



2024 ANNUAL REPORT



*Celebrating 10 Years of Transforming Lives
through Dance & Data*



OUR MISSION

MindLeaps creates educational paths for children and youth living in under-resourced communities through the creative arts and 21st century skills built on data-driven metrics.

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FOUNDER'S NOTE



Dear Friends,

It's 10 Years! As the Founder and Executive Director of MindLeaps, I am thrilled that we are celebrating our 10th anniversary in 2024. Many of you - our supporters and champions - have watched this organization grow from **servicing 150 children in 2014 to 2,110 in 2024**. For those who are new to our story and journey, let me say, "Welcome", and get ready for the next 10 years!



When I'm asked the question: **"Why did you start MindLeaps?"**...I pause because, in many ways, it wasn't a "decision"; it was a response to an experience. In 2008, I traveled to Africa for the first time. Although I had chosen to go to Rwanda to learn about post-genocide reconstruction and reconciliation, I experienced something life-changing: witnessing **how dance - my life's love - can create a path for children** when nothing else seems to exist. The street children I met loved dance as much as I did, but they had no home, education, or parents. This experience sparked my imagination and ignited my **passion to connect dance to poverty reduction**. I would not have believed that something like this was possible unless I experienced it first-hand, almost twenty years ago, on the streets of Nyamirambo, Kigali.

In 2024, we **gathered to celebrate what MindLeaps around the world has become** with an event held in New York City. **Africa Director Bashir Karenzi** spoke about his journey from being a volunteer in Rwanda to now managing a portfolio of four African countries. **Office Assistant Yves Bisina Akonkwa**, a Congolese refugee now living in the USA, connected the skills he developed running MindLeaps' largest refugee program in Uganda to his experience now working at our headquarters. **New York City dance trainer Olivia He** explained how graduating with a degree in neuroscience gave her a deeper understanding of why the MindLeaps' dance program improves children's social-emotional learning skills.



10th Anniversary Celebration

Voices of MindLeaps pictured (left to right):
Yves Bisina Akonkwa, Bashir Karenzi, Rebecca Davis,
Tracy Vogt, Olivia He, LaMar Baylor, and Apollo Levine

When I'm asked the question, **"How did you build MindLeaps?"**...I always chuckle because, in reality, it wasn't "me" who built the organization or figured out our **Theory of Change**; it was the young people whom we serve who kept pushing us in the right direction. As you'll read in this Annual Report, our country programs became **holistic** as children explained the challenges they faced to reach their dreams. Every week, our MindLeaps trainers visit children's homes and their academic classrooms to **understand our young people's lives**. This allows us to think broadly about **what we do in the studio** and how it **transfers to daily life**.

MindLeaps has become a sustainable organization, growing from a **budget of \$174,000 to \$1.3 million**. In 2024, we served **2,110 young people and their families in six countries**, including in the Bronx and Queens in New York City. We are proud of what we've accomplished with a **staff of 104 people**, but we can't slow down because our young people are still telling us how we can better help them reach their goals and become self-reliant.

When I'm asked the question, **"What's next at MindLeaps?"**...nowadays, I sigh because, in our current times, it isn't clear to me where my country stands in supporting communities that are under-resourced and at risk of becoming more marginalized. At MindLeaps, however, I am sure that we can use our **creativity and power - as artists and entrepreneurs - to hold fast to our mission** and commitment to ensure that our children achieve their full potential.

As always, MindLeaps is incredibly grateful to its foundation, corporate, and individual supporters, as well as its staff, volunteers, and partners who enable this work to be done. **Thank you for being a part of our history** - and hold tight for our future!

Sincerely,



Rebecca Davis
Founder & Executive Director



Rebecca with members of the MindLeaps' Performing Group in Guinea



Rebecca speaks at MindLeaps' 10th Anniversary Celebration in NYC



**Scan to Watch
MindLeaps in 10 Years:
Our Retrospective Video**

IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS



2,110 Students in our
Dance Program

1,746 Students in our
Tutoring Program

657 Students Sponsored
in School

671 Parents in our
Family Strengthening
Program

105 Small Businesses
Run by our Families

104 Total Staff
Employed

95 Graduates from
Formal Education
& Vocational
Training Centers

\$1,285,449

Annual Budget (USD)*

**unaudited number*

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

FY 2024

Global: MindLeaps 10th Anniversary

International staff and supporters of MindLeaps celebrated the organization's 10th Anniversary in NYC. Broadway's Apollo Levine and LaMar Baylor pictured right.



May



Guinea: Board Members and Guests Hosted Trip

A group of 8 Board members and guests visited MindLeaps Guinea and toured the country.

June

USA: City of New York Funding

MindLeaps received funding from the City of New York for the first time. Funds support MindLeaps' Dance & Data program in the Bronx.



July



USA and Guinea: Kid Glyde & Breaking Curriculum

US breaker Kid Glyde worked with MindLeaps in Guinea & NYC to create a breakdancing curriculum for our youth.

August

Uganda: Opening of our New Center

MindLeaps officially opened the Jewish Helping Hands Center in Kampala, Uganda, supporting 511 youth.



October



Rwanda: English Clubs

Sponsored by the US Embassy, MindLeaps established English clubs that serve 130 children at schools across Kigali, Rwanda.

November

ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

Before “**MindLeaps**,” there was “**RDDC: Rebecca Davis Dance Company**.” Founder Rebecca went to business school to learn how to create a dance company in order to become a choreographer. As her peers planned careers in Finance and Marketing, Rebecca wanted to build something out of nothing. Balanced books, human-centric design, and succession planning were not subjects she had studied at ballet school but were formative in her entrepreneurial path.

After completing her Fulbright in Choreography & Ballet at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory in Russia, Rebecca started RDDC. As an Artistic Director, Rebecca was increasingly **drawn to how dance performance could be used to advance social justice** and shed light on international issues. She decided to pursue a Master’s in Arts in International Relations with a focus on Peacekeeping, and ultimately, the vision of her company grew beyond dance performance.

In 2014, RDDC officially became “MindLeaps,” informed by three years of work with researchers, dancers, educators, and psychologists. The premise of MindLeaps was a standardized curriculum built on children’s love of dance and fascination with movement. Using **repetitive movements** that demonstrated links to **cognitive development** and **social-emotional learning**, MindLeaps developed a **data application** that measured these changes. This “product” interested communities and governments wrestling with social cohesion, recidivism, and street crime. **Connecting a product with a problem and measuring impact** allowed MindLeaps to become an organization operating in **six countries on three continents by 2024**.



*RDDC Company Members,
Lauren Putty and Curtis Lassiter (2008)*

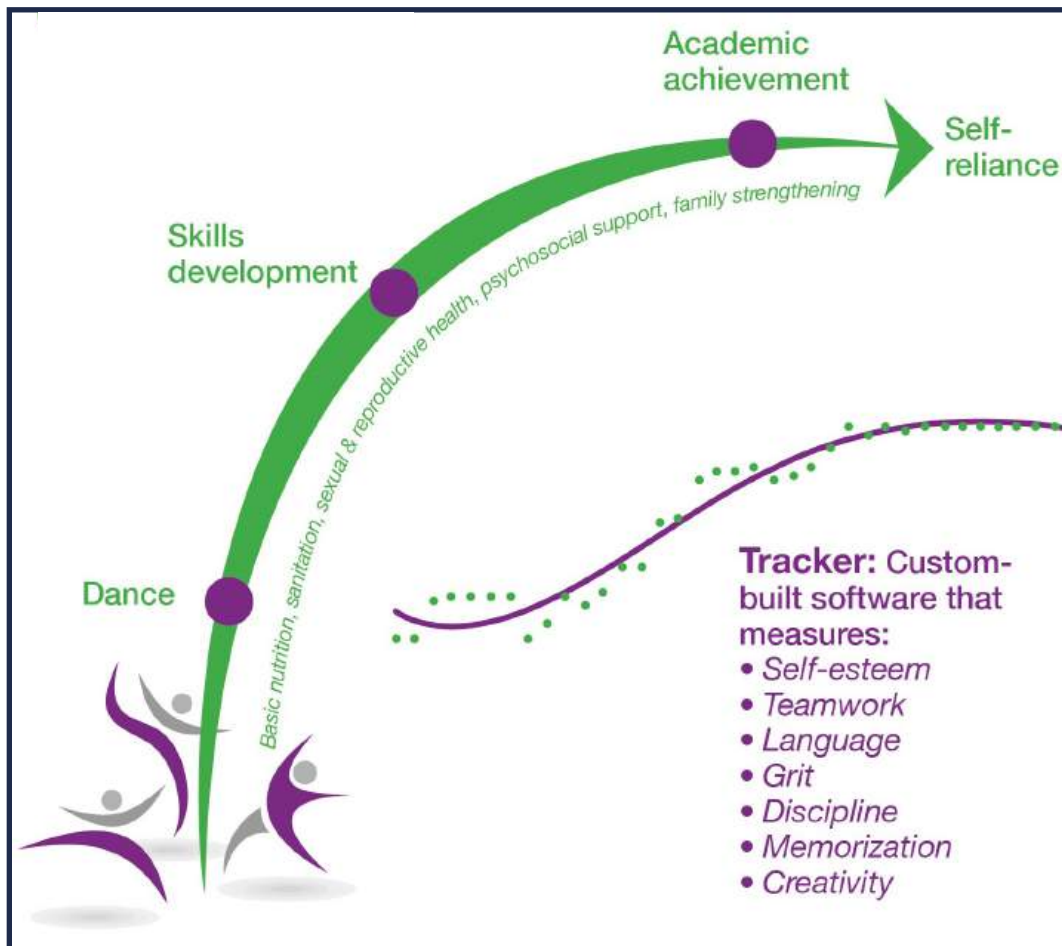


Early MindLeaps in Guinea (2019)



MindLeaps in Rwanda today (2024)

MINDLEAPS THEORY OF CHANGE



As Rebecca learned in business school, successful solutions constantly adapt to market needs. Today, we call our hallmark program “**Protection: Dance & Data**” because we use social-emotional learning data collected in the dance classes to understand progress and determine appropriate next steps. Staff visit our children’s homes and schools to gather a full understanding of how the skills in the dance class are transferring to real-life changes.

MindLeaps Centers have developed **robust academic support programs** to accompany our Dance & Data program, recognizing that children need assistance to **stay in school and make it to their high school graduation**. Our **Theory of Change** addresses the **economic empowerment of the family unit** with a livelihoods program for parents and caretakers. These activities give our families the best chance of reaching self-reliance.

Rebecca likes to repeat how someone measures success at MindLeaps: “*We did our job if we go out of business because our community is thriving without us.*”

ANALYTICS: MEASURING OUTCOMES

WHY IT MATTERS

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) is a game-changer for MindLeaps. Research shows that when kids develop skills like self-esteem, discipline, and teamwork, they do better in school and in life. A meta-analysis of over 250 SEL programs found that students in these programs had higher grades, better classroom behavior, and greater confidence - all of which are key ingredients for long-term success (Yale School of Medicine, 2023). The challenge is how to **accurately** and **consistently** gather this qualitative information **quantitatively**. For MindLeaps, the challenge is especially daunting for two reasons:

- (1) Our intervention is dance, which isn't inherently easy to measure in a standardized way, and
- (2) Our programs take place with thousands of children across three continents every day...

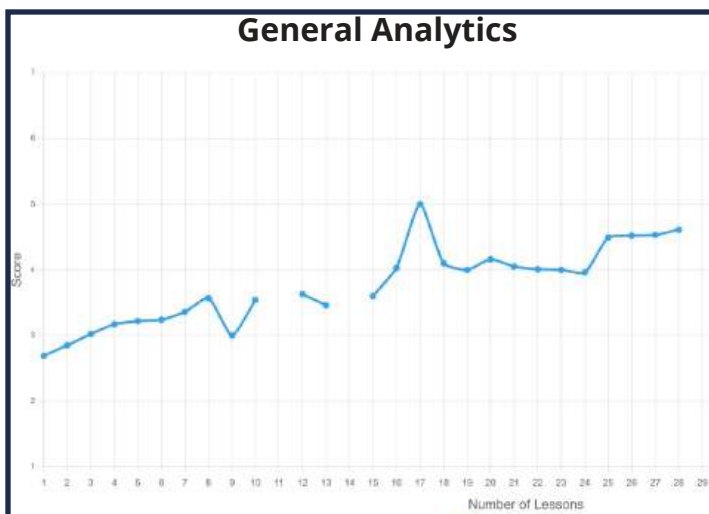
So how do we do it?

OUR MONITORING & EVALUATION (M&E) SYSTEM

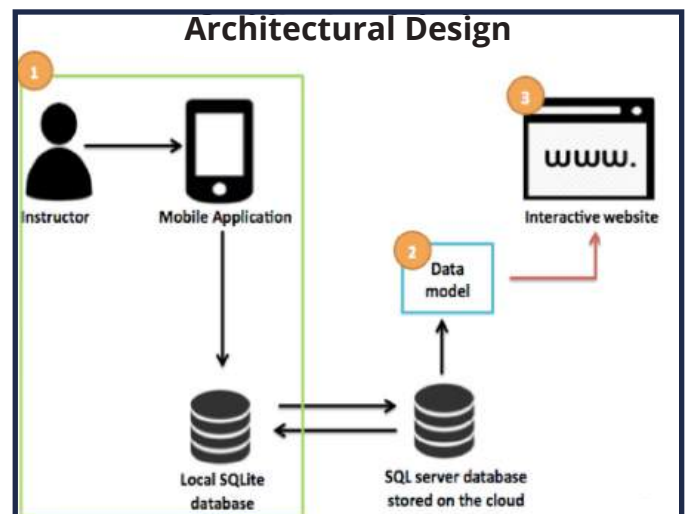
MindLeaps' M&E system tracks how students grow in seven key SEL skills:

Memorization Grit Discipline Teamwork Self-Esteem Creativity Language

Using the **MindLeaps M&E App**, instructors utilize a **grading rubric** to record students' progress in real time across all 7 skills, allowing for tailored support and guiding staff on what each child needs to support their educational journey.



MindLeaps M&E software application that tracks changes in SEL progress of beneficiaries in our Dance & Data program



Process of data collection from the dance studio to the web portal

WHAT OUR APP TELLS US:

Key Findings from an Internal 2021–2024 Analysis of 967 Students

At the end of this year, MindLeaps' **Interim Executive Director Ryan Neil** and **Georgetown faculty member Bryan Shaw** worked together to review and analyze data in our M&E App. The analysis found that, on average, **students improved their SEL scores by 43.2%** from their first lesson to their last lesson. (An average student takes 36 lessons, which is 72 hours of program intervention.)

Changes in Individual Skills of 967 Students:

KEY SKILL	CHANGE
Memorization	+ 51.58%
Language	+ 50.37%
Self-Esteem	+ 49.58%
Creativity/Self-Expression	+ 44.05%
Grit	+ 43.90%
Teamwork	+ 42.21%
Discipline	+ 31.70%

For more information on MindLeaps' M&E system, check out this video:

Carnegie
Mellon
University
Africa



OUR ENGINEERS

The MindLeaps M&E App was built over three years with a research team from Carnegie Mellon University, Drexel University, and engineers from the private sector. Since then, **Principal Engineer Tomislav Pesut** and newly hired **Engineer Marko Markovikj** manage our M&E App on a daily basis, constantly optimizing it to support our data collection and analysis around the world.

WHAT'S NEXT?

MindLeaps is constantly refining its M&E system to keep improving learning outcomes for youth. With over **5,600 children** successfully monitored in the last three years, we're ensuring every student gets the support they need to thrive, on the dance floor and beyond!

RWANDA



FROM 2014 TO 2024...



Since MindLeaps established the **Jim Bell Center** in 2014, the transformation of our community has been profound. Situated in **Nyamirambo, Kigali**, MindLeaps is now the “go to place” for children and adults seeking **educational opportunities and livelihoods training**. This year, we served **1,173 children and parents across Kigali and in 3 refugee settlements**.

In 2024, Rwanda marked 30 years after the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi. The country’s remarkable recovery is reflected in its average 8% annual economic growth since 1994 (Council on Foreign Relations, 2024) and its improved public education, with about 70% of children now completing primary school (UNESCO, 2024). MindLeaps’ growth mirrors this pursuit of **resiliency and self-reliance**. Back in 2014, we primarily served out-of-school children and offered a dance program that gave youth a sense of stability, but that was it...

What do we mean when we say “we serve children”?

At MindLeaps, this means a child attends at least 72 hours of dance training focused on developing 7 life skills. At most of our program sites, like those in Rwanda, the child will also receive a daily meal, academic tutoring, and digital literacy classes.

WHERE WE STARTED...



Rebecca meets with new students in the first MindLeaps Dance & Data program in Kigali (2014)

...WHERE WE ARE TODAY



Trainer Yves leads Dance & Data class at the Jim Bell Center in Kigali (2024)

As children started to believe “they could do more,” they asked MindLeaps to help reintegrate them back into formal education. This was the start of our **school sponsorship program**. As Rwanda became one of the fastest growing economies in Africa, the country no longer faced large numbers of street children – instead, **the challenge was helping at-risk youth stay in school**. MindLeaps built an extensive tutoring and academic support program.



MindLeaps students in English tutoring session in Kigali

PROTECTION: DANCE & DATA

Total Children: **868**

New Children Enrolled: **400**

Alumni Children Continuing in Dance: **468**

EDUCATION

School Sponsorships: 119 children received full sponsorships to attend school.

Tutoring & Training: 377 children benefited from academic tutoring, sexual and reproductive health lessons, and IT training.

As children thrived at school, caregivers and single mothers came to MindLeaps. They were curious about what program was sparking this change in their children and asked quite bluntly, “*And what are you doing for us?*”

This drove MindLeaps to establish the **Family Strengthening Program**. Our impact now firmly extends **beyond the dance studio and the classroom**, empowering parents to achieve financial independence through entrepreneurship training and seed funding, creating a ripple effect of stability and opportunity for entire families. In 2024, 230 parents were part of the program.



Right: Mothers in our Family Strengthening Program



Trainer Cedric visits a family in our Family Strengthening Program in Nyamirambo, Kigali

LIVELIHOODS & FAMILY STRENGTHENING

In 2024: **230 caretakers** participated in savings-and-loans programs, pooling \$13,271 by year's end, a **record-breaking achievement**. This amount is quite impressive in a country where the annual GDP per capita is just over \$1,000 a year. These funds, combined with **entrepreneurial training and seed funding** from MindLeaps with support from **Mercer University**, enabled parents to launch small businesses, fostering economic stability for their families.

As we reflect on **10 years of growth** in Rwanda, we are inspired by the resilience of the children and families in a country that, itself, is a testament to the **power of reconciliation**. Together, we've built a community of **learners, leaders, and changemakers**.

In 2024, the Ruxin Family, owners of the famous Heaven Restaurant, generously remodeled MindLeaps' outdoor concrete space to become a beautiful dance studio with a sprung wood, marley floor. Thank you to Alissa for this gift that keeps on giving!

BEFORE



PROCESS



AFTER



GUINEA



FROM 2014 TO 2024...



The West African country of Guinea has played a major role in shaping MindLeaps over the last 10 years. Guinea, a country that ranks 181st (out of 193) on the Human Development Index, was an important destination for our program because of its paradoxical statistics: Guinea has 1.2 million out-of-school children, and at the same time, it is **home to one of the first African dance companies ever created**, Les Ballets Africains. Despite its economic challenges, **dance and music are valued and celebrated across the country.**

For these reasons, Founder Rebecca Davis was intrigued to learn more about the country when she was first stationed there as a part of The Carter Center's Election Observation Mission. She formed a broad network during her time in-country and witnessed the devastating violence that accompanied Guinea's first democratic elections in 2010. She **saw how dance might be able to engage youth in positive activities** and started a **pilot program in 2011 in the city of Kindia.**

Over the next years, our dance program strengthened, and an accompanying **literacy program** began; however, with the outbreak of Ebola, we decided to suspend operations. It wasn't until **2017** that we had the capacity to restart operations. This time, MindLeaps **hired top youth (former students) to run the program**, now based in the capital city of **Conakry**. In **2023**, alongside **US Ambassador Fitrell**, MindLeaps opened its own 38,000 square foot community center, which now serves **551 children and parents** each year.

WHERE WE STARTED...



MindLeaps Guinea (2014)

...WHERE WE ARE TODAY



MindLeaps Guinea new community center (2024)

PROTECTION: DANCE & DATA

Total Children: **123**

New Children Enrolled: **63**

Alumni Children Continuing in Dance: **60**



Trainer Alpha instructs students on trying the splits

EDUCATION

School Sponsorships:

217 children received full sponsorships to continue their education.

Tutoring & Training: 188 children

- 80 out-of-school children completed our catch-up program to prepare them for reintegration into school.
- 108 children, already enrolled in school, participated in academic tutoring and digital literacy.



Student Ilias in MindLeaps digital literacy class

LIVELIHOODS & FAMILY STRENGTHENING

Economic challenges remain a leading cause of school dropouts in Guinea. To address this, **211 parents** participated in MindLeaps **Self-Help Groups**, where they engaged in savings-and-loans programs, financial literacy training, and entrepreneurship coaching. These initiatives enabled families to create stable sources of income, reducing the financial pressure on children to work instead of attend school.



Mothers sell fruit at their businesses after entrepreneurial training and receiving seed funding

A GLOBAL CONNECTION: KID GLYDE'S IMPACT IN GUINEA

Renowned breakdancer Kid Glyde traveled from Harlem, New York, to Conakry to launch MindLeaps' new **Breaking Program**. His presence ignited excitement among students, introducing them to the art of breaking as a tool for **self-expression** and **community-building**. From Guinea, Kid Glyde continued to the **Paris Olympics**, representing the global breakdancing movement, before returning to teach in MindLeaps' NYC summer program. His journey is a testament to the **power of dance in uniting cultures and inspiring the next generation**.

EXPERIENCES IN CONAKRY



MindLeaps staff and Kid Glyde attend a home visit



Guinea students and staff (Kid Glyde center)

DEPARTURE... AND ONTO THE PARIS OLYMPICS!

Watch Kid Glyde's
Video Journal here:



BREAKING PROGRAM



Kid Glyde teaches students how to "up rock"



Student Abdoulaye practices a "freeze" in the cypher



Kid Glyde teaches breaking with MindLeaps in NYC

UGANDA



FROM 2014 TO 2024...



Three years after starting operations in Rwanda and Guinea, **Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)** invited MindLeaps to begin a program in Kampala, Uganda, working with refugees. HIAS wanted to support an **arts-based approach** that used **quantitative measures** to address healing for youth who fled conflict and war.

After seeing the results both on the ground and in our data, MindLeaps was enthusiastic to continue to work in Uganda. In 2018, we returned with an intensive **Train The Trainer program** to develop a cadre of Ugandan and refugee youth trainers to lead our Dance & Data program - both in **Kampala** and in **Oruchinga Refugee Settlement**.

Uganda houses more refugees than any other African state. Today, there are 1.74 million refugees in the country. In response to the ever-growing need to support the integration of refugees, MindLeaps expanded to **Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement** just before Covid-19.

WHERE WE STARTED...

...WHERE WE ARE TODAY



MindLeaps' first Uganda program in Kampala in 2017



Trainer Rachel leads students through warm-up at our new center in Kampala

In 2023, **MindLeaps Program Director from Oruchinga Refugee Settlement, Yves Bisina Akonkwa**, relocated to the USA in the resettlement program led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. He joined our Headquarters and now serves as our **Office Assistant in New York City**. Our **Country Director, Martha Peace Bua**, is a former staff member of HIAS. This is a hallmark of MindLeaps across all of our programs: **both youth and staff find greater opportunities and upward mobility throughout the organization** - and the organization benefits: those in leadership roles understand how the program works from their direct experiences.

This year, we were especially thrilled to finally open a **permanent center** in Kampala to house all of the activities that make our program holistic and a pillar in the community. The **Jewish Helping Hands MindLeaps Center**, situated in Katwe, now serves children and families 7 days a week!

Check out this dance video showing the construction of MindLeaps' new Center:



MindLeaps Dance & Data students in Kampala



Trainer Didier leads Dance & Data class at Oruchinga Refugee Settlement

EDUCATION

School Sponsorships: 216 children received full sponsorships to attend formal education in Kampala and Oruchinga Refugee Settlement.

Tutoring & Training: 638 children participated in MindLeaps educational programs: Math and English tutoring, IT training, and Sexual and Reproductive Health classes.

PROTECTION: DANCE & DATA

Total Children: **811**

New Children Enrolled: **485**

Alumni Children Continuing in Dance: **326**



Dance student Labi Kajabika

LIVELIHOODS & FAMILY STRENGTHENING

In Uganda, 30% of the population lives below the poverty line (World Bank, 2020). The financial burden on families often prevents children from staying in school. To address this, MindLeaps has actively engaged caregivers in economic empowerment initiatives:

Self-Help Groups: 230 parents participated in savings-and-loans programs.

Small Businesses: 31 small businesses were started by single mothers to support their entire family.

These efforts ensure that families gain the financial stability needed to keep their children in school, breaking the cycle of poverty for future generations.



Certificate award ceremony for women completing business training in our Family Strengthening Program



Program Director Martha Bua Peace checks in with a student

MAURITANIA



FROM 2014 TO 2024...



In 2016, MindLeaps was challenged by a funder: “Can you pilot your Dance & Data model in the most unlikely environment for it to thrive?” The funder wanted to know how universally the model could be implemented.

We decided that country would be Mauritania, a religiously conservative state in West Africa where girls traditionally did not attend school. Given that the model is supposed to inspire and prepare children socially-emotionally for education, we would be tested: **Could we attract girls to the program? Could we track these girls’ academic performance afterward?**

Our first effort in 2017 was met with mixed success. We were **successful at recruiting girls to the dance program**; in fact, classes were oversubscribed! We were **successful in transitioning girls into formal education**, and they were excelling in school! However, we failed to attract local youth to our Train The Trainer, which was essential to formulate an **effective local team to sustain the program**.

In 2018, we decided to try again. This time, we had a new approach to recruiting youth trainers. Instead of looking for talented dancers in the community or existing NGO workers, we looked for 18 to 25-year-olds who loved sports and working with children. This was the magic combination, and the **trainers who completed that Train The Trainer continue to lead our program today – six years later!**

WHERE WE STARTED...



Mauritania Dance & Data program location (2017)

...WHERE WE ARE TODAY



Mauritania Parents Meeting (2024)

Since the pandemic, MindLeaps Mauritania has **succeeded in enrolling at least 85 new girls in Dance & Data every year**. Working alongside our local partner, SOS Pairs Educateurs, older girls complete a **Vocational Training certificate** and younger girls enter **formal education** after the dance program every year.

In 2024, **our top female trainer, Lalla Towiloum**, traveled to Guinea to participate in our breakdancing program with **US breaker Kid Glyde**. Soon, we might be seeing breakdancing in Mauritania!

Working in Mauritania has proven to our funders, to ourselves, and to traditional communities, that dance is universal – and that **girls thrive physically and academically when given their fundamental human right to education**.



Students help each other stretch in dance class



New students get ready for class

MindLeaps Mauritania in the News:

In 2024, MindLeaps was featured in the UK's Channel 4 documentary film, *"Divorce Parties in Mauritania."*

Check it out here:



PROTECTION: DANCE & DATA

Total Children: **140**

New Children Enrolled: **115**

Alumni Children Continuing in Dance: **25**

EDUCATION

School Sponsorships: 105 children received full sponsorships to attend formal education.

Tutoring & Academic Support: 88 children participated in tutoring, literacy classes (French and Arabic), and digital skills training. Of these 88 children, 50 were out-of-school and will be integrated into formal education next year.



Student Ekyarhoum Mohamed completes homework in tutoring



Mohamed Ali of SOS congratulates student Oumar Sidi



Student Mama Oumar makes art during the academic support program

SUSTAINED PARTNERSHIPS

MindLeaps' partnership with SOS Pairs Educateurs continues to be instrumental in delivering programs tailored to the needs of Mauritanian youth. SOS is a well-known local NGO working nationwide to improve access to health care and education for all Mauritians.

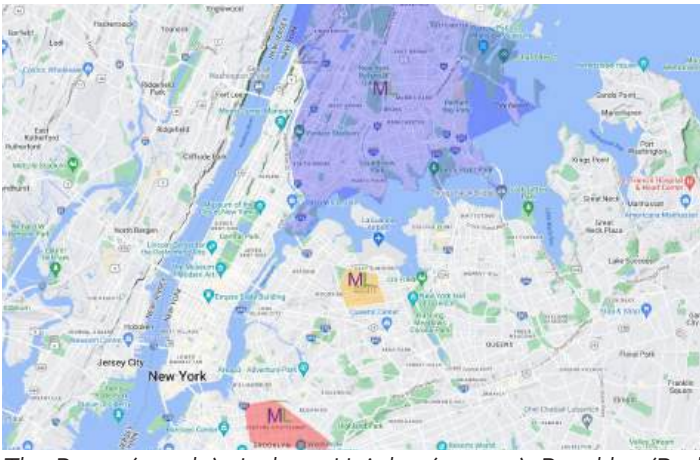


UNITED STATES



FROM 2014 TO 2024...

Although most of our programs date back to 2014 in some form or another, MindLeaps' regular programming in the United States did not begin until 2022. There had always been a lingering question as to **whether our flagship Dance & Data program would benefit under-resourced American communities.**



The Bronx (purple), Jackson Heights (orange), Brooklyn (Red)

In **2016**, MindLeaps piloted a short **summer camp program in Atlanta, Georgia, working primarily with recent immigrant children.** We learned a lot from it: yes, our program filled a gap in these children's development, but consistent classes running for months (not weeks) are necessary to make significant gains in social-emotional learning (SEL) levels.

Four years later, with the onset of Covid-19, there was a resounding call from MindLeaps' staff and funders to **try our program again in the USA to address the substantial drop in SEL skills across the country.** This, combined with the urgency to invest in under-resourced communities prompted by Black Lives Matter, sparked MindLeaps to try our program in New York City (NYC).

WHERE WE STARTED...



Summer program in Atlanta (2016)

...WHERE WE ARE TODAY



Dance class at Children of Promise in the Bronx (2024)

In 2022, MindLeaps partnered with Children of Promise in Brooklyn (and later in the Bronx) to **work with children affected by parental incarceration**. There are approximately 105,000 children in NY with a parent in prison (Children of Promise, 2023). In 2024, we began to **work in Queens with immigrant children** while we continued our partnership with **Children of Promise in the Bronx and Brooklyn**. Over this time, we also made substantial changes to the curriculum and grading rubrics. **The continuous feedback loop from our data helped us understand what changes were needed to adapt the program to these US populations.**

This year also marked a milestone in our US program. For the first time, **we received government support from the City of New York’s Department of Youth & Community Development**. We are encouraged by the enthusiasm for our domestic work while motivated to address the ever-growing challenges of young people in our country at this particular time.



Students in our Dance & Data class in Jackson Heights, Queens



Students in our Dance & Data class in the Bronx

In **Queens**, MindLeaps worked with middle school aged children who attend the after-school program at Public School #149 in Jackson Heights. At this school, 78% of children qualify for free or reduced lunch and 45% are English Language Learners.

In the **Bronx** and **Brooklyn**, MindLeaps worked with Children of Promise. Children of Promise is the only after-school provider in NYC offering free services to this population. In our 2024 cohort, 55% of our families had household incomes between \$1,000 and \$28,000; 69% of our participants lived in single-parent households; and 27% lived in shelters.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

In 2024, we were accepted into Youth INC's cohort of new organizational partners. At the end of this year, we received good news: MindLeaps will receive New York State Council on the Arts funding for the first time in 2025!

A special thank you to four volunteers from Scotiabank who worked with Executive Director Rebecca throughout the year to refine MindLeaps' growth strategy in NYC.



Scotiabank volunteers pictured above: Antonella Weyant, Ben Gibson, John Veise, and Kate Kwon with MindLeaps' Bashir Karenzi



Africa Director Bashir leads dance class in Queens



Trainer Charles leads dance class in the Bronx

PROTECTION: DANCE & DATA

Total Children: **85**

New Children Enrolled: **75** Alumni Children Continuing in Dance: **10**

WHAT'S NEXT?

Going forward, MindLeaps is exploring ways to adapt our Livelihoods Program to strengthen our US family units. Some of our parents are recent immigrants who face language barriers. Others are keen to provide their children with more exposure to the arts. Learning from our other countries, the Family Strengthening Program is essential.

NORTH MACEDONIA



FROM 2014 TO 2024...



One of the questions asked most often about MindLeaps' current programming is: *"Why does MindLeaps have a program in North Macedonia?"*

The answer is deeply connected to the evolution of the organization. When Founder Rebecca started working with researchers, educators, and dancers to explore patterns in movement and changes in children's behavior, she intentionally wanted to work in diverse locations. This would help to

identify patterns and eventually standardize parts of the program. **Bosnia-Herzegovina in the Balkans** was selected as one of the locations. The team ran **dance programs** in Brcko and Mostar, two **cities known for their ethnic divisions**. In 2010, two young female dancers - one Serbian and one Bosnian - were selected to travel to Philadelphia for intensive dance training in the USA. Although Masa and Armela were opposites in Brcko, they were nearly identical (and best friends!) when living in Philly. We could see **how dance could create lifelong friendships in areas of ethnic tension**. Nonetheless, with limited resources, the program in Bosnia-Herzegovina phased out.

In **2019**, at the invitation of the **US Embassy in North Macedonia**, MindLeaps was requested to pilot our program again in the Balkans. The Embassy was searching for **innovative programs that attracted at-risk youth to safe spaces with the belief that this would decrease youth radicalization**, which was becoming a national threat. Given this call to action, MindLeaps agreed to establish our program in Skopje, the capital of North Macedonia, marking our return to the Balkans.

WHERE WE STARTED...



MindLeaps in Bosnia-Herzegovina (2014)

...WHERE WE ARE TODAY



MindLeaps in North Macedonia (2024)

Since then, the program has gone through multiple iterations. In 2024, MindLeaps North Macedonia took two distinct steps. First, the beneficiaries served were narrowed to **focus on one of the most vulnerable populations in the country - the Roma**. Second, the program established its own Board of Directors and legal status in order to become an **independent operation**.

Both of these shifts reflect another core value of MindLeaps: **empowering local leadership and local decision-making**. We know that community leaders understand best how to use our tools to address the problems they consider most urgent. In 2025, MindLeaps North Macedonia will operate autonomously while still accessing our technical support when needed.



Student Alina Selimovska stretches during warm up



MindLeaps North Macedonia Dance & Data students

The Roma Population

The Romani people are an ethnic group that face institutional discrimination and social prejudice in North Macedonia. According to The World Bank, 87% of Roma live in material deprivation compared to 55% of the non-Roma population (2024).

Local Partnerships

MindLeaps North Macedonia is working with Sumnal: Association for Development of the Roma Community. This local NGO provides a safe space for Dance & Data classes and has partnered with MindLeaps to identify Roma youth who can become MindLeaps dance trainers.



PROTECTION: DANCE & DATA

Total Children: **50**

New Children Enrolled: **40**

Alumni Children
Continuing in Dance: **10**

EMMY'S STORY

Emmy Turikumwe: From Student to Country Director

Emmy's journey with MindLeaps began in 2009 - before the organization officially carried its current name - in a small town called **Rugerero in Northwestern Rwanda**.

That same year, Founder Rebecca had been asked to work with the rural community of Rugerero to engage children in **a creative arts program that could also serve as a mechanism to teach about hygiene and clean water**. Emmy was one of the students, and he immediately stood out.

"I remember this slightly taller boy coming up to me after the first class," recalls Rebecca. "There were 30 nine-year-olds running around the room, and Emmy asked, 'Would you like me to help control these kids?'" At that moment, I thought, *thank goodness this boy is here!* **"Little did I know that that was the start of a 15-year friendship."**



Rebecca and Emmy in Kigali (2010)

Emmy continued to thrive as a **voluntary assistant in the rural program**, and MindLeaps learned about his family history during the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi. Our dance teachers learned that he had recently dropped out of school, so **MindLeaps sponsored Emmy to return to school**.



Emmy speaks at a MindLeaps Rwanda event (2024)

Emmy's **passion for education** led him to pursue a **degree in Information, Communication & Technology** at Rwanda Polytechnic IPRC Kigali, graduating in 2019. But his commitment to growth didn't stop there. Fluent in Kinyarwanda, English, and Mandarin, with a working knowledge of French, Emmy's diverse skills opened new doors. In 2018, he was **selected by the Government of Rwanda to travel to China for an intensive martial arts training program**, a remarkable accomplishment!

Upon graduating, Emmy joined the MindLeaps Rwanda team in Kigali, where his leadership skills quickly became evident. By 2022, he was promoted to oversee the Refugee Program. This year, MindLeaps proudly offered Emmy the position of **Country Director**. **He is a living example of the organization's mission in action.**

LEADERSHIP



Yves Bisina Akonkwa
Office Assistant



Mayuya Athanase,
Assistant Director, Rwanda



Ena Bendevska
Country Director,
North Macedonia



Younoussa Camara
Program Coordinator, Guinea



Moussa Cissokho
Program Coordinator,
Mauritania



Rebecca Davis
Founder & Executive Director



Aissatou Diallo
Senior Finance Officer



Aliou Dioum
Program Coordinator,
Mauritania



Bashir Karenzi
Africa Director



Martin Mamadouno
Country Director, Guinea



Vedaste Ndayambaje
Technical Assistant



Cathy Nimusiima
Program Coordinator, Uganda



Martha Bua Peace
Country Director, Uganda



Ana Reyes
Development Officer



Nenad Stojchevski
Program Coordinator,
North Macedonia



Tanja Raic Tarcuki
International Coordinator,
Balkans



Emmy Turikumwe (far left)
Country Director, Rwanda



Olivier Twagirimana (left)
International Coordinator,
Africa



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Ramie Arian Consulting

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Catherine Smith

Dance Instructor

Kady Sylla

Myriad USA

Roger Webb

State Department

Daniel Penn

Consultant

Demetrius Shields

Detroit Opera House

Rebecca Davis

*ex-officio

THANK YOU RYAN!

MindLeaps would like to thank Ryan Neil, who stepped in as Interim Executive Director this year when Founder Rebecca went on maternity leave. Ryan first met MindLeaps as a volunteer in Rwanda back in 2018! His journey is typical of any MindLeaps leader; he combined his skills, training, and desire to drive community change!

Pictured (left to right):

Yves Bisina Akonkwa, Tanja Raic Tarcuki, Bashir Karenzi, and Ryan Neil



VOLUNTEERS

MindLeaps' volunteers provide considerable and vital support to its operations. The many roles they undertake include graphic design, translation, research and analysis, video editing, and much more. The Board is grateful to the following for their commitment and wonderful contributions:

Stan Fertig, Debi Maller, Anne-Sophie Matichard, Sage Miller, Susan Pasley, Colleen Simon, and Laura Solomon

FINANCIALS

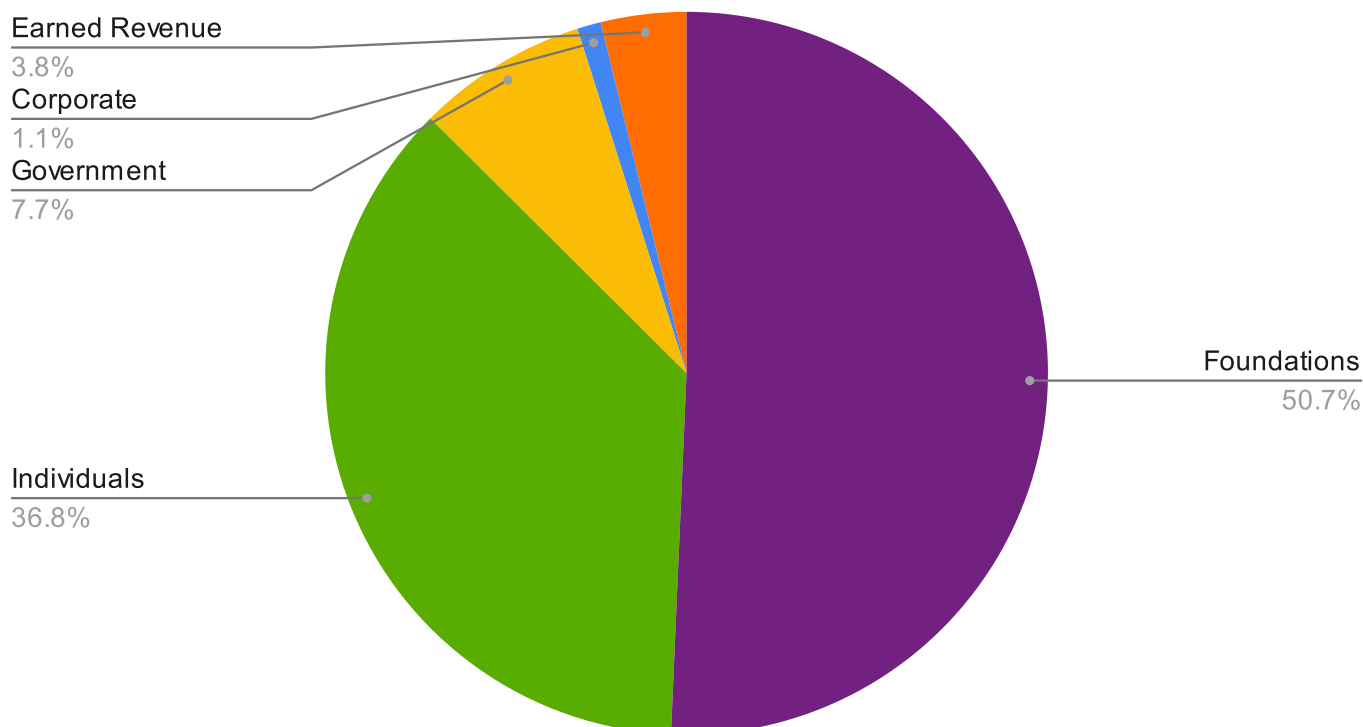
FY 2024

MindLeaps Statement of Activity (Unaudited) January 2024 - December 2024

Revenue	Total	Expenditures	Total
Foundation Support	\$534,661	Program Expenses:	
Individual Giving	\$387,812	Rwanda	\$231,338
Government Contracts	\$80,760	Guinea	\$208,079
Corporate Support	\$11,190	Uganda	\$248,253
Other:		Mauritania	\$135,442
Earned Income	\$24,698	North Macedonia	\$121,051
Interest & Investment Income	\$15,686	USA Program	\$117,910
Total Revenue	\$1,054,807	Operational Expenses:	
		USA G&A	\$141,588
		USA Fundraising	\$81,788
		Total Budget	\$1,285,449*

**Shortfall funded by leftover resources from FY23*

MindLeaps FY 2024: Sources of Revenue



OUR SUPPORTERS

Foundations & Partners



AllianceBernstein



LACEWING FOUNDATION



Government



U.S. Embassies in Rwanda, Guinea, North Macedonia



Council on the Arts



Department of Youth & Community Development



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Special thanks to photographer
Miki Powell