



**FY2019
ANNUAL
REPORT**


MindLeaps



Our Mission

MindLeaps harnesses the power of dance to guide vulnerable children and youth to safe spaces, academic opportunity and lifelong skill development to help them leap forward in life.

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Dear Friends,

Between 2014 and 2018, over 4,000 children completed the MindLeaps program across six different countries. Last year, 2,000 children completed the program in a single year! In addition to our permanent centers in Rwanda and Guinea, we have continued to strengthen our presence through our partnership programs in Uganda, Kenya, and Mauritania.

As a result of our growth, MindLeaps has reached a new milestone in 2019: over 300 children are being sponsored to attend primary and secondary schools and vocational training. In 2020, this number will more than double. This is the highest sponsorship enrollment in our organization's history and represents multi-year commitments to seeing these children through to independence. Reintegration into school is the final step in the MindLeaps' transformational program and sets vulnerable children on a permanent path to self-sufficiency.

MindLeaps' organizational growth has continued with a 28% increase in our operational budget. We have significantly increased the depth of our services with the assistance of strategic partnerships, including with companies such as HBO, Under Armour, Goldman Sachs, and Kate Spade New York. In addition, through our new partnership with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), we have also successfully brought our program to seven refugee camps and settlements in Rwanda and Uganda.

According to data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, about 263 million children, adolescents and youth worldwide - one in every five - are out of school. This figure reveals, that despite decades of efforts to get every child into the classroom, progress remains stagnant. Now more than ever, the services of organizations like MindLeaps are necessary to empower children and future generations.

As we reflect on the great progress we have made this fiscal year, we would like to share our heartfelt gratitude to our many friends, supporters, staff, volunteers, foundation partners, and corporate donors who continue to help us to fulfill our mission of helping vulnerable youth overcome adversity.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Davis
Executive Director



FY 2019 HIGHLIGHTS



60 young adult refugees, coming from six different refugee camps in Rwanda, were certified in how to teach the MindLeaps curriculum during a one-month Train The Trainer program.



MindLeaps launched a program to help at-risk girls in Mauritania. It provides 120 girls in poverty with dance, nutrition, and education helping them defy cultural expectations and leap forward in life.



Dancers from the United States, Europe, and Asia came to New York City for MindLeaps' two-week Train The Trainer program and learned MindLeaps' curriculum.



In partnership with Kate Spade New York's *on purpose* fund, MindLeaps launched the "Masoro Leaping" project to help develop the health, economic, and educational opportunities in Masoro, Rwanda.

November

January

February

June

August



MindLeaps reaches 700 kids in the 'Youth Empowerment and Behavioral Change for Children in Refugee Camps in Rwanda' program throughout all six refugee camps.



MindLeaps launched programs in Oruchinga Refugee Settlement in Uganda. The program is reaching 450 children in the settlement taught by 11 refugee trainers living in the settlement.



MindLeaps dance teachers came together to perform "Bound Alone" at the Ubuntu Arts Festival in Kigali, Rwanda. The piece was choreographed by *The Lion King* on Broadway dancer, LaMar Baylor.



IMPACT

BY THE NUMBERS

2,034 Students Served

6,632 Hours of dance instruction

324 School sponsorships

90 Youth who completed Train The Trainer programs

40,000 Meals served

26 Local staff employed

512,868 Data points collected

5 Countries served

MONITORING & EVALUATION

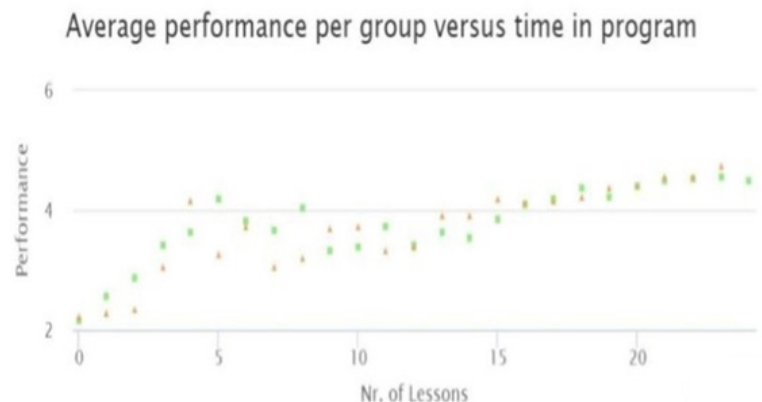
All of MindLeaps' dance programs use Tracker, a data-driven Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) system that measures changes in cognitive skills and social-emotional learning.

Developed in collaboration with Carnegie Mellon University, psychologists and software engineers, Tracker is an innovative assessment tool to measure a child's learning development. It is a software system that uses a kinesthetic-based rubric to capture and graphically display changes in seven particular skills: memorization, grit, teamwork, discipline, self-esteem, creativity and language.

Tracker is unique because it gathers data from a child's execution of dance moves to visually graph changes in behavioral patterns. Since the assessment relies on actual movements the child performs in the dance space, it reduces subjectivity.

The Tracker system consists of an Android tablet containing the rubric and an online analytics website. The data from the tablets sync to a front-end web application that stores student and class information. A mathematical model is applied to the data to generate graphs demonstrating learning curves of individuals' achievements.

This graph is a sample analytics report from Tracker. It displays the progress of two different classes of kids at the MindLeaps Center in Rwanda in Q1 2019. The x-axis is the number of dance classes taken and the y-axis is the average of the seven skills across all kids in the class on a scale of 1 to 7.



Learn More Here
mindleaps.org/research

MindLeaps
Tracker

Thank you to our software engineers
that keep iterating on this system
for improvements and optimization:
Tomislav Pesut and John Barker



Abdoulaye's story mirrors that of the many other children throughout MindLeaps programs in our various locations. It is in these types of vulnerable communities that MindLeaps' methodology develops life skills and creates a powerful sense of hope, optimism, and belonging in youth, enabling them to choose future-oriented, positive life decisions.



THE STORY OF ABDOULAYE

Abdoulaye is a 10-year old boy who lives with his stepmother in Conakry, Guinea. He had to drop out of school 2 years ago as a result of his family not being able to continue paying for his education. He has five siblings and, just like many other children in Guinea, Abdoulaye became responsible for himself at a very young age. After joining MindLeaps, however, he was able to discover his passion for dance and quickly became one of our best students!

Abdoulaye has grown so much while at MindLeaps. He is the leader of his class, knowing all of the terms and can teach the 45 minute warm-up by himself. He stands front and center in every class and listens to and understands every correction given in the dance classes. His memorization has also grown tremendously. For example, he watched another class do five minutes of choreography, and the next day he remembered everything he saw and was able to perform it in front of everyone. Abdoulaye is called "short boy" because he is so small, but his confidence is enormous.

In August 2019, he completed his training with MindLeaps, and he has now been sponsored by MindLeaps to attend formal education. Abdoulaye dreams of becoming a doctor so that he can help his family and community if anyone becomes ill. Now he will be able to go back to school and pursue his dream.

RWANDA

60.5% of the population in Rwanda is under the age of 25. Without resources and education, this perpetuates a cycle of homelessness and poverty

74-80% of MindLeaps participants are permanently reintegrated into a household and off the street after one year

70% of MindLeaps participants who enter the formal education system perform in the top 20% of their academic classes



RWANDA

PERMANENT CENTER

Dance Training

Dance training is provided to children to help stimulate changes in behavioral patterns and increase cognition. Dancing also provides children the ability to begin learning how to develop new skills, which can transcend beyond dancing and lead to learning many other essential academic skills.



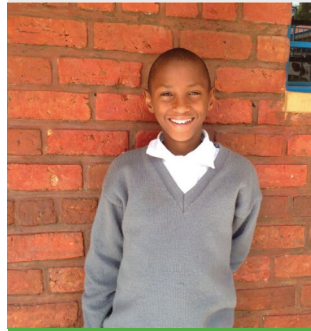
Digital Literacy



IT classes are provided to introduce children to technology and the outside world and this allows for them to develop skills that are essential for joining the workforce later. These classes help in closing the technology gap that continues to serve as a barrier for many children in developing countries.

Academic Enrichment

An academic enrichment program helps children catch up to their grade level. Once they have caught up to their levels, sponsorships are provided to fully reintegrate the children back into formal education and ensure school completion.



MindLeaps Rwanda's Jim Bell Center in Kigali opened in 2014. In 2019, a staff of seven Rwandans works with 20 out-of-school children daily and 100 in-school children on the weekends to help develop the skills needed for success in school and the workplace. The staff understand the challenges faced by their communities, and they are important role models for the students, providing emotional support and positive encouragement to build confidence. MindLeaps is also currently sponsoring 168 of our former students who have gone through the program to attend formal education in Rwanda in a variety of primary schools, secondary schools, and vocational training programs.

Health Awareness



Health and reproductive classes and hygiene and sanitation services are provided. Children learn about their anatomy, how to practice safe sex, and prevent diseases and unwanted pregnancies. The increased awareness destigmatizes the topic of sex.

Daily Meals

A daily meal program improves learning capacity and reduces the issue of food insecurity that many children and their families face. The program allows for children to remain healthy through access to nutritious meals, which are essential for their growing bodies and minds.



Family Strengthening



MindLeaps offers home visits, access to social workers, and opportunities for families of children to also receive social service help. 100 parents of our students participate in our family strengthening program, enabling them to take out microloans to build businesses.



FAMILY STRENGTHENING PROGRAM

MindLeaps Rwanda's Family Strengthening Program aims to improve the home life for the kids of MindLeaps by providing small business loans and workshops to their parents/guardians. One hundred parents of MindLeaps students are currently participating in the program split into self-help groups of 20-25 members per group.



The program includes:

- Microloans provided by MindLeaps help the parents start businesses and meet basic needs
- Workshops cover a variety of topics:
 - Through The Arthur & Patricia Hill Foundation, MindLeaps delivered a training for 100 parents on topics such as financial literacy, good parenting practices and gender-based violence. The training was facilitated by a self-help groups expert and Nyarugenge district officials
 - Through Mercer University, Stetson School of Business, MindLeaps trained and certified 26 self-help groups' leaders in an entrepreneurship course
- The parents also contribute to a joint social fund to support their peers who may need help in unforeseen emergencies



Masoro Leaping



"Masoro Leaping" is a project designed by MindLeaps to develop the health, economic and educational opportunities in Masoro. During the two-part pilot phase, MindLeaps ran a program for 100 youth and 25 community leaders. The 100 beneficiaries participated in our flagship dance program that improves mental health and increases school performance. The 25 community leaders participated in an intensive Train The Trainer to learn the methodology of MindLeaps and became equipped to co-build and sustain the MindLeaps wellness program on a regular basis in Masoro. The program was funded by Kate Spade New York's *on purpose* fund, created to support women in transforming their communities through entrepreneurship, technology, and the arts.

Refugee Camps in Rwanda

MindLeaps has been working with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2018 to bring MindLeaps programming to six refugee camps throughout Rwanda. In November and December 2018, MindLeaps ran a Train The Trainer program for 60 refugee youth to learn the MindLeaps curriculum and create a cadre of trainers who are able to carry out the MindLeaps dance program in all six camps. Thirty-eight of the sixty trainers were employed to teach the MindLeaps program. After the training, the teachers returned to their camps to implement the MindLeaps program and formalize the structure of dance education in the camps. In addition, each of the six camps were later visited by the MindLeaps international team to provide technical assistance and the trainers were evaluated on the success they had in bringing programming to their respective camps. As a result, over 700 refugee children living in these camps demonstrated improved social-emotional learning and life skills.



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

GUINEA



In July 2017, MindLeaps opened its first permanent center in the capital city of Conakry to provide dance and English classes in a safe space

After 34 classes (about 10 weeks), the students demonstrated a 28% increase in skill development

In October, the class of 52 students was reintegrated into formal education through MindLeaps sponsorship

GUINEA

PERMANENT CENTER



In July 2017, MindLeaps opened its first permanent center in the capital city of Conakry to provide dance and English classes in a safe space. The MindLeaps Center's eleven-member Guinean staff employs the same approach successfully established in Rwanda. Children come to the center to attend a "fun dance class" but are actually participating in a carefully structured kinesthetic-based curriculum targeting critical learning skills that prepare them for entry into school or vocational training. The program develops the ability to concentrate, memorize and use language, while also improving teamwork, discipline, grit, creativity, and self-esteem.

Sanitation Program

All children receive a sanitation kit and workshops on basic hygiene and health practices. In addition, the center provides clean water and electricity for the children to bathe, wash their clothes, and brush their teeth.

Social Services

MindLeaps conducts home visits and provides opportunities for families to receive social services.

Dance Training

MindLeaps codified dance curriculum is provided to help stimulate changes in behavioral patterns and increase cognition.

Daily Meals

A daily meal program improves learning capacity and reduces the issue of food insecurity that many children and their families face.

Academic Sponsorship

Students take part in English classes. After completing the MindLeaps program, sponsorships are provided to fully reintegrate the children back into formal education and ensure school completion.

OUR PARTNERS

The United Nations Women's Guild (UNWG) supports many children's charities in Austria and the developing world. The UNWG charity program assists abused children, those having restricted access to education, orphans, children with special needs or children suffering from extreme poverty or starvation. A grant from UNWG enabled MindLeaps to add electricity, water tanks, kitchen refurbishments, and a new classroom to our center in Conakry.



The US Embassy in Guinea is supporting "Rhythm of Peace", a two-part program designed to reach youth in the most volatile areas of Conakry and involve them in dance-based activities that teach critical thinking, political plurality, and media literacy. The program includes community English classes for youth ages 18-30 and public performances by MindLeaps students.



UGANDA

A group of children in a refugee settlement in Uganda. In the foreground, a young girl in a black dress with a leopard-print belt has her arms raised high in a gesture of joy or prayer. She is smiling and looking upwards. Behind her, other children are visible, some also with their arms raised. The background is a simple, light-colored wall. The ground is reddish-brown. The overall atmosphere is one of hope and resilience.

Uganda has taken in 1.4 million refugees - the greatest number on the continent and the third highest in the world

60% of all refugees and asylum seekers are children below the age of 18

MindLeaps rehabilitates urban refugee youth in Kampala as well as children living in Oruchinga Refugee Settlement

UGANDA

PARTNERSHIPS



In 2017, in Kampala, MindLeaps partnered with HIAS, an international NGO facilitating the resettlement of refugees around the world, to work with urban refugee children. In 2018 and 2019, MindLeaps expanded to work with additional partners, to provide our program to urban refugee children and vulnerable Ugandan children living in Kampala. MindLeaps' dance program builds resiliency, helping them to see and work towards their futures by taking advantage of the resources available to them through our partnering organizations - M-Lisada, Agape World Ministries, and Save Street Children Uganda.

OUR PARTNER

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a United Nations program dedicated to protecting refugees who are forcibly displaced and assist in their local integration or resettlement to another country. UNHCR works to ensure that everybody has the right to find safe refuge and seek asylum, regardless of whether they have fled persecution, war, violence, or disaster in their home. In partnership with UNHCR Uganda, MindLeaps is operating a nine-month program in Oruchinga Refugee Settlement in Uganda. MindLeaps deployed a team to teach MindLeaps dance classes to refugee children as well as train refugee youth living in the settlement to become MindLeaps dance trainers through Train The Trainer programs. Every three months, MindLeaps teachers reach 150 new children through dance classes - taught 3 days per week, 2 hours each class. At the end of the three months, these children are sponsored into day school or vocational training in the settlement. As of August, MindLeaps had hired 10 youth certified through the Train The Trainer to sustain the program, reaching 450 children by calendar year-end.



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

KENYA



Thousands of differently-abled children in Kenya are abandoned due to poverty and stigma

21% of Kenyan children ages 6 to 13 are currently out of school

MindLeaps works with differently-abled children in Kenya and improves cognitive and social-emotional learning by an average of 30%

KENYA

PARTNERSHIP



This year, MindLeaps continued to expand in Kenya and launched a new program in the city of Kisumu. This is MindLeaps first program that supports children at the intersection of vulnerabilities: those living on the street and presenting a physical or learning disability. Our project involved an initial intensive three weeks of Train The Trainer where youth dance trainers were trained in the tailored dance curriculum for street children with disabilities. MindLeaps dance teachers and the new trainers now teach 100 youth in the Kisumu area.



OUR PARTNERS

MindLeaps local partner in Kisumu is Kisumu Urban Apostolate Programmes (KUAP). KUAP works with the local communities of Kisumu to improve the standard of living by integrating cultural, economic, environmental, health, social, spiritual, educational and human rights values.



MindLeaps program in Kisumu was generously funded by Chance for Childhood. Chance for Childhood is a charity working in Africa to support the most vulnerable children, such as street children, disabled children, children affected by conflict and kids behind bars.



MAURITANIA



20 percent of the population in Mauritania lives on less than \$1.25 a day and only half of adults are literate

16 percent of children between the ages of 5-14 years are categorized as child laborers and girls are often forced to turn to prostitution

120 girls participated in the MindLeaps program in 2019, receiving dance classes, nutrition, and educational support

Academic Enrichment

Over the course of 12 months, 120 girls are enrolled in the MindLeaps program to develop critical learning skills. Of the 120 girls, the 50 girls who rank highest on improvement in cognitive skills and social-emotional learning will be sponsored to enter formal education.

Dance Training

The girls take 6 hours of dance training per week for 12 weeks. The measurable goal is to develop and track change in seven skills (memorization, grit, teamwork, discipline, language, self-esteem and creativity) to improve cognitive skills and emotional stability.

Nutritional Program

All girls are provided with nutritious meals and clean water daily in partnership with SOS Pairs Educateurs.

MAURITANIA PARTNERSHIP

This year, MindLeaps launched a new program serving vulnerable children in Nouakchott, Mauritania. The program is helping 120 vulnerable girls in urban poverty by combining our dance program with additional resources in education and nutritional support. This project draws young girls off the streets and out of prostitution through MindLeaps' highly popular dance program. As the girls come to the safe space to attend dance workshops, they receive remedial education, psychosocial counseling, and nutritional support. With girls now accessing formal education, a grassroots, appropriate cultural shift can start to take place.



OUR PARTNERS

Dining for Women (DFW) is a global giving circle dedicated to transforming lives and eradicating poverty among women and girls. DFW has selected MindLeaps as one of their featured grantees for 2019 and this grant allowed MindLeaps to launch the program in Mauritania. Many thanks to DFW for their generous support to make this program possible.



SOS Pairs Educateurs is MindLeaps' local partner in Mauritania. They provide a safe space for children, share project staff, leverage their female community leaders to recruit girls into the program, and facilitate school sponsorships.



NEW YORK CITY

Dancers from the United States, Europe, and Asia came to New York City for MindLeaps' two-week Train The Trainer program in June 2019. They studied MindLeaps standardized curriculum, learned how to use Tracker, and studied the model to prepare vulnerable children to re-integrate and succeed in the formal education system. Participants included: Deanna Cormier, Sheila Grant, Toshia Jackson, Sarina Malik, Sadiya Ramos, and Giulia Coti Zelati.



TRAIN THE TRAINER



“ Train The Trainer has taught me so much about culture, about people, and about the way I teach and approach students. I can already see myself applying what I learnt with MindLeaps in my everyday work and life.”

-Giulia Coti Zelati
Freelance Dance Artist, Italy

UBUMUNTU

INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL

For the fifth year in a row, MindLeaps participated in the Ubumuntu International Arts Festival in Kigali, supported by the US Embassy in Rwanda. The theme this year was "When the walls come down – Truth." LaMar Baylor, a dancer in Disney's "The Lion King" on Broadway, choreographed a work for twelve MindLeaps teachers from all over Africa. The piece entitled "Bound Alone" explored how men help each other during hardships, and how individuals endure their own problems while being part of a team.



The cast was comprised of Congolese and Burundian refugee youth from Rwanda's refugee camps where they teach MindLeaps dance classes as well as MindLeaps dance instructors from Rwanda, Uganda, and Guinea. They spent an intensive one month rehearsing, living, and working together, while learning about the power of dance to advance youth. Watch the full performance online at bit.ly/mindleaps-ubumuntu-19



SUPPORTERS AND DONORS

We thank our institutional supporters for helping us in providing more children with the access, programs, opportunities, and education that they need to succeed and leap forward in life.

Foundations



The Seattle Foundation



Broadway Cares



Chance for Childhood



The ChangeBox Foundation



Communities Foundation of Texas



Dining for Women



GlobalGiving Foundation



Issroff Family Foundation



Jewish Helping Hands



Lacewing Foundation



The Nelkin Foundation



Peace Exchange (in Guinea)



Segal Family Foundation



The Tides Foundation



Tisch Philanthropic Fund



Tully Sennett Charitable Fund



Burwell Public Schools



Malvern Preparatory School



Williamsville Central School District

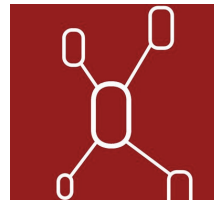
Corporations



AllianceBernstein



AmazonSmile



Axiom Networks



Celebrity Dance Emporium



Égal Dance



Goldman Sachs



JTI



Pentland Graphics



Rock Shrimp Productions

Government



U.S. Embassy in Rwanda



U.S. Embassy in Guinea

FY19 AUDITED FINANCIALS

Statement of Financial Position

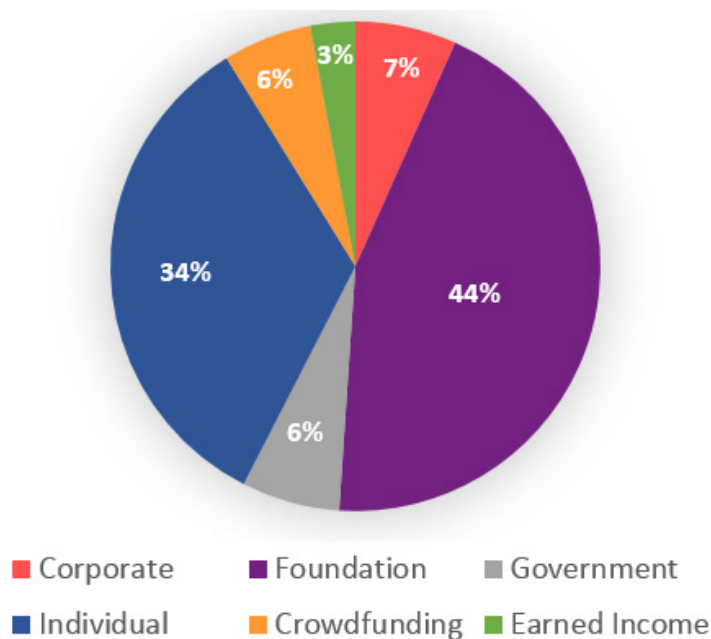
<u>ASSETS</u>	<u>2019</u>
Assets:	
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 3,735
Contribution receivable	12,398
Prepaid expenses	119
Other assets	34,391
Total current assets	50,643
Property and equipment, net	7,575
Intangible asset, net	
Total assets	<u>\$ 58,218</u>
<u>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</u>	
Liabilities:	
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 33,429
Total current liabilities	33,429
Note payable	22,500
Total liabilities	55,929
Net assets (deficit):	
Without donor restrictions	(14,191)
With donor restrictions	16,480
Total net assets (deficit)	2,289
Total liabilities and net assets	<u>\$ 58,218</u>

Revenue Sources

Corporate	\$ 37,910
Foundation	\$ 251,898
Government	\$ 36,764
Individual	\$ 190,908
Crowdfunding	\$ 33,188
Earned Income	\$ 16,874
TOTAL	\$ 567,543

Statement of Activity

Programs	
Rwanda	\$ 179,110
UNHCR Rwanda	\$ 87,992
Guinea	\$ 72,999
Uganda	\$ 58,980
Mauritania	\$ 37,973
UNHCR Uganda - Oruchinga	\$ 27,320
Tracker	\$ 18,816
Masoro	\$ 9,631
Kenya	\$ 9,323
International Artists	\$ 5,593
Teacher Training	\$ 5,414
Ubumuntu	\$ 1,710
Total Programs	\$ 514,862
Support Services	
G&A	\$ 88,218
Fundraising	\$ 32,094
Total Support Services	\$ 120,312
TOTAL	\$ 635,174



Hacking Finance

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ALL THE RIGHT MOVES

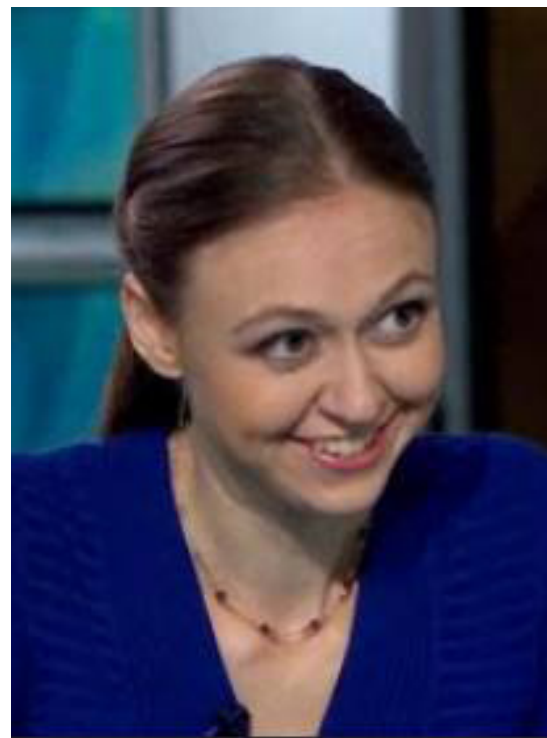


It all started, in 2014, with dance. For two young Rwandan brothers, the offer of free dance classes was simply too tempting to turn down.

Read the full article at www.hacking.finance/read/all-the-right-moves

LEADERSHIP AND BOARD

Rebecca Davis fused her expertise in entrepreneurship, dance, and international relations to build paths for vulnerable youth to education, technology, and jobs. In serving as the Executive Director of MindLeaps, Rebecca is responsible for the strategic direction, fundraising, and management of the organization currently operational in five African countries and with headquarters in New York City. As a 2018 Fellow of the Gratitude Network, Rebecca has been recognized for outstanding leadership and MindLeaps' potential to scale an innovative solution to one of humanity's greatest problems: out of school youth. Rebecca worked for The Carter Center, Stage Holding Russia, and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Rebecca graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelors of Business Administration in Entrepreneurship from Temple University, and she holds a Masters in International Relations with a concentration in Peacekeeping from American Military University. Rebecca is a two-time Fulbright Scholar and a former Greater New York City Fulbright Alumna-in-Residence. A sought-after speaker whose accomplishments are frequently noted in various news media, Rebecca has won numerous awards recognizing her contributions to dance, technology, and education in conflict zones.



Rebecca Davis
Founder & Executive Director

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

Board of Directors

Ramie Arian - Ramie Arian Consulting
Kathleen Bakarich - Hofstra University
Rebecca Davis - MindLeaps *ex-officio
Kathy G. Gallo - Goodstone Group
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Michael Maguire (Board Chair) -
Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation
Richard Abeeku Mills-Robertson -
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Board of Advisors

LaMar Baylor - The Lion King on Broadway
Misty Copeland - American Ballet Theatre
Neil Kleinman - University of The Arts
Joel E. Soffin - Jewish Helping Hands

MindLeaps' volunteers provide considerable and vital support to its operations in the U.S. and internationally. 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 contribution:

Stacy Acker, Bowie Alexander, Javier Aranzales, Brian Bill, Ali Hoyt, Arnold Glick, Samantha Hyde, Jillian Kenny, Sean Kirby, Ally Larrick, Dan Longfellow, Lily Lovinger, Leslie Massicotte, Jude McCoy, Najmul Miah, Matt Molina, Ryan M. Neil, Danielle Parker, Lauren Rich, Christelle Smith, Hana Smith, Romy Tierney, Alice Tzou, and Marie Windal.



ORGANIZATIOAL HISTORY

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 advance these children. In 2015, MindLeaps concentrated on developing a rigorous Monitoring & Evaluation system to evaluate the effectiveness of its program in collaboration with staff from Carnegie Mellon University Rwanda and Drexel University. As of 2020, the company will serve over 3,000 children annually.



Photos by:
Miki Powell
&
Stacy Acker

MindLeaps

315 West 36th Street
2nd Floor
New York, NY 10018

+1 646 902 1295
info@mindleaps.org