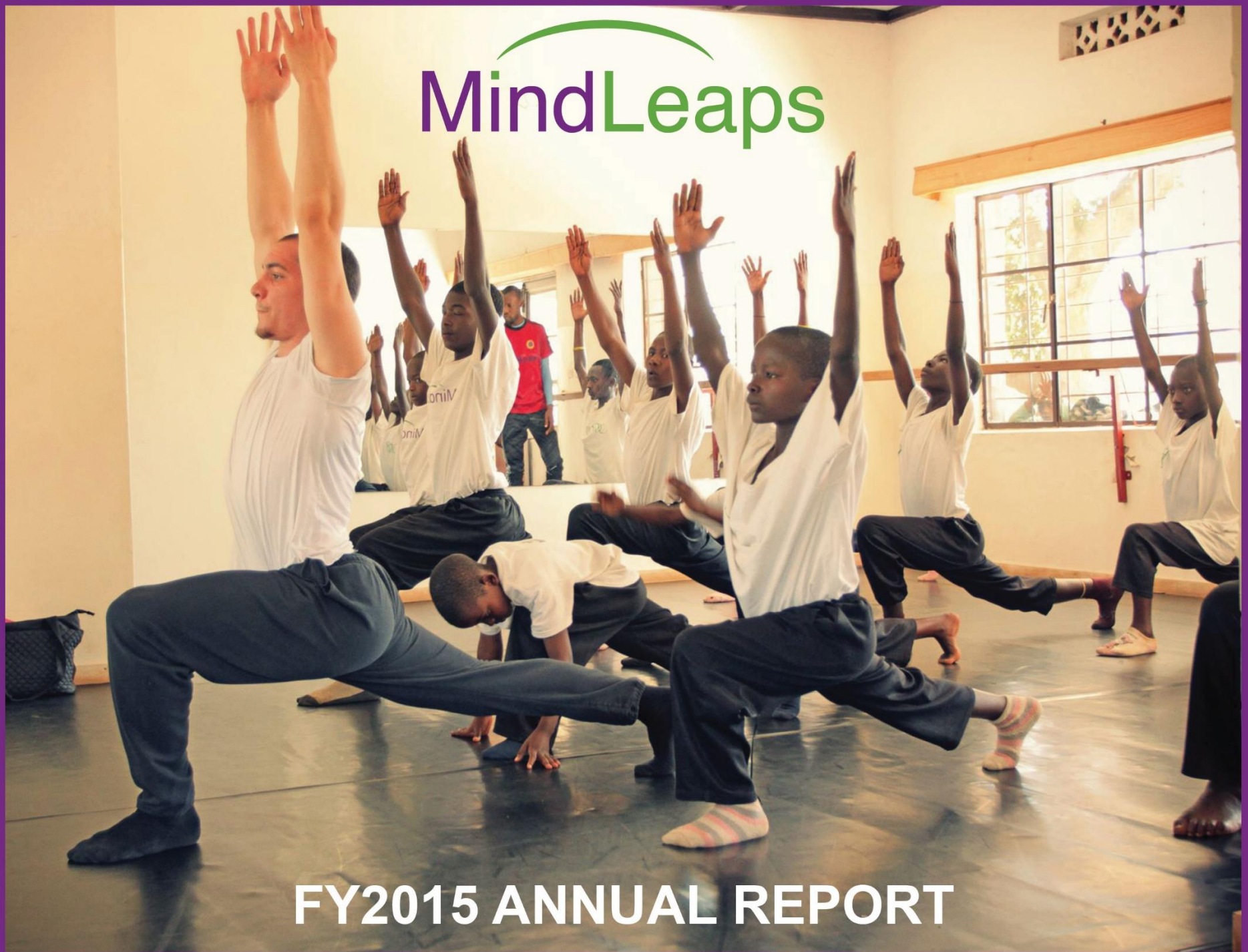




MindLeaps



**FY2015 ANNUAL REPORT**



## Table of Contents

Director's Note .....	3
MindLeaps Overview .....	4
FY2015 Highlights .....	5
A Day in the Life of a MindLeaps Student .	6
FY2015 Financials .....	7
FY2015 Program Activities .....	8-13
Carnegie Mellon Research.....	14
Leadership and Management .....	15
Media Highlights .....	16
History of MindLeaps .....	17

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Dear Friends,

We started this year with a new name – MindLeaps – and logo to reflect our focused mission on children's educational development.

Our program at our center in Rwanda grew to serve 60 children, over six hours a day, five days per week. We increased our local staff to five, and invited three phenomenal dancers from the US to visit our center and participate in our "train the trainers" program. We also partnered with the AIDS Healthcare Foundation to provide testing and education to all our students.

New research documented our impact in the field: Carnegie Mellon University created software for us to collect data on the impact of our dance curriculum on 7 cognitive and behavioral skills in MindLeaps' students. The findings are exciting, showing growth of these skills in just 7-10 weeks in our program.

Across the world, MindLeaps was assisted through an expansion of the involvement of volunteers. There are dedicated volunteers working on educational, organizational, and business projects, with great work being done from research to curriculum development.

We are so grateful to our donors, partners, staff, volunteers and friends for all they have done to make 2015 such a landmark year for MindLeaps. We look forward to many bright years ahead.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Davis  
Executive Director  
MindLeaps



## What is MindLeaps?

MindLeaps is a not-for-profit organization working in post-conflict and developing countries to permanently decrease the number of street children. MindLeaps uses a kinesthetic-based curriculum to improve the cognitive skills of youth to ensure they can go to school, enter the workplace and leap forward in life.



## Why Dance?

Working in countries where dance is an intrinsic part of local culture, we use dance as an entry point to the development of a street child's mind. Boys and girls come off the streets and into MindLeaps' center because they want to attend a "free, fun dance class", but in reality, this is a carefully crafted, standardized curriculum focused on enhancing critical learning skills.

## Three Phase Model



Street youth are attracted to dance classes at MindLeaps and participate in a curriculum that targets cognitive and behavioral skills



Once skills improve by 35%, children enter the vocational training program with English and IT classes



The top performing students are sponsored to attend boarding school

# FY2015 HIGHLIGHTS

**1,186**

Hours of Dance Classes

**675**

Hours of IT Classes

**366**

Hours of English Language Classes

**11,435**

Meals Provided

**11**

Local Staff Employed

**\$12,800**

Awarded in Boarding School Scholarships

**340**

Children Served

# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MINDLEAPS STUDENT

Rene was a typical street boy.

He had been living on the street for two years because his mother was unable to provide food for him at home. He slept wherever he could.

He was severely addicted to drugs, had barely gone to school, and managed to eat once a day when he was lucky. Rene learned about MindLeaps from another student who told him that he was attending our classes at FidesCo. He explained that MindLeaps had helped him to get off the street and to start a new life.



In March of 2014, Rene joined the first group at MindLeaps' new center in Nyamirambo. At first, he would come to dance class, but would have to stop half way through. Due to his drug addiction, he didn't have the necessary stamina and couldn't meet the other physical requirements. But the joy of dancing kept him coming back. Rene said that dance made him happy and helped him to forget the challenges he was facing.

He said MindLeaps slowly gave him the ability to work hard and to follow the rules. He struggled with his addiction, but his newfound joy and increased discipline enabled him to stop using drugs. Rene reached his goal of being able to dance successfully for the two full hours of the class. He then became a most dedicated student, attending regularly, five days a week.

## Rene's schedule

### EVERY MONDAY, WEDNESDAY & FRIDAY

9:00 AM-11:00 AM -- Dance Class

The two-hour dance class involves warm ups, floor exercises, combinations, and across the floor steps. The curriculum includes steps from jazz, contemporary, and ballet.

11:00 AM – 1:00 PM -- Lunch

A lunch meal is provided every day by MindLeaps. These meals alternate between porridge, rice with fish, and rice with meat. For many students, this is their only meal of the day.



### EVERY TUESDAY & THURSDAY

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM -- English

Language Class

In English language class, Rene and the other students learn both spoken and written English and practice the alphabet and basic phrases. The class is taught by Fulbright alumni Keilah Creedon along with several English speaking volunteers.

12:00 PM – 2:00 PM -- Lunch

Daily lunch of porridge, rice with fish, and rice with meat.

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM -- IT CLASS

In IT class, students begin by learning the basics of computer components and functionality. Next they learn typing, windows applications, and how to conduct internet searches. Then they move on to connect with the outside world through email, Skype, and Twitter.

Rene loved his mother and missed her so he decided to return home. He moved back in shortly before she died of AIDS. Now he is an orphan. As the oldest child in the family, he works and takes care of his five younger siblings. Rene's progress in MindLeaps has made him a more dedicated and resilient young man. He is attending vocational school in tailoring, supported by individual donors, and wants to make it his career. He hopes to continue to be able to support himself and his family.

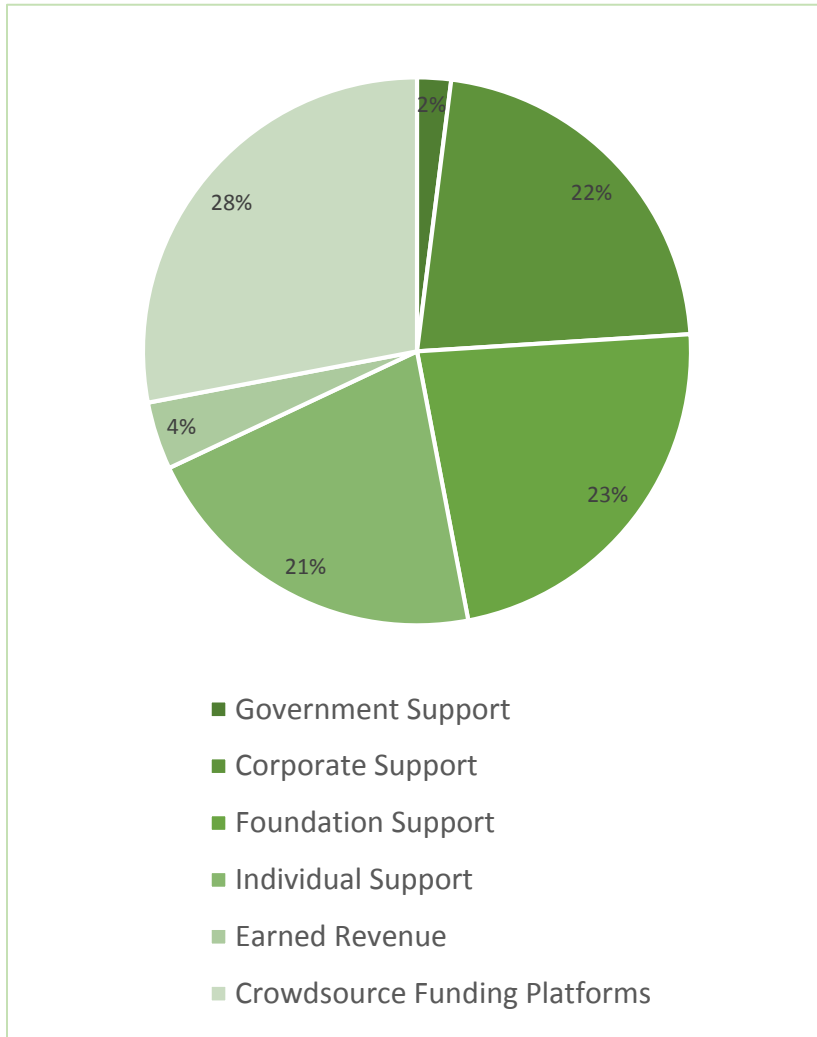


*"When Rene first came to us, I didn't think he would be able to make it in the program. He has really changed a lot over his time at MindLeaps. He now is one of our top students in dance, and when he sets his mind to do something you know he will do it. You can see he is the happiest person in the room when he is dancing. He is so honest and kind, and wants to become a better person every day."*

– Ssali Eugene, Dance Teacher

**MindLeaps thanks its generous donors and partners for making FY2015 a record fundraising year.**

MindLeaps funding comes from diverse sources, including:



**Financial Highlights - FY 2015**

INCOME	USD
Contributed Income	\$168,060
Earned Income	\$6,004
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$174,064</b>
<b>EXPENSES*</b> (see notes below)	
USA: G&A	\$8,668
USA: Executive Director	\$27,000
Fundraising	\$2,230
Rwanda	\$81,289
Guinea	\$3,371
Bosnia-Herzegovina	\$250
Teacher Training /Curriculum	\$2,918
Scholarships	\$12,800
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$138,525</b>
Net Ordinary Income	\$35,539
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$174,064</b>

\*Notes: USA G&A: filing fees, insurance & administrative help (ad hoc)  
 Only full-time stateside staff was Rebecca at \$2,250/month.  
 Rwanda: includes full program at MindLeaps Center for 60 kids/day (staff of 5)  
 Guinea: small because the program was suspended in 2015 due to Ebola  
 Bosnia-Herzegovina: program was a short one-month program entirely run by volunteers  
 Scholarships: boarding school support for top students exiting MindLeaps Center

# Rwanda

## *MindLeaps Center in Nyamirambo, Kigali*

MindLeaps' permanent Rwandan staff worked with **60 street children daily** in order to provide a "catch up" program for street youth and out-of-school youth who have never had the chance to go to school and become literate. The program consisted of:

- Dance training to reform behavioral patterns and increase cognition.
- IT classes to introduce children to technology and the outside world.
- English Language training to provide valuable job skills.
- Boarding school sponsorship to fully re-integrate children back into civil society.
- HIV testing & treatment via AIDS Healthcare Foundation.



### Spotlight on Supporter: LEVEL8

Formed in 2009, Level8 is a small local charity based in Carnoustie, Scotland. Level8 aims to raise funds for small to medium projects anywhere in the world, focusing on the relief of poverty and the promotion of education. Students in Scotland individually fundraised through Level8 to provide funding for MindLeaps. Level8 supported the MindLeaps Center again this year through:



- Creation of a full kitchen
- Providing desks and chairs for the guest rooms
- Giving 36 sanitation packages, with each kit containing a t-shirt, towel, flip flops, toothbrush, jogging pants, water bottle, nail clippers, and shower gel.

In January 2015, Rebecca Davis visited Scotland, giving several presentations to raise awareness of MindLeaps' and its partnership with Level8. In summer 2016, students in Scotland who fundraised through Level8 will visit the MindLeaps Center in Rwanda. **Thank you, Level8!**





## FidesCo

FidesCo is a local NGO in Rwanda that works with the government to rehabilitate and reintegrate street children. Working with FidesCo, the MindLeaps team taught 40-50 street children five days a week at FidesCo's center in Kigali. The staff led dance classes from 2:00pm to 4:30pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the staff led IT and computer science classes, introducing the street children to the basics of computers and laptops.

### Spotlight on Supporter: David Williamson Rwanda Foundation

A team of MindLeaps teachers traveled to Rugerero, a survivor village near the border of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Working with 150 poor, rural boys and girls, the staff led dance classes followed by health lessons to address community issues, such as water conservation and HIV/AIDS. At the conclusion of the program, the children performed a dance-theater piece with the lessons learned via dance, drama and song. In this way, the children became educators for the wider community. MindLeaps thanks our generous funder for the Rugerero program, the David Williamson Rwanda Foundation.

**DAVID  
WILLIAMSON  
RWANDA  
FOUNDATION**



# Bosnia-Herzegovina

## *Summer Program in Travnik*

MindLeaps ran a summer program in Travnik, Bosnia-Herzegovina, focusing on integrating youth of diverse ethnic backgrounds.

MindLeaps instructors ran a series of dance workshops for multi-ethnic youth along with social dialogue workshops. Over the summer, MindLeaps provided 40 hours of dance classes and social dialogue workshops to 30 children taught by 2 local staff members.

## *KUREMA, a weeklong international dance event*

MindLeaps commemorated the end of the Bosnian War by hosting KUREMA, a weeklong, international dance event. Dancers, movers and fitness instructors across all genres were invited to teach a class anywhere in the world between June 15-21 and hold a moment of silence to remember the victims of the war.



Over 60 classes around the world were held – in styles ranging from ballet, to yoga, to gyrokinesis – to recognize the Bosnian War. See a video

online here: <https://youtu.be/PjGPO7MpcNo>



## Guinea

Our program in Guinea continued four days a week providing dance, English language classes, and the meal program through September 2014. On September 28<sup>th</sup>, students performed for an audience of family, friends, and members of the US Embassy.

After September, the Ebola crisis caused MindLeaps to suspend its program for the rest of the year.

MindLeaps will relaunch the program in part in 2016. In addition to its regular programs and services, MindLeaps will provide additional health research and services to these students and their dependent siblings who have special needs in post-Ebola Guinea.

*Between March 2014 and February 15, 2015, 3,108 people died from Ebola in Guinea.*

*“The Ebola pandemic has had a profound impact on Guinea’s economy and society, and damaged the social fabric and retarded the country’s growth prospects” (The World Bank).*

*MindLeaps is deeply saddened by the impact of Ebola on Guineans.*



## International Artists Fund

In MindLeaps' International Artists Fund (IAF), artists travel to the MindLeaps' program in Rwanda where they see in practice how dance is being used to attract youth off the streets and channel them back into education. They learn about the country's history and see first-hand the impact of investing in Rwandan children. The artists invite their followers around the world to follow their journey and bring a critical level of awareness to these children's plight. This year's IAF dancers were:

**Nicole Corea, Lar Lubovitch Dance Company**

On her first visit to Rwanda, Nicole Corea of Lar Lubovitch Dance Company spent one month helping both MindLeaps' students and teachers. She trained MindLeaps' staff on the new contemporary dance curriculum, and introduced this curriculum to the advanced students. She taught dance classes to students at both MindLeaps' Center and at the local partner's center FidesCo.

**Ashley Werhun, Les Ballets Jazz de Montreal**

**Mark Caserta, Complexions Contemporary Ballet  
& Les Ballets Jazz de Montreal**

Mark and Ashley spent two weeks in Rwanda with MindLeaps in June 2015. They spent time teaching the MindLeaps students, training the teachers, and visiting the boarding school where many former MindLeaps students now live and study. In addition, they visited the Kigali and Nyamata Genocide Memorials to learn about the difficult challenges of Rwanda's history and society. You can view their vlog series on their experiences working with street youth [online here](#).

*"These rhythms meant so much more than counts, and the movements more than shapes. I could feel each child's spirit in full celebration."  
- Ashley Werhun*



## *Antigone* at the Ubumuntu Arts Festival



MindLeaps presented *Antigone* at the 2015 Ubumuntu Arts Festival. This annual festival was created by Hope Azeda, who is part of the contemporary Rwandan theatre scene and the founder and artistic director of Mashirika Creative and Performing Arts Group. The festival aims to promote peace building and healing from violence, to give a platform for the arts as an appreciated discipline in its own merit, and provide space for artists to network, grow, share, and create.

*Antigone* was choreographed by Rebecca Davis with music by Timofey Buzina, and performed by dancers Cassidy Giordano and Nicole Corea. See the performance online here: [youtu.be/Hrl12Vb8oso](https://youtu.be/Hrl12Vb8oso)

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*"We are really proud to be a sponsor of this festival, because it is an important recognition of what arts can do. Arts is a language and a dialogue in and of itself, and it can help bring us all together—building bridges across cultures, across countries, and across continents."*

*- United States Ambassador to Rwanda  
Ms. Barks-Ruggles speaks at the  
Ubumuntu Arts Festival*

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# MindLeaps' impact is measured by Carnegie Mellon

Carnegie Mellon University Rwanda created data collection software and released a research study, "Measuring Performance of Innovative Educational Programs: Developing Critical Learning Skills in Street Children Through Dance," led by Dr. Patrick McSharry from the ICT Center of Excellence at Carnegie Mellon University.



## Cognitive & Non-Cognitive Skills Targeted at MindLeaps

1. Memorization
2. Language
3. Discipline
4. Self-Esteem
5. Grit
6. Teamwork & Collaboration
7. Creativity & Self-Expression

Preliminary findings by Carnegie Mellon University Rwanda concluded the MindLeaps' program improved the composite skill levels of 45 youth between the ages of 9 and 18 years in Rwanda. The study reported "The program develops adolescents' ability to concentrate, memorize, and use language, while helping them learn to work as a team, become self-disciplined and develop their creativity and self-esteem; skills that are critical for future success in school."

A team of Carnegie Mellon University students and faculty developed software that allowed MindLeaps' staff to capture daily data on these skills. The software generates skill development curves that visualize the progress of individual students and entire groups.

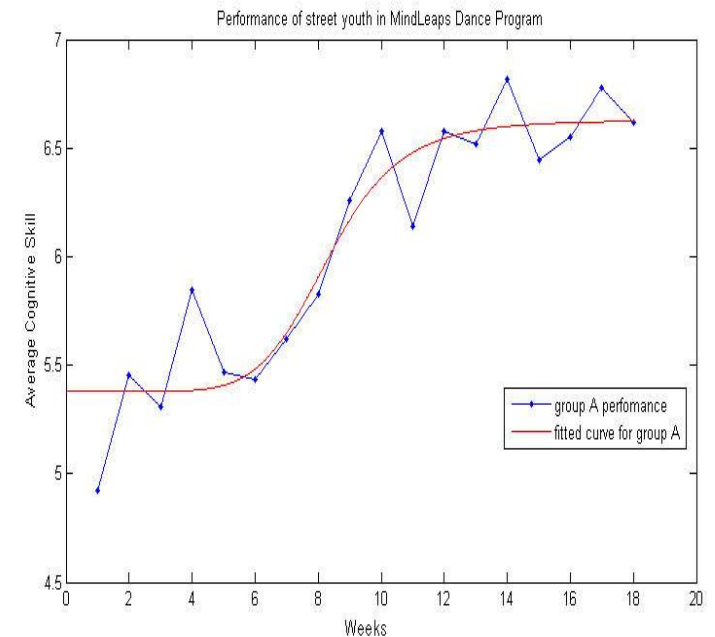
Each student in the study had a minimum of 504 data points, and each class/group had over 7,500 combined data points. Students were assessed over a six-month period.

## Research Conclusions:

- A general S-Curve is formed: students show a rapid improvement in cognitive and non-cognitive skills in 7 – 10 weeks and then maintain their newly attained level
- All three groups improved their composite skill score
- The group of younger children (ages 10 -12 years) improved more than either the mixed age group or the older group

A video demonstrating the software is online here [youtu.be/h53aRkoVbp4](https://youtu.be/h53aRkoVbp4)

Read more about MindLeaps' research online here [mindleaps.org/research](https://mindleaps.org/research)



# LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT



## Founder & Executive Director, Rebecca Davis

Rebecca Davis leveraged her background in ballet, business and international relations to found MindLeaps. Originally from Vancouver, British Columbia, Rebecca has choreographed and taught in Russia, Ukraine, Rwanda, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Scotland, Guinea and the United States. She was classically trained in the Russian Vaganova method of ballet while studying in Moscow, Saint Petersburg and Krasnoyarsk, Russia. She received a degree in choreography from The Saint Petersburg Conservatory and is a two-time Fulbright scholar. She attended York University's Schulich School of Business and Temple University's Fox School of Business (graduating summa cum laude) and holds a Master's in International Relations with a concentration in Peacekeeping Studies (American Military University). She is the recipient of the Loran Scholarship, a two-time Leeway Arts & Social Change grantee, a Carl Wilkens Fellow of The Genocide Intervention Network, and the 2015 Fulbright Alumnae in Residence in New York. She has been a guest speaker at Temple University, University of Pennsylvania African Studies Center, the Annual Fulbright Alumni Conference, Princeton University, Marywood University, University of Michigan, Brown University and gave a [TEDx talk](#) at the US Chamber of Commerce in Washington, DC.

## MindLeaps Board of Trustees & Advisors

MindLeaps Board of Trustees & Advisors provides essential guidance, strategic planning, and oversight. Among the Board's activities are fundraising, financial management, legal counsel, strategy planning, and monitoring and evaluation.

### VOLUNTEERS

MindLeaps' volunteers provide considerable and vital support to its operations in the U.S. and internationally. The many roles they undertake include graphic design assistance, research collection and analysis, teaching English lessons, collecting donated goods, and much more. The Board is very grateful to the following individuals for their commitment and wonderful contribution:

Andee Dooley  
Alan Greenfield  
Michelle Loizeaux  
Jorge Losch

### Board of Trustees & Advisors

*LaMar Baylor* – The Lion King on Broadway  
*Mary Cox* – International Rescue Committee  
*Rebecca Davis\** – MindLeaps  
*Gail DeLong* – Marie Industries  
*Vincent Emanuele* – WellCentive  
*Neil Kleinman* – University of The Arts  
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*Erin Perez* – Arke Systems  
*Ronni Pressman* – Temple Ner Tamid  
*Joel E. Soffin (Chair)* – Jewish Helping Hands  
*Catherine Smith* – Dance 101  
*Tracy Vogt* – Tolbert Yilmaz School of Dance

*\*ex-officio*

### Staff

#### **Rwanda:**

Eugene Dushime, Country Director  
Bashir Karenzi, Assistant Director  
Ssali Joseph Eugene, IT/Dance Teacher  
Innocent Nkusi, IT/Dance Teacher  
Keilah Creedon, English Teacher

#### **Guinea:**

Ansoumane Conde, Country Director  
Amed Dumbuya, English Teacher  
Fode Chouaibou Keita, Children's Coordinator

#### **Bosnia-Herzegovina:**

Tanja Tarcuki, Country Director  
Sanja Elezovic, Teacher  
Miki Powell, Media Coordinator

#### **New York City:**

Caitlyn Casson, Administrative Assistant

## MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS FROM FY2015



[Dance Studio Life | The Second Annual Dance Studio Life “Generous Heart” Awards](#)

(May 14, 2015)

[Dance Studio Life | An artistic director does good by kids in genocide’s aftermath](#)

(January 1, 2015)

[Project M | You can’t save the world with dance. But you can dance your way to a better life.](#)

(December 2014)

[United Nations Association Film Festival | Dance Up From the Street](#)

(October 22, 2014)

View the complete press list at <https://mindleaps.org/blog/media-press-kit/>



## History of MindLeaps



The present international orientation of MindLeaps is the company's second growth phase. The company was founded in 2005 as "Rebecca Davis Dance Company" with a focus on developing original, full-length contemporary ballets based on famous literary works, significant historical events and modern social issues. In 2010, it underwent a mission change to reflect today's international work serving children.

The stimulus for the mission change began in 2008 when Rebecca Davis choreographed a full-length ballet about the genocide in Darfur. The creative process of transforming Brian Steidle's book "The Devil Came on Horseback" into an aesthetic presentation was an all-consuming experience and left Rebecca wondering what happens in post-genocide countries. She traveled to Rwanda to answer her lingering questions about genocide and reconciliation. Instead of finding answers, she found hundreds of kids living on the streets that loved the same thing she had built her entire company around – dance. Since that trip, Rebecca has committed her life to getting kids off the street and educated in order to break the cycle of poverty. By 2010, she had piloted projects in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Guinea and Rwanda.

From 2011-2013, Rebecca traveled in Africa and the Balkans working with educators, dancers and psychologists to build the current dance curriculum and methodology that is used by MindLeaps. This curriculum targets learning skills that are essential for success in a formal educational environment. In 2014, the company changed its name to MindLeaps to better reflect the mission of the organization and the collective effort put forth every day to help these street children.

The company currently serves between 250 and 700 children annually depending on the funding climate, political stability and health levels of the focus countries. For a historical timeline of activities visit <https://www.hstry.co/timelines/mindleaps>



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