

so they can

Executive Summary

Our Sustainability Model 2026

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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.

55,000 children and 35,600 community members have directly benefited since 2009 through So They Can's direct partnership with 57 government schools and their communities in Kenya and Tanzania. In 2023, So They Can received full accreditation from 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.



Why Sustainable Development Matters

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 AUD $3.60 and the Government of Kenya provides AUD $17 per enrolled child, per year, direct to a primary school. However, funds are only provided if the school's enrollment is greater than70 children and no funding is provided for pre-primary children. This mere contribution does not cover a school's annual learning and operational costs, nor does it allow for critical infrastructure improvements or maintenance.

In marginalised rural communities where multidimensional poverty persists, parents rarely have the additional income required to fill the funding gap. Government health facilities in these same rural communities are similarly under-resourced, requiring additional support to deliver quality primary healthcare services.

Sadly, it has been shown time and time again that when international development support is delivered through short-term projects or withdrawn prematurely, it often leaves communities no better placed to sustain change than they were before the partnership began. At So They Can, we challenge these outdated models of 'external, short-term aid'. Instead, our response to this reality is a partnership-based model that is structured and time-bound, with exit planned and agreed from the outset. Our partnership with governments and local communities includes primary and secondary schools, and health facilities, and is a co-investment that prioritises capacity strengthening and progressive handover. Our partnerships end only when the institution, its community and the local government can independently sustain the outcomes achieved well into the future - without external support.

How We Embed Sustainability

Locally-led delivery
So They Can's partnerships and operations are led and staffed by 100% nationals, based in the communities where we operate. Every solution is culturally appropriate, contextually informed, and embedded in local accountability structures.

Government partnership
Each partnership is anchored in formal engagement with the relevant Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and local authorities. This ensures that So They Can's work strengthens the public system rather than creating a private parallel system with little hope for long-term sustainability.

Co-investment, not donation.
Co-investment is what creates ownership. Effective lobbying for our partner schools and medical clinics results in increased government funding. Communities also co-contribute. In Tanzania, for example, there is a minimum of 10% co-contribution on infrastructure builds, plus parents' contributions to the feeding program, labour for school farms, and active participation in School Management Committees.

Clear sustainability indicators.
Every So They Can partner school and health facility is assessed against defined indicators as part of our rigorous Monitoring and Evaluation system. In schools, sustainability indicators are measured across infrastructure, feeding programs, school management, community engagement, child protection, income generation, and teacher capability for improved education outcomes. In health facilities, "exit" indicators are measured across infrastructure, equipment, staff and quality healthcare services to meet population needs. Facilities progress to the "Sustained phase" of our model only when these indicators are met.

Income generation.
Each partner institution is supported to establish at least one Income Generating Activity (IGA) for revenue after So They Can exits. In schools, this is typically through climate-smart farming at scale and by ensuring that all children have birth certificates to maximise capitation grants. Health facilities are similarly supported with an aim to establish revenue-generating activities appropriate to their context, such as clean water sales and income generating farms.

A clear exit strategy, with post-exit monitoring
SSustainability requires accountability on both sides of the partnership, formalised through signed agreements. After So They Can's financial support is withdrawn, performance is monitored for a further year before formal exit, and 5 more years on the board of governance post exit, confirming that the institution can stand on its own.

Our Sustainability Model in Schools

So They Can's Sustainability Model is embedded in public education systems in three targeted regions where education and development outcomes are lowest in Tanzania and Kenya. Led by our in-country teams, our model works in direct partnership with governments, schools and communities, and is structured around a 6-8 year sustainable development cycle:

Phase 1: Foundation School (Year 1)
In the "Foundation Phase", So They Can establish the minimum learning environment needed for sustainable progress. This includes classroom renovations, the provision of desks and water tanks, the formation or strengthening of the School Management Committee, the introduction of teaching and learning standards, and the activation of child safeguarding structures within the school and community. National and local government engagement is established at the outset, and barriers limiting girls' access to education are identified.

Phase 2: Core School (5–6 Years)
In the "Core Phase", So They Can strives to deepen its government and community co-investment.. The focus shifts to improving literacy, numeracy and digital literacy outcomes, building teacher capability, strengthening school management, increasing community ownership of school operations, and unlocking greater national and local government investment. Safe and inclusive school infrastructure is initiated and progressively expanded including additional classrooms, gender-disaggregated toilets with girls' changing facilities, reliable water and sanitation, and accessible learning spaces for children with disabilities.The school feeding program is initiated or strengthened, education outcomes improve, and child safeguarding becomes embedded school-wide.

Phase 3: Sustained School (Handover years 7-8 and 5 years post monitoring)
In the "Sustained Phase", the School Management Committee, teachers and community assume full responsibility for managing the school and maintaining the outcomes achieved during the Foundation and Core phases. Once this is verified, we formally exit the fully functioning government school, operated by its community and government. So They Can monitor for a further 5 years to confirm that governance, resourcing and quality are durably in place with ongoing review of the minutes from School Management Board meetings.



What School Sustainability Means
Measurable Indicators

Sustainability Area	What "Sustained" Looks Like at Exit
Infrastructure & Resources	Sufficient classrooms for the forecast student population, gender-disaggregated toilets including accessible toilets and girls' changing rooms, safe and reliable clean water sources, efficient cooking stoves, dormitories where required, and Information Computer Technology and teaching resources appropriate to the school context.
School Feeding	A school lunch feeding program that provides food and nutrition security, supported by parents and the community, and embedded as a permanent operational practice.
School Management	A School Management Committee appointed in line with government guidelines, meeting regularly with documented records, effectively managing infrastructure, finances, child protection and Income Generating Activities, and accountable to parents and community.
Parents & Community	High levels of parental participation, attendance at parents' meetings, active community ownership of school operations, and village-level child protection mechanisms.
Chid Protecton	Trained So They Can Champion Parents in every school community, gender parity in learning and leadership, and engaged student governance with student voices activated.
Income Generation	One sustainable Income Generating Activity, typically climate-smart farming, or an alternative co-funded activity, generating revenue that supports school operations beyond So They Can's exit.
Teachers	An active School Quality Assurance Committee, a functioning School Academic Committee, an operational peer teachers' network at school and ward level, integration of child protection into teaching practice, and an effective School Management Team.



Our Sustainability Model in Health Facilities

So They Can's Sustainability Model also extends beyond schools. In rural communities in Kenya where access to quality primary healthcare is limited, So They Can works as a key partner with selected government healthcare facilities to strengthen the delivery of essential health services as part of Community Development Program. Our Community Development Program sits alongside our Education Program, and is designed to tackle the additional barriers to education within communities - such as health.

As with our partner schools, the model is designed from the outset to reinforce the public system, build local capability, and to develop a facility, its staff and the surrounding community to ultimately be better equipped to sustain quality care independently.

How the Partnership Works

Government of Kenya

Holds overall responsibility for the facility, including coordination of healthcare services, provision of personnel and supplies (including medicines), establishment and enforcement of service standards, and Monitoring & Evaluation.

The Clinic

Attends to the day-to-day needs of the community by providing curative and preventive primary healthcare services to its patients.

So They Can

Provides targeted, time-bound support: medicines and consumables to supplement shortfalls in government supply, infrastructure improvements, and capacity building of the clinic's healthcare professionals and the Community Health Volunteers network. Medical camps are also conducted annually to reach remote community members.



Evidence of Sustained Exit
Abadere Ranges Primary School
Exited 2023

Opening its doors in 2010, Aberdere Ranges Primary School (ARPS) was So They Can's founding and flagship project. ARPS is the only project where we built and established an entirely new government school, made possible through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Kenya, for internally displaced Kenyan children. The experience has shaped our approach since, to partner directly with existing government schools, embedding our model within the national education system.

At the time of our exit in 2023, 1,790 children had accessed quality primary education since it opened in 2010. At this point of exit, we measured the school's progress against the pillars of our Sustainable Schools Framework to ensure it was ready to become "sustained" and exited from external support. What we found was a testament to the strength of our Education Program:

•1,000+ students (51% girls) enrolled from pre-primary to Standard 8.
• An effective School Management Committee who could competently use resources and engage with school management and governance.
• Significant parental engagement. A Parents' Committee had been successfully established, and was actively engaging in the school's operations, with increased understanding of child rights and protection.
• Student success, including high levels of attendance, retention (85%) and learning. There was gender parity in enrolment, and 71% scored 250+ in the Kenyan Certificate in Primary Education in 2023.
• Safe, inclusive school infrastructure with 29 classrooms, 13 administration facilities, a water borehole and community water kiosk supported by So They Can.

ARPS beyond our exit, in 2026:
• 100% of Grade 6 ARPS students approached or went above their learning expectations in the 2025 national exam.
• 97% of ARPS students in 2025 met expectations or went above their learning expectations in the 2025 national exam.
• Enrolment has also continued to increase - from 1,068 in 2023, to 1,285 in 2026.





Mamire Teachers' College Exited 2022

In 2012, schools in Endakiso and Mamire Wards were severely under-resourced in teachers, infrastructure and materials. Children were not achieving age-appropriate learning outcomes, and championed by So They Can, concerned parents and community members rallied together to donate 30 acres of land to build a teachers' college. In exchange, graduate teachers would work in the local primary and secondary schools.

A group of stakeholders led by So They Can, including the Ministry of Education, the communities of Endakiso and Mamire Wards, and the Babati Rotary Club, signed a Memorandum of Understanding, and construction of Mamire Teachers' College (MTC) began. It was a significant milestone, and the beginning of So They Can in Tanzania.

Since 2014, when the College was registered, 1,155 teachers have graduated with a 2-year Certificate of Teacher Training, or a 3-year Diploma in Primary Education. In 2016, So They Can introduced the MTC 2-year internship program for graduates: 233 have been placed in program-supported schools for valuable practical experience to boost their employability.

Over the 10-year partnership, the Government of Tanzania has invested over AUD $700,000 in infrastructure for classrooms, student and teacher accommodation, toilets, a laboratory, a hall, and training materials. The College has also been the site of a Demonstration Farm where 432 students and 170 community farmers have learnt how to establish and cultivate high-yield farms.

Following phased hand-over of infrastructure throughout the partnership, So They Can formally ended its support of the College. The Government of Tanzania continues to increase the infrastructure at MTC, operate and fund the institution and develop competent, qualified teachers.

This is what a sustainable exit looks like in international development.



New Canaan Health Clinic, Nakuru, Kenya
Exited 2021

In 2015, So They Can entered into a MoU with the Ministry of Health, Nakuru County, to support the New Canaan Health Clinic, a facility based in the middle of what was an Internally Displaced Persons camp serving more than 10,000 people.

Prior to the partnership, the clinic offered only basic curative services. With So They Can's support, services expanded to include family planning, ante-natal and post-natal care, child welfare and immunisations, laboratory services, HIV testing, and community follow-up, with prescribed medicines provided at no cost. By the time of So They Can's exit, the facility was treating approximately 2,000 patients every month.

The impact on the community has been significant, through reduced childhood mortality and illness.



Sew Women Can, Kenya
Handed over to women in 2021

Sew Women Can was established under So They Can's Women's Empowerment Program as a true social enterprise by elevating women through education, skills creation and employment opportunities to improve their lives and their families. An additional layer of the project, bibi&me, was a social impact brand showcasing artisan products handmade by more than 50 women working together in weaving cooperatives in rural Kenya.

In 2021, after six years of success, So They Can handed the business over to the women who had been trained, allowing them to run and grow it independently. Following our Sustainability Plan, the team is now empowered with both the sewing skills and the business itself, generating their own income, and creating new opportunities for their community.

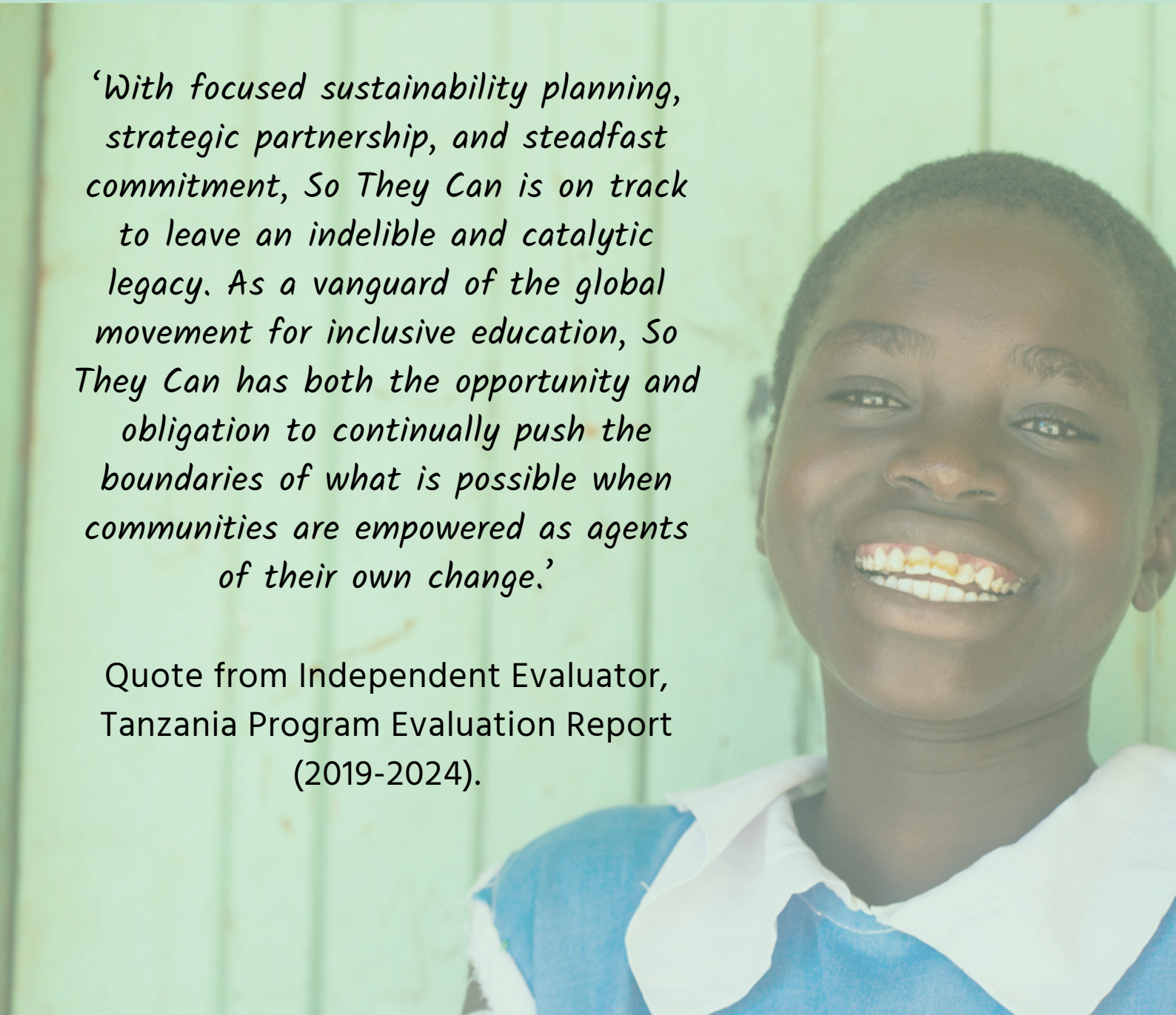
3 women are still engaged in the production of So They Can's NIA Dignity Packs, producing reusable sanitary pads for girls in our partner schools, as their livelihood.

Investment Pathways

With further investment from partners looking to make an impact, our evidence-based model is now ready to scale to more education and health facilities in need.

- **$AUD3.6 million will sustain all 43 government primary schools currently in So They Can's Education Program in Kenya and Tanzania through to full sustainable exit.**

- **$AUD7.2 million will scale our model to the 14 secondary schools in So They Can's partner communities, so that children can continue their educational journey and access quality secondary education through the same proven holistic approach.**



'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).



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