

so they can

Monitoring and Evaluation (MEL) Executive Summary 2026

On behalf of Cassandra Treadwell
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Australian Aid

*All figures in this Executive Summary are in AUD

Who we are

Founded in 2009, So They Can is a leading international NGO that delivers development projects to reduce poverty and improve access to quality education in East Africa.

It is through our Education Program that we implement all the essentials for quality education – from infrastructure, to teacher training, to school management and our leading 'Keeping Girls in School' project. Alongside our Education Program, we also implement our Community Development Program, consisting of our 'Family Strengthening' project, 'Wezesha Business Skills' project and 'Community Health' project, to tackle the more complex barriers to education and poverty.

Our Approach

Scale
So They Can has reached 55,000 children and 35,600 community members across 55 government schools. Government and community partnerships, in-country teams, and Australian Government Full Accreditation position our model for further scale.

Cost
Annual delivery costs are low - AUD $23–$67 per student - with additional leverage gained through DFAT funding. Our model's breadth of outputs across education, wellbeing, and gender makes it highly cost-effective.

Depth
Our holistic programs address multiple drivers of multidimensional poverty including education, health, nutrition, water and sanitation, gender equality, child protection, and livelihoods, and contribute to 14 of the 17 SDGs.

Sustainability
Our sustainable eight-year partnership with each government school ensures sustained change through strengthened school governance, teacher capability, community co-contribution, and increased government investment. Our schools, teachers' college and clinics continue to operate independently once So They Can exits, demonstrating long-term impact.



Since the beginning:
Our impact to date

55,000
Students reached through our education projects

82
Families empowered through our Family Strengthening initiatives

1,056
New teachers graduated to address Africa's concerning teacher:student ratio

35,600
Community members supported through our Community Development initiatives

1,916
Women empowered through our Women's Empowerment initiatives

6
So They Can legal entities including: Australia, Kenya, New Zealand, Tanzania, the UK and the US

300+
Global network of 50+ paid employees, 200+ volunteers, 25 global Board Directors and 16 high profile ambassadors

$50m
Invested in So They Can's programs since 2009 through 100+ partners, thousands of individual supporters, government, foundations, businesses and schools.



Program Outcomes:
In 2025 alone

Program Outcomes – Kenya 2025

8,585 students
14 Partner Schools

108%

Enrolment retention rate
(> 100% due to increased enrolment)
Gender parity in enrolment

97%

Students transitioning
From lower- to upper-primary

87%

Attendance rate

85%

Academic performance
% of children meeting academic expectations, as per Government's scale

100%

Students transitioning
From primary to secondary education (Government Policy)



Program Outcomes – Tanzania 2025

16,116 students
29 Partner Schools

96%

Enrolment retention rate
Gender parity in enrolment

99%

Students transitioning
From lower- to upper-primary

96%

Attendance rate

82%

Academic performance
% of children meeting academic expectations, as per Government's scale

86%

Students transitioning
From primary to secondary education



Behind the numbers:
How we collect data to understand, adapt and scale our impact

At So They Can, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) underpins everything we do. It guides how we plan, implement, and assess our work by clearly linking our actions (what we do), outputs (the immediate results of those activities), and outcomes (the longer-term changes we aim to achieve).

MEL is critical for understanding how effective and efficient our interventions are. It enables us to track progress from activities through to results, while also providing opportunities to generate insights, foster continuous program improvement, and build evidence to support the scaling of our programs.

1. Baseline data

Our MEL is based on our Theory of Change. We have a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Manager and Officer in both Kenya and Tanzania.

Baseline data is collected at the beginning of each new project by our in-country MEL and Program team members. Empirical quantitative and qualitative data is collected depending on the nature of the project and the indicators required. For example, in our 'Keeping Girls in School' project, we monitor the distribution of our reusable sanitary product packs, participation in menstrual health training, and changes in girls' knowledge about their rights. This allows us to track not only what we deliver, but the difference it makes—evidenced through improved knowledge and practices, as well as contributing to improved girls' education outcomes across our partner schools.



'Reliable data enables us to clearly tell meaningful stories of change and development' - Roy Kipchumba
MEL Manager, So They Can Kenya



Behind the numbers:
How we collect data to understand, adapt and scale our impact



2. Quarterly interval data collection and reporting

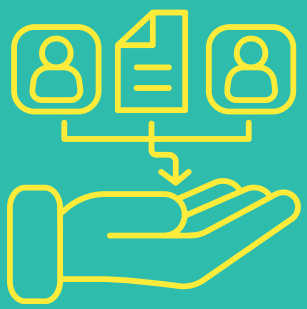
Data is collated throughout project implementation at quarterly intervals. So They Can's Education and MEL Managers conduct monitoring visits with partner schools to ensure data quality and control.

Conversely, quarterly reports, managed through Google and Kobo forms, are shared with our team by the Head Teachers of the current 48 schools that So They Can supports.

Our team then produces detailed quarterly output reports that track all projects against targets and achievements, as well as challenges and recommendations for improvements, through our MEL digital software: Toladata.

Kobo Toolbox is an important tool in this process because it allows our teams to collect data even in the remotest of communities, and then synchronise, clean and analyse our data for structured reporting.

'Data collected and reported through So They Can's M&E systems provides the evidence of program progress and the foundation of accountability' - Wilson Kaijage
MEL Manager, So They Can Tanzania



Behind the numbers:
How we collect data to understand, adapt and scale our impact

3. Annual Project Evaluations

Annual Projects Evaluations are conducted to measure the effectiveness and outcome of each project. Primarily using Kobo Toolbox, this process of assessment involves rigorous data collection methodologies including:

- structured interviews;
- closed and open ended questionnaires;
- focus group discussions;
- observation;
- and desk reviews with sampled program schools/communities participants.

Our teams also employ innovative MEL collection methodologies, such as outcome harvesting, which enable us to systematically track and validate important changes influenced by interventions. It is through this technique that we have been able to demonstrate shifts in stakeholder behavior, relationships, and practices that go beyond normal indicator tracking.

4. Annual Program Sustainability Assessments

Our MEL team further facilitates Annual Program Sustainability Assessments to evaluate the Education and Community Development Programs' progress towards our 'Sustainability Matrix & Exit Strategy'. We will also continue to collect data on our "sustained" partner schools to ensure that these schools and communities can continue to deliver quality education even after our exit. These reports then inform our future project plans.

5. External Program Evaluations

Finally, in line with the phases of our Program Implementation, So They Can also periodically engages external consultants to conduct Program Evaluation. This is typically done at Mid-Program and End-Program points, every three years. The purpose of these external evaluations is to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of So They Can's Program, and to provide valuable insight that is reflected in planning for the following three-year period.





Accountability, impact and So They Can's full accreditation with the Australian Government

Our full accreditation with the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) further strengthens our MEL practice and reinforces our commitment to transparency, effectiveness, efficiency, and delivering measurable impact in our partner communities. Our accreditation means that we operate within a rigorous framework of external oversight and accountability. It requires us to meet high standards across governance, financial management, risk, safeguarding, child protection, and program effectiveness, and we are subject to regular independent review and continuous monitoring. Less than 1% of Australia's 60,000+ charities have achieved full accreditation.

In August 2025, an Accreditation Officer from Australia, together with an Officer from the Australian High Commission in Nairobi, conducted an in-person monitoring of So They Can's projects in Kenya. The report commended our commitment to DFAT's key development pillars including disability inclusion, gender equality, collaboration and local partnerships. The monitoring report concluded that:

'So They Can's Education Program demonstrates value for money... [Their] adaptability ensures that funds are not only used efficiently but are also strategically targeted to maximise developmental impact'.

Participant-first MEL:

Throughout all stages of our MEL, we believe that it is vital to engage a diverse range of stakeholders, including children, to ensure their voices are heard, promote buy-in and motivate action. We aim to ensure that the processes and systems we employ for assessing our impact are culturally sensitive and accessible. This includes translation into locally spoken languages, sensitive structures (being mindful of other work/family/community commitments) and appropriate mediums (written, spoken and video).



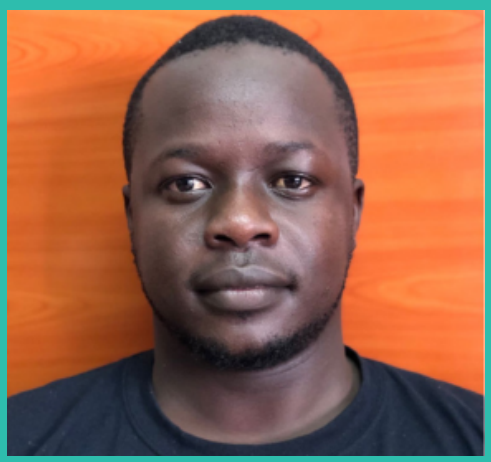
Meet our MEL Team:



Roy Kipchumba
MEL Manager, Kenya



Wilson Kaijage
MEL Manager, Tanzania



Dennis Cheboi
MEL Assistant, Kenya



Cesilia Ndashuka
MEL Officer, Tanzania



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