

so they can

Executive Summary

2026

On behalf of Cassandra Treadwell
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Australian Aid

*All figures in this Executive Summary are in AUD

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

56,000 children and 35,600 community members have directly benefited since 2009 through So They Can's direct partnership with 55 government schools and their communities in Kenya and Tanzania. In 2023, So They Can received full accreditation with the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), which means that So They Can delivers development projects on behalf of the Australian Government annually. It is a testament to So They Can's effectiveness and transparency in governance, operations and accountability.



The Education Crisis in Rural Communities

In Kenya and Tanzania, universal access to education is supported by the national Governments with fee-free primary and secondary education. The Government of Tanzania provides $3.60 and the Government of Kenya provides $26 per enrolled primary child, per year, direct to a school. However, funds are only provided if the school's enrolment is > 70 children and no funding is provided for pre-primary children. This mere contribution does not cover a school's annual operation costs, nor does it allow for critical infrastructure improvements or maintenance.

Due to these gross inadequacies of government funding for schools' operations and infrastructure, in reality, public primary schools can only operate with additional, community funding. However, in marginalised rural communities, where multidimensional poverty persists, parents rarely have additional income to support government schools. Ultimately, this means that the education system fails under this devastating cycle.

In response to this education crisis, So They Can was founded in 2009 to change the future of children and communities living in poverty in East Africa through education.



Our Approach
Our Impact

Evidence
Independent evaluations and DFAT's rigorous accreditation confirm that So They Can's model delivers measurable improvements in school attendance, retention, academic performance, transition rates and gender equality. Outcomes are consistent across multiple regions and over more than a decade of implementation.

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.

Scale
So They Can has already reached 56,000 children and 35,600 community members across 55 government schools. Government and community partnerships, in-country teams, and DFAT accreditation position our model for further scale.

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

Sustainability
Our 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.



So They Can's Sustainable Schools Development Model

So They Can's 3-phase Sustainable Development Model is embedded in public education systems in 3 targeted regions where education outcomes are lowest in Tanzania and Kenya. Through direct partnership with governments, schools and communities, we implement 2 core programs to improve education and development outcomes:

1: Education Program

Our Education Program consists of eight interlinked projects to improve the quality of education focused on: teacher training and development; student well-being (feeding programs, children's rights, keeping girls in school, access to water, hygiene and sanitation); development of school boards and management; community and stakeholder engagement; school infrastructure and resources; and quality Early Childhood Development.

2: Community Development Program

Our Community Development Program consists of four projects that address the less obvious but additional, complex barriers to education such as health, wellbeing and economic empowerment. These projects include: our Community Health, Women's Empowerment, Family Strengthening and Child & Youth Development projects.

From the outset, our model makes it clear to all strategic partners that So They Can's goal is to strengthen government schools and their surrounding communities over an eight year period by co-contributing infrastructure, resources, training, and advocacy. The outcome is that schools are able to independently sustain high-quality education when we exit. So They Can's partnerships and operations are led, and staffed by 100% nationals, based in our partner communities.

So They Can's holistic model addresses multidimensional poverty in a way that is culturally appropriate, sustainable and locally led. In doing so, we actively address 14 out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.





Impact to Date

- 56,000 children and their families in 55 government schools have directly benefited from So They Can's Education Program since 2009.
- 35,600 community members have directly benefited from So They Can's Education & Community Development Programs since 2015.
- Key education outcomes have improved for primary-school children in partner primary schools.
- There has been significant evidence of long-term and sustainable impact in complex measures of multidimensional poverty including: wellbeing, community development, and gender equality.
- 544 girls have been directly rescued from Female Genital Cutting and child marriage and enrolled in So They Can supported schools.
- So They Can was founded in 2009 and has grown to become a leading international NGO in Australia, Kenya, New Zealand, Tanzania, the UK and the US. A global network of 50+ paid employees, 200+ volunteers, 25 global Board Directors on 6 international Boards, and 16 high profile ambassadors contribute to our impact.
- Over 100 partners, and thousands of individual supporters, have invested over $45 million in So They Can's programs since 2009. Government, foundation, business, school and individual donors worldwide ensure that So They Can has a resilient, agile and diversified income.

Program Costs Per Participant

Our interactive maps show the locations of our partner schools within our 3 targeted regions:
So They Can Tanzania
So They Can Kenya.

So They Can operates in rural, hard-to-reach locations. Costs vary by region due to differences in remoteness and infrastructure.

Direct annual costs per participant in AUD	Babati, Tanzania	Nakuru, Kenya	Baringo, Kenya*
Primary school student (exclusive of Education Program school construction/renovation)	$23	$42	$67
Primary school student (inclusive of Education Program school construction/renovation)	$60	$62	$109

*Baringo's costs are higher because it is a semi-arid, remote region with limited infrastructure and difficult access, which increases transport, program delivery and construction expenses.

'With focused sustainability planning, strategic partnership, and steadfast commitment, So They Can is on track to leave an indelible and catalytic legacy. As a vanguard of the global movement for inclusive education, So They Can has both the opportunity and obligation to continually push the boundaries of what is possible when communities are empowered as agents of their own change.'

Quote from Independent Evaluator, Tanzania Program Evaluation Report (2019-2024).

So They Can Tanzania Spotlight: Increased Government Investment in Education Infrastructure

School Infrastructure in Primary Schools

So They Can's partnership-based model has led to increased allocation of government funds. From 2023-2025, an additional $515,889 was provided by the Tanzanian Government for critical school infrastructure in So They Can's partner schools.

Increased Community Co-Contribution for School Infrastructure

For all school infrastructure projects in Tanzania, school communities are required to co-contribute a minimum of 10% of the project build (usually with local building aggregates and volunteer labour). Parents' contributions have quadrupled since 2015, reflecting significant attitudinal and behavioural shifts within So They Can's partner school communities and a growing recognition of the value of education.

Investment in Mamire Teachers' College (MTC)

So They Can was founded in Tanzania in 2014 through an innovative public-private partnership to establish the MTC. Through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Education and So They Can the college was constructed and operationalised. 1,043 teachers have graduated with a 2-year Certificate of Teacher Training, or a 3-year Diploma in Primary Education to date. In addition, 211 graduates from the college have been placed as interns in So They Can's MTC 2-year internship program, in primary and secondary schools.

MTC consistently ranks as a top performing public teachers' college nationally. Over the 10-year partnership with the Tanzanian Ministry of Education, the Tanzanian government has nearly matched So They Can's investment, the government has spent over $700,000 on infrastructure for classrooms, student/teacher accommodation, toilets, a laboratory, a hall, and training materials. Following the phased hand-over of infrastructure throughout the partnership, So They Can formally ended its support of the MTC in 2022, exiting as per our 8-year development model. The Government of Tanzania continues to invest in capital expansion, operate and fund the institution and train competent, qualified teachers.



Designed for Scale

With further investment from partners looking to make an impact, our evidence-based model is ready to scale to more schools. So They Can holds Full Accreditation by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

So They Can received Base Accreditation with DFAT in 2019. This was further increased to Full Accreditation in 2023, awarded for the effectiveness of our sustainable development model and puts So They Can in the top 1% of Australia's 60,000+ charities. $4,485,676 has been granted to So They Can by the Australian Government between 2019 and 2025.

DFAT's rigorous accreditation assessment and ongoing monitoring and evaluation, assures prospective partners that their contribution will support systemic change through our sustainable development model. In practice, this means that prospective partners who are looking to invest for scale can leverage our full accreditation - donor funding unlocks increased DFAT funding to So They Can through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program.

Partnership for Scale

A $3.6 million investment will sustain all 43 government primary schools currently in So They Can's Education Program in Kenya and Tanzania. Every primary school will have: essential infrastructure including classrooms, toilets, girls' changing rooms, access to clean water and school farms for food security; competent teachers, trained to deliver curriculum-based education; and an engaged school community with School Management Boards, parents, children and community leaders who are equipped to lead, and sustain quality education beyond So They Can's exit.

A $7.2 million investment will scale our model to the 14 secondary schools in our partner communities, so that children can continue their educational journey and access quality secondary education through our proven holistic model.





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