

# AN INTRODUCTION TO TRANSFORM



WE ARE NOT MAKING FAST  
ENOUGH PROGRESS TOWARDS  
THE UN'S SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT GOALS. THIS IS  
HOW A UNIQUE PUBLIC-PRIVATE  
PARTNERSHIP IS PRESSING THE  
ACCELERATOR PEDAL



# THE 17TH GOAL

**IN 2015, THE UNITED NATIONS UNVEILED 17 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) TO REPLACE THE MILLENNIUM GOALS THAT HAD SET THE AGENDA FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE FIRST PART OF THE 21ST CENTURY.**

The first 16 address the principal challenges facing a world where the climate is changing, inequality is rising and the prospects for billions of citizens are blighted by hunger, illness and little or no access to decent education or a fair judicial system.

The 17th goal stands out from the rest. It is entitled **Partnerships for the Goals**. The official description is: **Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development**. Perhaps it's simpler to see SDG17 in these terms. If the first 16 goals are all about what we need to achieve, 17 is about how we will set about achieving it.

SDG17, then, is a call for alignment and cooperation, between countries and between sectors. It also demands that private corporations and governments find new ways of working together – urgently. For these are not vague or Utopian aspirations, they are tasks to be completed by a deadline. That deadline is 2030.

It's against that background that TRANSFORM was created, also in 2015. It recognised there were (and are) urgent problems that required long-term, but rapid solutions; and that private entrepreneurs already working in low-income communities were the people best placed to provide them.

The 2000s also saw the rise of the business accelerator, first in the tech field, then beyond, as a response to changes in technology and consequent disruption to business models and consumer behaviour. That's relevant to TRANSFORM too, for accelerate is a word that hangs over the SDGs and the 17th goal in particular. **There is a palpable air of urgency about the 2015 goals. But what projects should we accelerate and how?**



Source: Zayohub

## 17TH

### PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

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# THREE PARTNERS AND A LOT OF CHALLENGES

**In 2015, Unilever's Sustainable Living Plan was making impressive progress in many, but by no means all areas. At the same time, the UK's Department for International Development, now the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), was exploring ways to increase their impact and return on investment.**

Together, Unilever and the FCDO resolved to create a new kind of public-private partnership. Both organisations believed that lasting change can come from market-based solutions – offered by those local entrepreneurs and the breakthrough ideas they were eager to turn into viable businesses. In 2018, EY joined that core team.

TRANSFORM would focus on meeting the needs of low-income households and supporting entrepreneurs who had little hope of attracting the support they needed from conventional financial institutions and venture capitalists.

With the combined support of the TRANSFORM partners, those businesses would be empowered to learn and scale quickly and be in shape to attract exponentially larger amounts of capital from other investors as they overcame the perilous early stages in their journey. Transitioning enterprises to scale is notoriously one of the hardest and riskiest points of intervention in the investment cycle. TRANSFORM wanted to de-risk the process.



The example of those enterprises – success stories and failures – could then be used in other territories by other donors, investors and entrepreneurs. That's how it's turned out. TRANSFORM uncovers valuable technologies and business models and co-creates routes to make enterprises financially viable at scale. It's a world where knowledge, technology and expertise are openly shared. TRANSFORM is an open-source project.

The impact enterprises we work with have relationships with multiple investors. They quickly noticed that there's another way in which TRANSFORM is different: investment is not passive. The £40 million collaboration blends funding with business support, with powerhouses Unilever and EY offering enterprises unique access to their local and global talent, expertise and value chains.



# THE PROGRAMME SO FAR



**TRANSFORM  
HAS  
SUPPORTED:**



**61 PROJECTS**



**ACROSS 13 COUNTRIES  
AROUND THE WORLD**

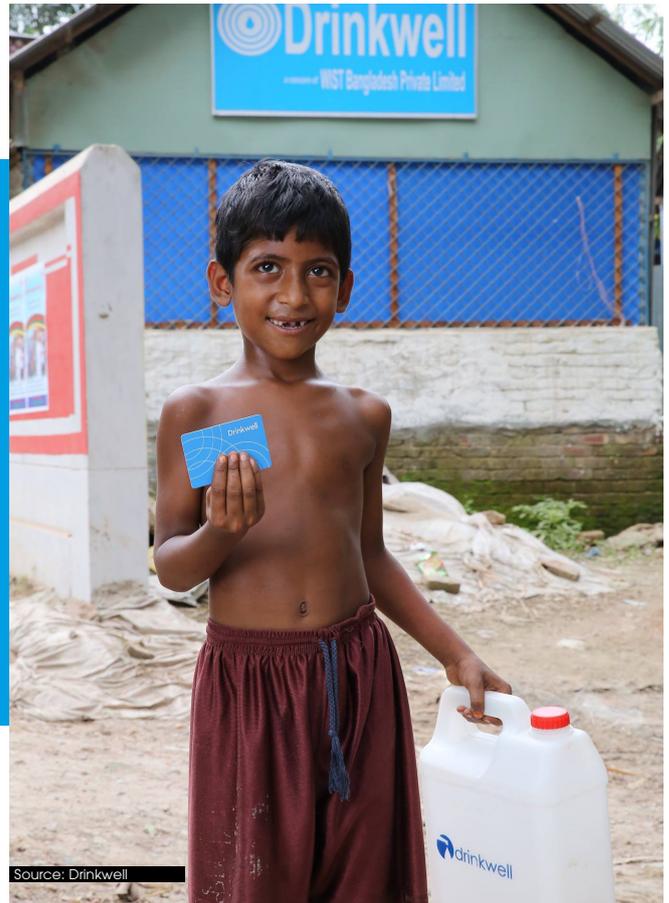


**IMPACTING THE LIVES OF  
OVER 6 MILLION PEOPLE**

# THE PROGRAMME SO FAR

**OVER THE PAST SIX YEARS, TRANSFORM HAS SUPPORTED 61 PROJECTS ACROSS 13 COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD, IMPACTING THE LIVES OF OVER 6 MILLION PEOPLE. BUT WHAT DOES THAT ACTUALLY LOOK LIKE?**

For **Drinkwell**, which operates Water ATMs in Bangladesh and India, operational metrics increased 15-fold as the number of people served grew from **50,000 to over 787,000**. Their 12-month revenues grew 5-fold, from **\$544k before TRANSFORM to \$2.75M** with support from the initiative.



Source: Drinkwell

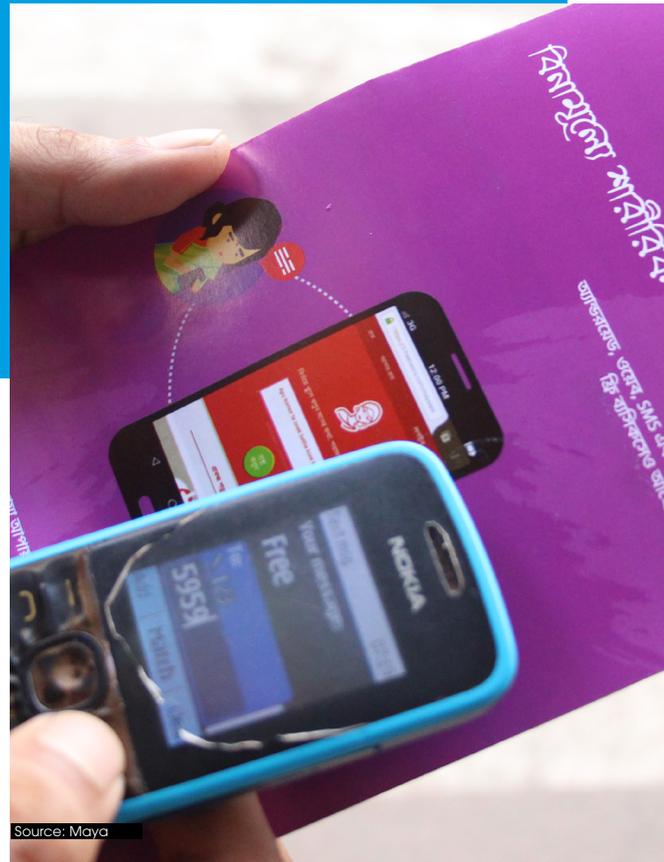


Source: Kasha

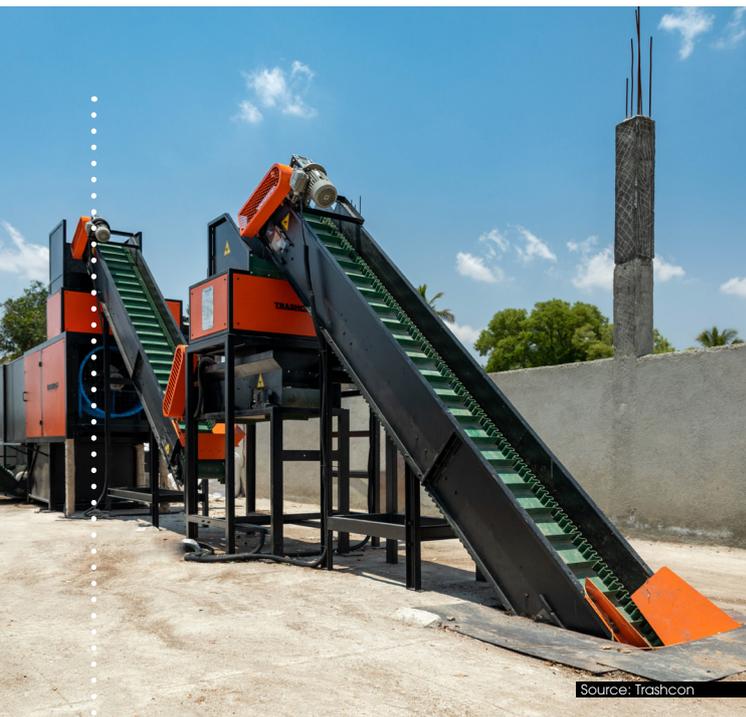
For **Kasha**, an e-commerce health and self-care platform for women in Rwanda and Kenya, it has become the leading FemTech in Africa and is experiencing **5x year-on-year revenue growth** as a result of TRANSFORM.

# THE PROGRAMME SO FAR

For **Maya**, which began as a text-based health consultation service for women in Bangladesh, it's transitioning into a well-being platform that provides health and mental health information and support. During the pandemic, they went from selling 200 subscriptions a month to over 1,500, and recently raised **\$2.2m** for regional expansion. With support from TRANSFORM, they have had **1 million female beneficiaries** and have served over 10,000+ garment workers through their hotline.



Source: Maya



Source: Trashcon

For **TrashCon**, it's inventing the world's first completely automated waste sorting and recycling technology in India, converting tons of mixed waste into recycled plastic, biofuel and multi-purpose furniture boards. They scaled from **2 tons/day to 200 tons/day** with TRANSFORM's support in just a few months. The very first year they started selling, TrashCon made **\$1 million** in revenue and are due to close a **\$2.5 million** round of funding in December 2021.

The reports in the [flagship report series](#) are full of stories like these.

Both the TRANSFORM-supported enterprises and core partners have learnt a lot: which is why we wanted to publish these valuable lessons and insights, sharing stories about what has worked and what hasn't. We want to foster more peer-to-peer learning within the impact entrepreneur community, and inspire more co-operation between governments and private businesses.

**To us, that's what SDG17 means.**



# WHAT NEXT?

The current global environment for investment is a very different place to 2015. 'ESG' and 'CSR' are no longer small, fringe departments, leftfield investment vehicles or a token page or two in an annual report: companies' fortunes and futures are being decided on how effectively they align with the missions encapsulated in the SDGs.

The huge rise in ESG investing offers an increased opportunity to scale the kind of innovations TRANSFORM champions. But investors need data and insight to commit. TRANSFORM works with partners to provide that evidence and insights into huge markets which for too long have been marginalised, underserved – and under-researched – by business and government.

Growth isn't enough – in fact, as some of our enterprises have discovered, rapid growth can bring with it **a lot of difficulties. Some of them may pose an existential threat to the business.** We look for enterprises to be financially viable at scale and replicable.



TRANSFORM is now entering the next phase with the ambition, by 2025, to expand our scale and our impact. We are looking for new partners to join us to tackle the world's issues more effectively.

We'll be stepping up our digital engagement with partners and enterprise communities through our TRANSFORM collaboration platform and extending our partner, enterprise and geographic reach.

**If you are an impact investor, ecosystem enabler or corporate, and if you are in the acceleration business, then read these reports and tell us what you think. Better still, act: apply for funds, suggest ways you can partner with us or ask how you can reuse and adapt the products, services and processes we describe [here](#).**



**It's a competitive world. But we will only beat the clock if we compete together.**



TRANSFORM is a joint initiative between Unilever, the FCDO and EY. Established in 2015, it works to accelerate impact enterprises, blending funding and support to deliver market-based solutions to the world's biggest development challenges. TRANSFORM uses its capabilities and expertise in marketing, distribution, digital, and business resilience to deliver transformative market-based solutions to low-income households in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia that last. For more information on TRANSFORM, visit our [website](#), and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).



The UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office pursues the UK's national interests and projects the UK as a force for good in the world. It promotes the interests of British citizens, safeguards the UK's security, defends its values, reduces poverty and tackles global challenges with its international partners. For more information please visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-development-office>, and follow us on Twitter [@FCDOGovUK](#) and [@FCDOResearch](#).

This initiative has been funded by UK aid from the UK government; however the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.



Unilever is one of the world's leading suppliers of Beauty & Personal Care, Home Care, and Foods & Refreshment products, with sales in over 190 countries and products used by 2.5 billion people every day. We have 149,000 employees and around 400 brands found in homes all over the world.

Our vision is to be the global leader in sustainable business and to demonstrate how our purpose-led, future-fit business model drives superior performance. The Unilever Compass, our sustainable business strategy, is set out to help us deliver superior performance and drive sustainable and responsible growth, while: improving the health of the planet; improving people's health, confidence and wellbeing; and contributing to a fairer and more socially inclusive world.

While there is still more to do, we are proud to have been recognised in 2020 as a sector leader in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index and - for the tenth-consecutive year - as the top ranked company in the 2020 GlobeScan/SustainAbility Sustainability Leaders survey. For more information about Unilever and our brands, please visit [www.unilever.com](http://www.unilever.com).



#### **EY | Building a better working world**

EY exists to build a better working world, helping to create long-term value for clients, people and society and build trust in the capital markets.

Enabled by data and technology, diverse EY teams in over 150 countries provide trust through assurance and help clients grow, transform and operate.

Working across assurance, consulting, law, strategy, tax and transactions, EY teams ask better questions to find new answers for the complex issues facing our world today.

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#### **About EY Ripples**

The global EY Ripples program aims to positively impact one billion lives by 2030. EY people, together with clients and other like-minded organizations, use their skills, knowledge and experience to bring positive change across three focus areas: supporting the next generation workforce, working with impact entrepreneurs and accelerating environmental sustainability. Learn more at [ey.com/eyripples](http://ey.com/eyripples).