



Buildher

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

SUSTAINING ECONOMIC  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR URBAN  
WOMEN IN A PANDEMIC

**"If you believe in your idea of change and are willing to work hard, sooner or later that dream will be a reality."**

Naomi Tulay Solanke

## WHAT WE DO

### OUR MISSION

We equip women in Kenya with accredited construction skills leading to greater financial prosperity, changing male attitudes and promoting gender equality within the construction industry. With this in our mind, Buildher is committed to taking leadership in improving and maintaining the development of women in the Built Environment.

### OUR VISION

We work to see women across Kenya actively contribute towards urban development to create safe, inclusive, resilient and sustainable cities. We work on promoting urban development with women, for women, by women.

**Equality and inclusivity** are core to our work. We prepare Buildher women for dignified skilled employment, promote equality in the workplace, and help them secure increased wages. Buildher women increase their income by an average of 530% after just five months with Buildher (from \$9/week to \$48/week).



Bahelanya Ebengo  
Buildher Cohort 04, 2021



Vivian Ludagura  
Buildher Cohort 02, 2019



Mary Wamaku  
Buildher Cohort 01, 2019



Lydia Awinja  
Buildher Cohort 02, 2019

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## MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

**"2020 was a year of one challenge after another, but we persevered and we could not have achieved impact without our community of partners."**

This is a time like no other, with uncertainty affecting our families, schools, businesses, as well as our local and global communities. In the early days of the pandemic, it was easy to let fear and anxiety cripple our actions and decisions. This virus devastated so much of our daily existence that it was difficult to see beyond it, let alone imagine a world healed from it.

As I look back, I see how this crisis has been a challenge for all of us, both personally and professionally, but I am also aware of the immeasurable moments of courage, grace and compassion when our larger community came together to support us and each other in fundamental ways. In the midst of devastation, I often found myself feeling inspired, motivated and supported by the Buildher team and our community of partners. Those early months were filled with candid and compassionate conversations with donor partners, frank and encouraging check-ins with employer partners, and meaningful collaboration with our CBO and NGO partners, who remained closely connected to their communities. Throughout, the Buildher team constantly availed themselves to develop and conduct outreach engagement programs with our stakeholders.

With our community of support, we were able to achieve three main goals amidst the 2020 crisis:

1. Ensure the safety of our staff, trainees, and partners;
2. Sustain our impact by keeping the vulnerable women we serve safe and COVID-19 free while preventing further spread of coronavirus;
3. Reduce operational costs to secure the organization's survival over the long-term.

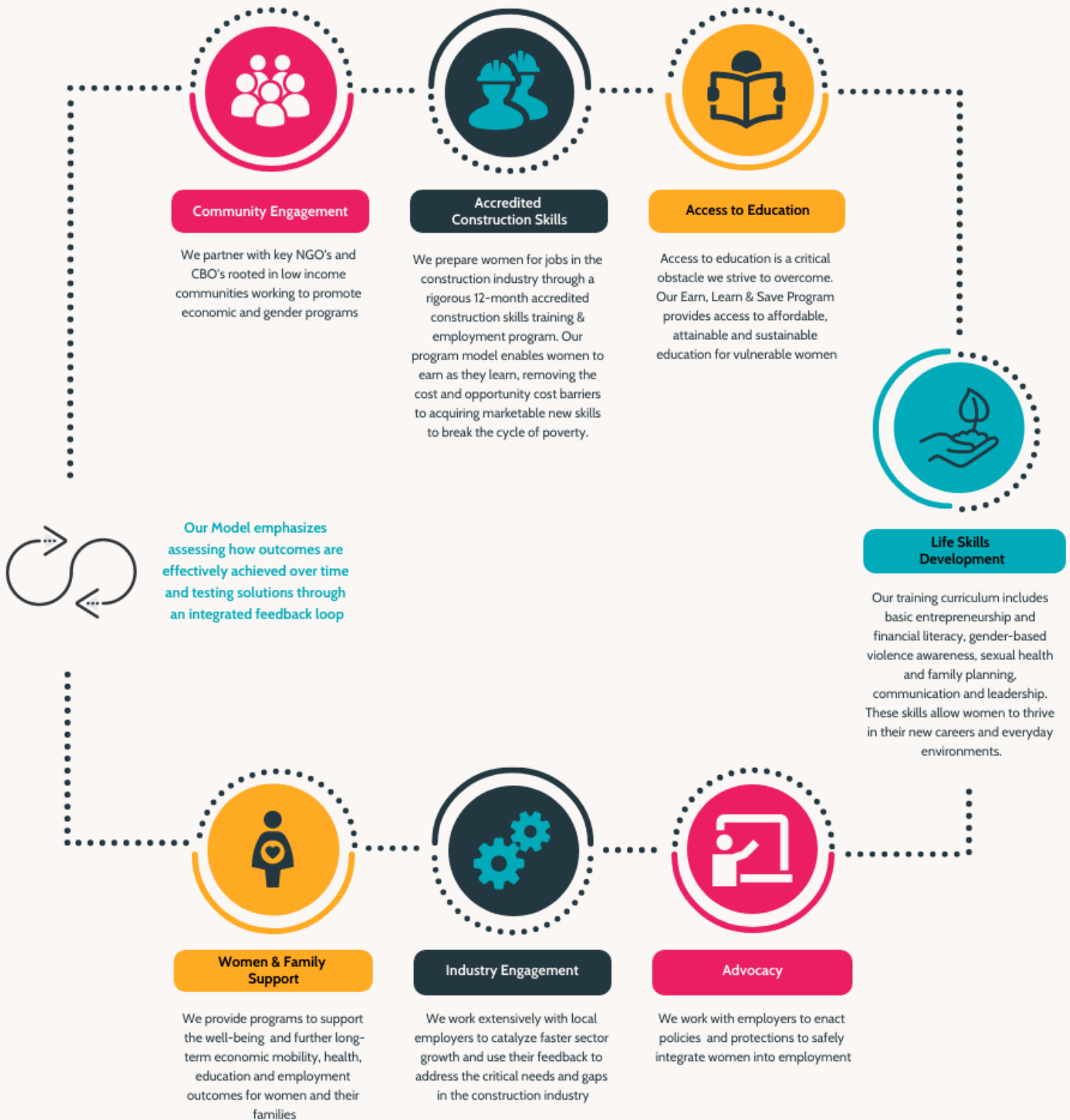
As we look forward, we know this community remains a key component of our success. Our challenge remains unprecedented: Empower women through high value jobs in a high growth, male dominated sector, by creating access to education, training and critical skills development for a vulnerable group who do not have the infrastructure or resources needed to access virtual or distance-learning.

This report celebrates some of the amazing journeys we witnessed through our work in 2020. We thank you for your support and for being our cheerleaders, supporters and champions through this difficult, rewarding and empowering work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Tatu Gatere.

**Tatu Gatere**  
Chief Executive Officer

# The Buildher Model





## 2020 OVERVIEW

While our impact slowed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we used this year as an opportunity to build stronger internal systems that led to organization-wide growth. Maintaining our focus on improving our clients' wellbeing and resilience included additional emergency programming to ensure the vulnerable women we serve survived this difficult year. We also increased our resilience and sustainability as an organization by launching new earned income streams.

## Cumulative Primary Impact



194

Women trained in accredited construction skills.



4000+

Total direct & indirect beneficiaries impacted by Buildher



111

Buildher artisans currently pursuing careers in construction sector.



530%

Increase in income for Buildher women after 4 months of training.



83%

Employers implementing policy changes to incorporate gender, sexual harassment & dignified pay.



95%

Increased confidence in women who attend the program.

## KPI Dashboard

FY	Women Trained	Women Passed Accreditation Test	Women Hired	Employer Partners Hiring Women	Training Tracks Offered	Buildher Alumni	Indirect Beneficiaries
2019 (actuals)	107	N/A	65	12	1	0	700
2020 (actuals)	57	21	111	18	1	22	*4000
2021 (expected)	150	100	135	25	2	100	1650
2022 (expected)	360	252	324	60	3	252	3960
2023 (expected)	600	420	540	60	3	420	5160

\* the higher beneficiary numbers in 2020 was due to our indirect service model where Buildher supported more people through COVID-19 response activities

Our 2023 numbers are expected to double due to launch of a second training location within Nairobi

In 2020, Buildher served 4,000+ beneficiaries across Nairobi. We refined our model and improved our training, family support, and employment placement support. This generated an average 530% increase in income after five months compared to baseline (from \$9/week earned prior to joining our program to \$48/week), which is 200% higher than our rate in 2019. Women also increased their income security: Earning a reliable salary consistently for eight months is a shift from previously precarious sources of income, which enabled women to plan and make strategic financial decisions and invest in their families, including moving to safer homes and educating children.

Yet amid these positive developments, external factors led to lower impact for many of our graduates and trainees as Kenya grappled with a year of crisis and massive job losses. These factors continue to be a challenge for artisans across the construction sector. In the current environment, providing skill development alone is not enough to guarantee sustainable income gains for our graduates.

To respond to this reality, we are emphasizing trainee resilience. Through a variety of methods, we aim to equip women with tools and practices to fight loss of income, build secure livelihoods, and build proper safety nets for the future.



## 2020 HIGHLIGHTS

Our 2021 Furniture Collection is here! Order yours today and get a woman out of poverty!



### Served 4k+ beneficiaries

4,000 individuals and 16 construction sector employers benefited from our core & emergency (COVID-19 response) programming. More than two-thirds of our beneficiaries were women.



### 7 COVID-19 Response Interventions

Our programs team delivered a total of seven COVID-19 response interventions in addition to our direct service model, reaching most the vulnerable during the worst periods of the pandemic.



### 43% of women placed back in jobs

Following COVID-19 lockdowns, Buildher supported women to resume building their careers in construction.



### Integrated use of technology for remote technical training

Our training staff leveraged technology to efficiently sustain training outcomes across all training areas during the COVID-19 lockdown.



### Launch of Buildher Production

To promote sustainability by earning income, we leveraged our existing skills and assets to launch a furniture production line and machining and production services for hire.



### Expanded program to 6 additional locations

We identified new informal settlements for expansion of our program. To accomplish this, we forged seven additional partnerships with two large NGOs and five CBOs.

# Buildher

## Production Launch, 2020

### Mini Gallery

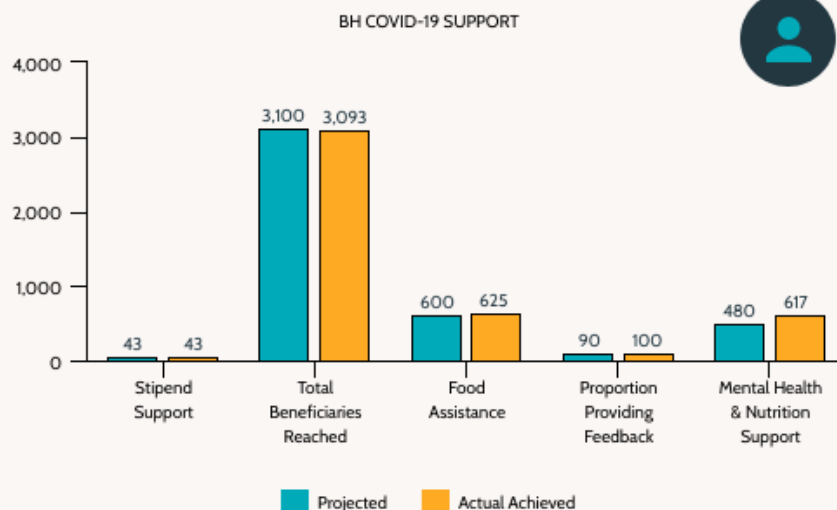


Buildher identified a significant demand for furniture, cabinetry, and specialist finishes within the fast growing residential housing construction market in Kenya. In 2020, we leveraged our existing skills and capital assets to launch a furniture production line and machining and production services for hire. These are some of the products in our 2021 collection.

## COVID-19 Response: Sustaining Impact in a Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased poverty, inequality and unemployment for our beneficiaries and their communities due to its adverse impact on jobs and livelihoods in the key sectors of the economy, including construction.

The impact of COVID-19 has been most devastating in poor and densely populated urban areas, especially for the 60% living in informal settlements and slums in Kenya as well as for refugees, internally displaced people and migrants. Urgent action was needed to help the communities we serve stay safe and healthy. Measures to slow transmission such as physical distancing, self-quarantine and community-wide lockdowns were almost impossible in these overcrowded areas and even the most basic hygiene measures proved challenging as water and soap were often unavailable for handwashing.



# \$55,000

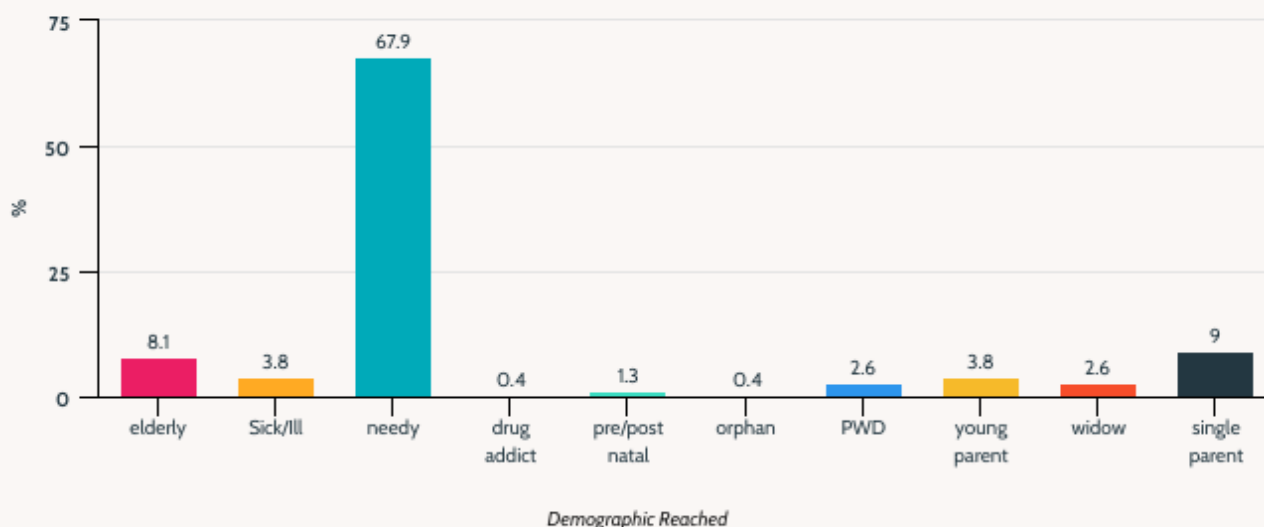
Total amount raised by Buildher in 2020 to support emergency response initiatives

Emergency funds were used to provide support to our beneficiaries and their families. With these resources, we were able to:

- Provide regular and up to date information on community preparedness;
- Provide ten tons in food and hygiene support to 3,000+ Buildher women, artisans and the most vulnerable populations;
- Facilitate income replacement for lost jobs to 137 Buildher women, and;
- Distribute nutrition supplements to 274 young children.



### Proportion (%) of Beneficiaries Reached



## WIRE/NCA Artisan of the Year - 2020



Cecilia, a 35-year-old mother of two is fresh from being awarded the 2020 Women In Real Estate (WIRE) Artisan of the Year. She is not showing signs of stopping at that. "I am proud to have won The Artisan of the Year Award since I had never been in any position like this. This is through the skills that I obtained through Buildher. My advice to anyone is that no one is incapable of doing something, just believe in yourself and you can do it. Three years from now I want to be far from where I am". Cecilia is just one story of the many women who have changed their lives by pursuing a career in construction. Her background, like many from informal settlements in Kenya, tells a story of struggles and labor to make ends meet in a world full of barriers against women.

Cecilia has seen swings in her economic growth in most of her adult life. As a young single mother from Nairobi's Mathare slum, life was cruel. With Secondary level education and sometimes earning less than \$4 a week in casual labors, living in the capital was unsustainable. "My life had not been easy before joining Buildher because getting a job that could sustain me in life was hard," she confesses. "I used to hawk French beans and also did household cleaning for about 2 years. When lucky, I would earn between Ksh200 to Ksh300 per day which could still not sustain my family".

**Women like Cecilia** have experienced the effects of gender and economic violence first hand. The compounded effect is the generations that are born into the cycle of poverty that exists in the informal settlements.

Yet, women like Cecilia are also at the forefront of adopting solutions available for them. At Buildher, we're equipping our beneficiaries with the tools they need to address their economic challenges head-on. In the short term, we provide training that equips women with accredited construction skills that allow them to change their attitude, increase their confidence and compete in the male dominated market.

Cecilia shares how her journey at Buildher has been. She expounds... "I came to know about Buildher through Serah Waithera (Cohort 01 trainee) where I registered for the program through Muungano wa Wanavijiji in Bondeni Mathare. When I got a chance at Buildher, I was very happy for I saw my life and my family's life will change."

Cecilia's confidence has grown since joining the program. Timid and closed at the beginning, she has exceeded everyone's expectations - her growth evident in her being chosen by her colleagues to be their leader. "I remember the first day at Buildher, I introduced myself then later I was asked what don't I like and I said that I don't like been laughed at. At that moment, the rest of the trainees laughed at me and I deeply cried. I asked myself why had they laughed at me? I thought that everyone knew my previous life struggles and so was the reason of laughing at me." She adds, "With time all that changed. Through Life Skills, I learnt self-awareness and started to love myself. I also came to realize myself and also learnt that as a woman, I have to stand on my own in everything. In addition, through Mental Health Coaching, I used to get advice on how to cope with life which helped relieve my stress and focus on the training. I was even chosen by my colleagues to lead them as Class President".

Cecilia's story demonstrates some of the critical benefits of the Buildher program. We keep designing it to reduce the economic and psychological effects of poverty, improves the self-reliance and livelihood of our beneficiaries and offers them long-term solutions to everyday problems that would otherwise cast them back into the cycle of poverty.



Mary Wamaku steel bending at BuildX Studio site, Nairobi

## Changing the Face of the Construction Industry

### Key developments and lessons learned in 2020

#### Engaging employers to make their workplaces more productive and gender inclusive:

To ensure we are meeting industry needs, Buildher maintains a continuous feedback loop with industry stakeholders. This close collaboration with employers ensures Buildher is preparing women to fill relevant skill gaps and enables us to track our impact on the broader construction sector. As we have increased the size and reach of our network of employer partners, we have driven the following changes for women, employers, and the broader industry:

- **Increase in productivity for employers:** Buildher graduates complete projects in less time at higher quality, increasing productivity by 67%. Employers also reduce costs and turn-over by aligning with Buildher's placement team to ensure women's competency in the skill areas they need from the start, eliminating the need to provide upskilling on-site and saving an average of KES 100k (\$1,100) per artisan onboarded.
- **Essential gender integration policies enacted:** Within one month of placing Buildher women in their workplace, 83% of employer partners introduced policies guaranteeing a minimum dignified pay rate of KES 900/day ( \$9/day). 16% of employers made infrastructure improvements to enhance gender integration (i.e. improving women's restroom facilities) within one month and this figure increased to 25% three-months after placement. Within three-months of placement, 25% of partners adopted a formal sexual harassment policy. Within three-months of placement, 25% of partners adopted a formal sexual harassment policy.
- **Positive change in male attitudes:** In informal interviews, supervisors and fellow workers have reported a mindset shift around women's ability to hold specialized construction jobs after working with Buildher trainees, who serve as visible examples of work (and pay) equality.

In 2021, our goal is to partner with 25+ additional employers to build the case for creating opportunities for women and scale our direct programming. Our target is to increase productivity on employer sites by 70%.

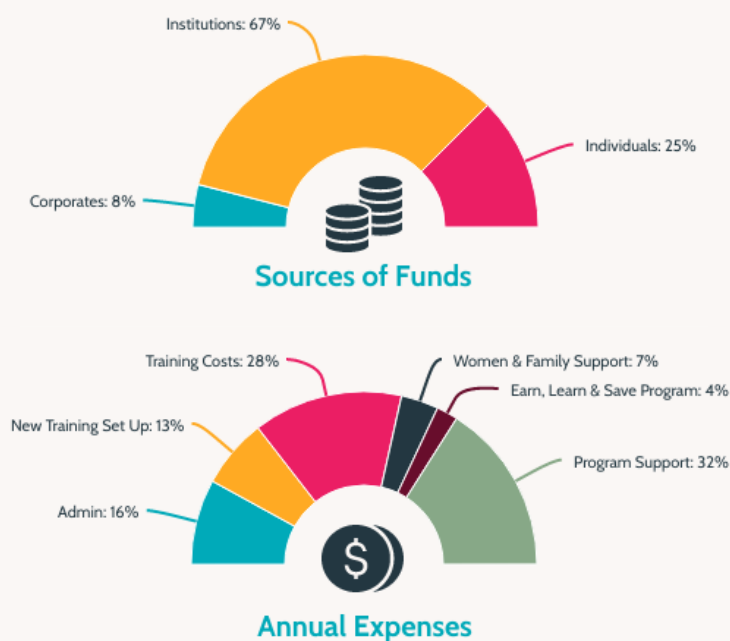
#### Engaging additional stakeholders to transform the industry:

We are working with the National Construction Authority (NCA) and WIRE to advance gender mainstreaming in the construction sector by collecting and disseminating compelling data on productivity and efficiency gains that employers can realize through gender integration. Together with the NCA, we are co-developing an effective and responsive training curriculum for artisans and contractors based on Buildher's industry feedback.



Brandy Achar of Cohort 01 with supervisor Julius Ogada of BuildX Studio

## 2020 Financials and Fundraising



### It's important to know what keeps our wheels turning.

A core group of family foundations, corporates and individuals made donations and grants in the 2020 fiscal year and made a critical impact on our mission.

Funds raised totaled **\$777,000**, a \$200k increase over 2019. 2020 also marked the set-up of a COVID-19 response fund, which supported the preservation of livelihoods and health for Buildher staff, beneficiaries and communities.

The launch of Buildher's production subsidiary and machining services enhanced our longterm sustainability by diversifying our revenue. These new income streams will help fund our programming for women and we expect them to eventually become profitable. Projected annual revenue from furniture production alone totals \$20,000. Combined with machining services, projected revenue can reach \$1.37M/yr.



Mary Wanjiku,  
Buildher Cohort 02  
Product: Guitar Stand  
Client: Hope Raisers

## Meet our Most Outstanding Graduate

“

***"Prior to joining Buildher, I believed that Carpentry is a job reserved for men and any woman doing Carpentry was out of her mind. After the 4 months training at Buildher, I feel that I am a skilled Carpenter and Joiner and this is my chosen career!"***

***- Mary Wanjiku***

”

The story of Mary, 34-year-old mother of 3, is one we will share for years. Coming from Korogocho, a salonist in the settlement prior to joining the Buildher program, her time was split between raising children, being a wife and making a living. In addition to this pressure, she volunteered her time in her community through football coaching and mentoring the young girls, including advocating for safe spaces for young girls in the community.

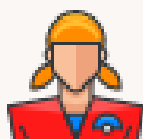
Mary earned less than USD 10 per week in her previous life. Her admission into Buildher changed life for her. She says, "I come from Korogocho and before joining the training program, I was a salonist where I used to earn less than 300 shillings per day. This money could not help sustain my family needs so after hearing about the training opportunity from Komb Green (CBO), I registered for I knew after the training, I would get a formal job and earn a living out of it." Her skills development was the fastest Buildher had seen in any of the trainees, eventually earning her place as Buildher's most outstanding trainee.

She not only developed her technical skills during her training, but her entrepreneurial acumen flourished. During the hardest periods of the COVID-19 pandemic, Mary was one of the many who were laid off from employment. Instead of sitting out the pandemic, she started her own carpentry business in the community, building her client base and working on different assignments. She even created employment for her Buildher colleagues, and has been coached by Buildher staff on entrepreneurship, client and people management. Mary confesses, "...when I lost my job, I asked myself... 'who will hold my hand when everyone is struggling now with Corona virus?'...I decided to try pitching my skills in the community as I was not going back to plaiting hair. I quickly realized that I could not only make a living through my skills but pull in a few of my colleagues to help and for them also to earn something, as opposed to sitting and waiting for aid or help".

Mary's first four projects took her a month to complete, and earned her Ksh.18,000 (approx. \$180) – these were two guitar stands, a wooden mannequin and a cabinet. She has since started setting up a workshop in the community, assisted by Buildher and Hope Raisers (one of Buildher's CBO partners), and will be working part time to build it up as she continues building her skills.

Mary is currently placed at De'Exact Interiors, a strategic partnership that will enable her grow in not only her joinery skills but also build the entrepreneurial mindset she will need to build and scale her business in the community.

## Scaling our Innovation



~100,000

Total Direct & Indirect Beneficiaries  
Impacted by 2030

Our goal is to increase women's participation in skilled construction roles from the current **3%** to **10%** by **2030** through directly and indirectly creating employment opportunities in construction for 10,750 women. Buildher will reach this scale and drive systemic change within Kenya's construction sector through two pathways:

- **Core Model:** Buildher will directly train women and place them with employers in our network over the next 10 years through its core model, by expanding to new sites and additional training tracks. We will ensure sustainability by decreasing the cost-per-impact as we grow by unlocking economies of scale and increasing earned revenue, as described below.
- **Partnerships:** Enabling construction employers beyond our network to integrate women by sharing best practices and advocating for new incentives: We are building partnerships that increase brand visibility, and enable regulatory structures to support gender integration in the construction sector. This will help increase women's employment in construction. We expect that driving this systemic change will lead to an additional women securing employment in construction, exposing male employees to highly-skilled woman artisans in the workplace, a key driver toward changing male attitudes in the sector.

Buildher is launching additional training areas in our current, Baba Dogo Location (Workshop 1) and two new locations (Workshop 2 & 3) by 2023, to directly scale up the number of women in the program. Additionally, Buildher will continue testing new strategies for trainee enrollment to build and sustain commitment and reduce attrition. We plan to streamline our routes to employment processes through continuously re-aligning our training and placement processes to address industry gaps, needs and expectations to build sustainable employment partnerships. Finally, we are partnering with key industry players to create training and advocacy solutions to foster employer and industry alignment across training areas.



## OUR 2020 National Industrial Training Authority (NITA) GRADUATES

**Third Row:** Stephanie Mbeke Syombua, Lucy Wangari Njoroge, Eunice Mwende Ndambuki, Susan Wangui Wanjiru, Mary Wanjiru Wamaku, Beth Waniiru, Mercy Ngonyo

**Second Row:** Brandy Achar Atieno, Madina Abdi Ali, Betty Kendi Muchiri, Febe Imali Ondera, Sabina Wanjiku Nyambura, Anastasia Nduku Mukeli, Rose Wamaittha

**Front Row:** Josephine Omoche Bwana, Faith Nyambura Mwangi, Fatuma Rapando Omala, Vivian Ludagura Lazaro, Staycy Akinyi Odhiambo, Fridah Nyawira, Margaret Mwihaiki Kinyati

# BOARD OF Directors

**Our team is backed by practitioners who have made a mark in both the Gender and Built Environment Space. Meet Buildher's first BOD, built in 2020!**



**Robin Emerson**  
Board Member

**Robyn** has worked in the built environment, community development, women and youth empowerment, human and civil rights arenas in Kenya and the US for 30 years. She is an urban planner who works to incorporate economic development, spatial planning, policy advocacy, participatory methods, leadership development and strategic planning as the basis of her work.



**James Mitchell**  
Chair of Board

**James** Co-founded BuildX Studio predecessor Orkidstudio in 2008. A trained architect, in 2016 he was named in Impact Design Hub's "40 under 40" and in 2018 was selected as an Aspen Institute Spotlight Health Fellow. James has also led BuildX Studio to international recognition, including accreditation as the first architecture and construction B Corporation in Africa



**Khetsiwe Dlamini**  
Board Member

**Khetsiwe** loves bringing ideas from vision to reality, offering turnkey skills - from strategy to execution in a range of areas. She is a qualified business leader (Doctorate in Business Leadership) with an impressive track record of accomplishment and demonstrated aptitude for building high performance diverse teams that deliver results. She believes that Change is a constant when pursuing excellence.



**Tatu Gatere**  
CEO & Secretary

**Tatu** is an entrepreneur, an architect and a built environment enthusiast. She is the Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer of Buildher, an organization that disrupts the male dominated construction industry in Kenya and equips disadvantaged young women with accredited construction skills, leading to greater financial prosperity, changing male attitudes and promoting gender equality within the construction industry.



**Buildher**

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