drug abuse and addiction to help with the curriculum that helps them with life skills and how they do it through dance.

**David Macharia, ChezaCheza Parent from Mathare**



“The ChezaCheza program has been very beneficial to the learners because when they engage in dancing, they become very active in class. This has enhanced their attention while in class. It has also motivated most of them to attend school regularly, because they are aware that Tuesdays and Thursdays they get to engage with ChezaCheza classes so they can't be absent.

**Garden of Hope, school teacher Mr. Dan Josphat**

“My favorite topic is teamwork, which is all about doing things together, helping one another, and playing together. For instance, in school, if someone hasn't understood something in class, you help them out.

**Winnie, ChezaCheza student from Mathare North**



# PARTNERSHIPS



**60**  
teenage girls



**302**  
libraries



**2**  
countries



**17**  
coaches



# MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships help us to share resources and knowledge, making it easier to reach our goals. Working together, we can reach more communities and solve problems faster. By teaming up, we can do even more good in the world.

## 1 BOOK BUNK

Dance Bunk, a part of Book Bunk's programs, is an education program that offers free dance classes to library users from the Makadara and Kaloleni libraries. As part of Dance Bunk, we recruited Kevin and Alexis as new dance coaches for the program and provided training to kick off Dance Bunk in April 2023. They will have support from our seasoned ChezaCheza coaches, Stacy and Isaac, to deliver the classes. Every school holiday, children living near the libraries can come to enjoy the ChezaCheza classes in these historical libraries to learn, express themselves and have fun.

## 3 GIRLS RISING

This year, we worked with Girl Rising to support 60 girls and 30 boys in Kibera and Mathare. We provided classes and activities on expression, participation in decision-making, confidence, and positive attitudes towards gender equality. All through different art forms, like poetry, singing, and dance. Our team received training from Girl Rising, and our female coaches held the monthly sessions. With the Girl Rising curriculum and this partnership, we are working towards eradicating stereotypes and building an equitable future where adolescent boys and girls co-exist and have an opportunity to survive and thrive.

## 2 AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

In collaboration with the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), we created a podcast version of our dance sessions for children 4 to 8 years old. The podcast was transformed into a portable 'dance' card that can be used in the Yoto player. This Yoto player was distributed to 300 community libraries across Kenya's coastal areas to support play and learning. It works by inserting cards that play stories, podcasts, songs and now also our dance sessions.

## 4 ELIMU FANAKA

With our partner Elimu Fanaka, we took the first steps to expand in schools across rural Kenya. Franco travelled to Voi to give training during Elimu Fanaka's teacher convention. The convention was a 3-day training where 22 teachers and head teachers from rural schools from Taita Taveta and Kajiado were trained on how to build 'happy' schools where students look forward to going every day. We further trained 5 school alums into Community-Based Dance coaches who implemented the ChezaCheza program in their schools.



# SPECIAL MOMENTS TO US

We have little or big moments that light up our world. It's through connection and generosity that there is always an unexpected moment that comes our way and impacts our organization.

## A NEW DANCE CENTRE

This year, we were able to build a professional dance studio on our property - the first one in Kibera! We broke down our hall and built the new space from the ground up, ensuring a solid foundation, good ventilation and natural lighting. There is now a space with mirrors, so children can see their movements, understand how they move and improve their dance skills. Professional flooring to ensure children are safe during the dance sessions and the most vibrant colours and inspirational words to uplift, motivate and cultivate our young and bright minds.



## DANCING IN BIDI BIDI

A state-of-the-art music and arts centre is being built to nourish talent and artistry in the refugee settlement Bidi Bidi in Northern Uganda. To bring dance and mental health support, ChezaCheza trained 10 youths from Bidi Bidi to conduct the ChezaCheza program in this new art centre. Since the start of the refugee crisis in 2016, a severe lack of mental health resources has led to widespread mental health crises, including suicide. We aim to combat this through our dance therapy curriculum to specifically focus on addressing the mental health crisis among the refugee youth.





# LOOKING FORWARD TO 2024

As we look forward to 2024, ChezaCheza is ready to expand its wings beyond Kenya. We're sticking to our promise of using dance to help people feel better mentally and physically. We've got three big plans for the coming year.

## 1 REFUGEE-LED SESSIONS

First, our journey takes us to two refugee settlements in Uganda and Kenya. These are often very tough places to live and our programs are more than necessary there. We already trained 10 coaches in Bidi Bidi (Uganda), that will implement the program throughout 2024 in a newly constructed music and dance centre. In Kakuma (Kenya), we will work with partners to training 4 coaches and reach 150 students in a pilot program. We'll use dance to bring happiness and hope to these communities. Our therapeutic dance sessions will help people deal with tough experiences, become stronger, and feel connected to each other.

## 2 BUILDING MORE HAPPY SCHOOLS

ChezaCheza is thrilled to propose a pilot program titled "Happy Schools," aimed at integrating dance as a creative solution for enhancing mental health and well-being among children in Kenya. We recognize the profound impact of creative expression, particularly through dance, on children's emotional and psychological well-being. With this in mind, we are dedicated to pioneering dance as a solution for fostering happier and more engaging learning environments in schools. The primary objective of the Happy Schools pilot program is to explore the effectiveness of integrating dance-based activities into the school environment to foster happiness, engagement, and overall well-being among students.

## 3 GENERATING EVIDENCE

Lastly, we're all about learning too. We want to make sure our programs really make a difference. That's why we're exploring partnerships that can support research and generating more evidence of the effectiveness of our work. In our studies, we focus on how dance and movements helps children feel happier, and how this affects other parts of their life. By learning more, we can make our programs even better and help even more people.

Please keep moving along this journey with us!

# A HEARTFELT THANK YOU

Our deepest gratitude to all our supporters, donors and partners who contributed to our work in 2023. Together, we're working towards a future where dance isn't just something fun to do; it's a powerful tool for healing, happiness, and empowerment. With your help, we're stepping closer to our dream of a world where everyone can feel mentally and physically well.





# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

## 2023

### Income statement 2023

Jan-Dec 2023

2023 (KES)

#### Total Income

**15,352,101**

- Grants
- Earned income
- Donations

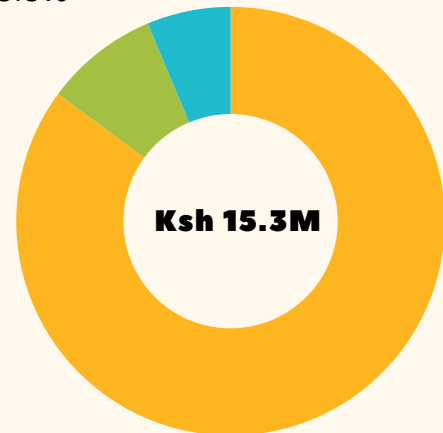
13,066,256

1,317,110

968,734

Earned income 8.6%

Donations 6.3%



**Ksh 15.3M**

Grants 85.1%

Jan-Dec 2023

2023 (KES)

#### Total Expenses

**15,461,067**

- Direct program
- Team
- Administrative

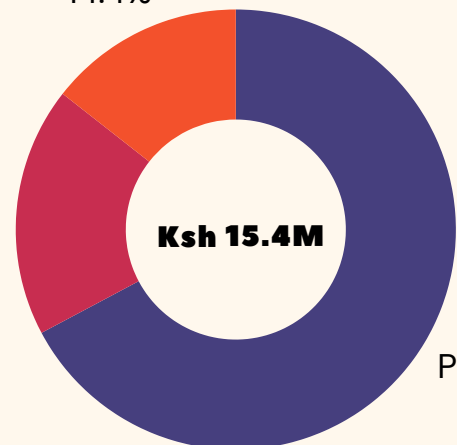
10,393,252

2,838,787

2,229,028

Admin 14.4%

Team 18.4%



**Ksh 15.4M**

Program 67.2%





# BUILDING STRONG MINDS THROUGH DANCE

**Keep Dancing, Keep Smiling**

CHEZACHEZA DANCE FOUNDATION  
NAIROBI, KENYA



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