



WHY  
WE  
EXIST

TO CREATE A WORLD IN  
WHICH NO ONE IS LIMITED  
BY THEIR CIRCUMSTANCE



unreasonable  
institute

Learning and Impact, 2010 – 2014

Photo courtesy of Eneza Education, a 2013  
Unreasonable Global venture improving  
education in rural Africa. [enezaeducation.com](http://enezaeducation.com)



A photograph showing three people in blue shirts and caps installing solar panels on a corrugated metal roof. One person is on a ladder, while two others are on the roof. The building has a reddish-brown wall. The sky is blue with some clouds.

## OUR MISSION

TO GIVE ENTREPRENEURS  
TACKLING THE WORLD'S  
GREATEST CHALLENGES  
AN UNFAIR ADVANTAGE

## WHAT WE DO

We work tirelessly to get entrepreneurs the clarity, people, and capital they need to scale their impact.

## WHERE WE'VE BEEN

We've spent the past five years perfecting our flagship, 5-week Unreasonable Institute in Boulder, Colorado. We select the most promising entrepreneurs tackling the world's greatest social and environmental challenges, bring them together under one roof, and surround them with custom-matched teams of world-class mentors, access to values-aligned funders, and tailor-made coaching and curriculum to grow their ventures.

Photo courtesy of Greenlink Energy, a 2014 Unreasonable Global venture transforming schools and health facilities in Africa through solar installations. [greenlink.solar](https://greenlink.solar)

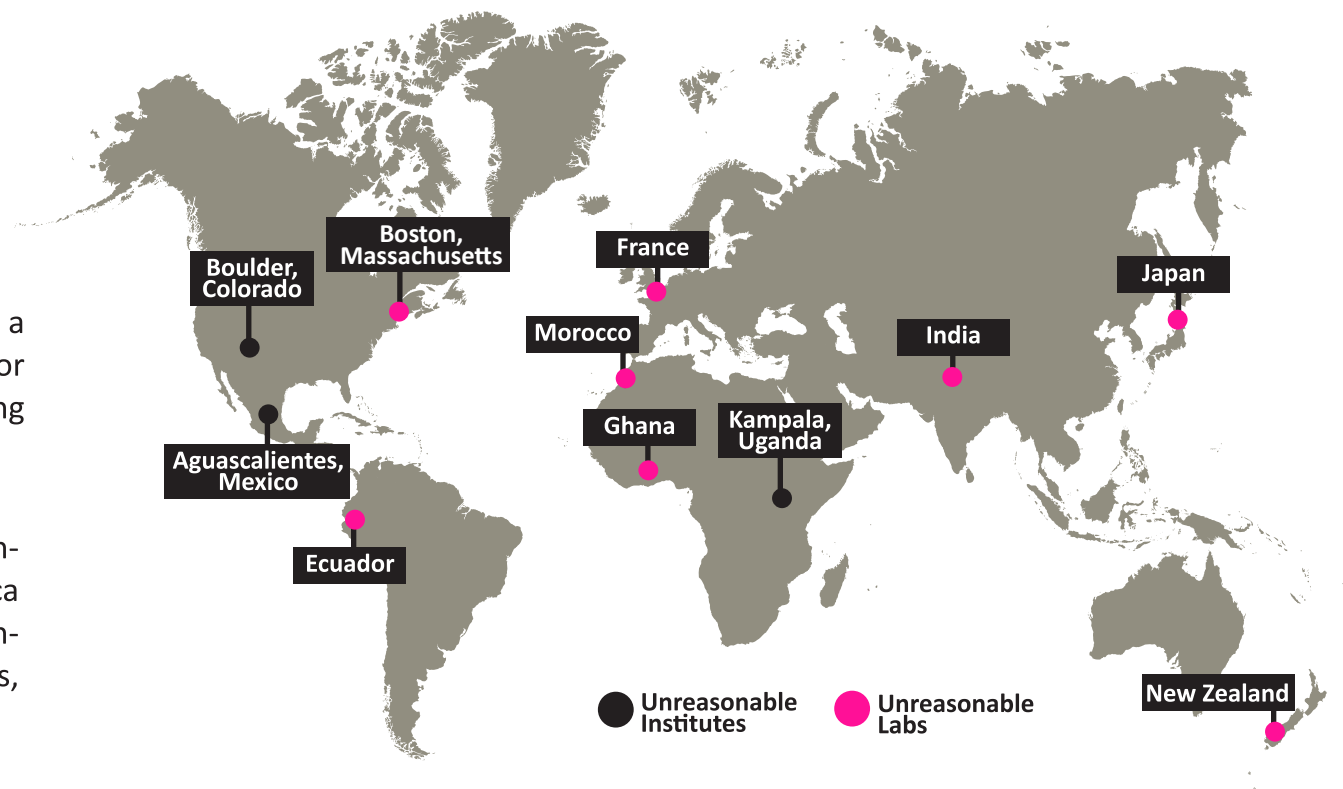
## WHERE WE ARE TODAY

We've learned a lot about how to create a deep, lasting Unreasonable advantage for entrepreneurs; now we are empowering others to do the same.

In 2014, we launched two new Unreasonable Institutes: Unreasonable East Africa (UEA) in Kampala, Uganda, and Unreasonable Mexico (UMX), in Aguascalientes, Mexico.

To increase our rate of learning and experimentation, in 2015 we are launching Unreasonable Labs, 5-day mini-Institutes addressing critical needs for early-stage ventures.

This year, we will run 10 Unreasonable Labs, in locations including India, Japan, Morocco, Ghana, New Zealand, and the U.S. Out of the Unreasonable Lab locations, we will select 3-4 new geographies for full-fledged Unreasonable Institutes.



## WHERE WE'RE GOING

Our aim is to help create sustainable, thriving entrepreneurial ecosystems around the world, providing entrepreneurs with the support they need to tackle the world's greatest challenges. We believe that the best way to do this is to empower local entrepreneurs, mentors, and funders to work together to solve critical local problems. To get there, we are going to launch Unreasonable Institutes, run by local teams, around the world. Our goal is to create 100 Institutes in 100 countries.



## WHAT WE VALUE

### HUMILITY

Treat everyone like  
the Messiah

### TRUTHFULNESS

Be militantly transparent

### COURAGE

Lean into fear

### EXPERIMENTATION

Be agile

### IMPACT

Do what works

### EXECUTION

Get sh\*t done

### CELEBRATION

Remember to dance



Photo courtesy of Village Energy Limited, a  
2012 Unreasonable East Africa venture  
building a network of franchised rural solar  
technicians in Uganda.

[new.villageenergyuganda.com](http://new.villageenergyuganda.com)



## ABOUT THIS REPORT

We have long wanted to do a better job of measuring the impact that the Unreasonable Institute creates for the entrepreneurs and ventures that participate in our programs.

We are thrilled to announce that, over the past year, we have invested in designing and implementing a new impact assessment system that will allow us to regularly collect data from our entrepreneurs, better understand the impact we are creating, and continuously improve our programs. Please note that the data in this report reflects only ventures that participated in Unreasonable Global in Boulder, Colorado, from 2010-2014, and only the time period through December 31, 2014. We have begun data collection from the 23 ventures that participated in UEA and UMX in 2014 and look forward to sharing that information in future reports.

## METHODOLOGY

Of the 93 ventures that have participated in Unreasonable Global, 82 (88%) completed the impact assessment survey. Of these, 75 ventures (91%) are still active, and 66 entrepreneurs (80%) are still employed with their Unreasonable venture. Unless otherwise noted, details on funding, revenues and team size reflect those ventures and entrepreneurs.



Photo courtesy of Kingo Energy, a 2012 Unreasonable Global venture providing sustainable solar energy services to off-the-grid communities in Guatemala.  
[kingoenergy.com](http://kingoenergy.com)

# OUR APPROACH TO IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Photo courtesy of Yellow Leaf Hammocks, a 2014 Unreasonable Global venture empowering hill-tribe communities in Thailand through job creation. [yellowleafhammocks.com](http://yellowleafhammocks.com)



## FOCUS ON LEARNING

Our primary objective is learning, so that we can increase our impact. We want to know what's working, what's not, and what we should change. We measure impact so that we can continually improve our programs, better serve our entrepreneurs, and advance our mission.

## CONTRIBUTION, NOT ATTRIBUTION

We know better than anyone that our entrepreneurs' success is the result of their own blood, sweat, and tears. We do not attempt to claim that any specific portion of that success is attributable to Unreasonable, but rather are content to know that we contributed in some small way.

## BAKED-IN IMPACT

We select ventures whose business models and impact models are intrinsically linked. In other words, for every dollar they make, they also create social and/or environmental impact. Therefore, we can feel confident that revenue growth, while imperfect, can serve as an indicator for scaling impact.

## VENTURES ARE UNICORNS

All of our ventures are unique, and given the breadth of start-ups we work with - across geographies and sectors - we typically do not aggregate impact metrics. We believe that this can lead to measuring "lowest common denominator impact" and doesn't truly reflect the goals and ambitions of our ventures. We do, however, ask our ventures to share with us how they track their impact, and measure growth in those metrics over time.

## NO ONE APPROACH TELLS THE WHOLE STORY

We track growth metrics over time to better understand the extent to which our ventures are scaling, and if their growth was accelerated after the Institute. We also capture stories of impact to better understand the critical nuances that can't be captured quantitatively. And to better understand how valuable the Unreasonable experience was, and the extent to which that value lasts over time, we simply ask our entrepreneurs to tell us.

None of these approaches by itself tells the whole story - and there is always lots more we can do to better measure our impact - but taken together, they give us a pretty good sense of how our ventures are doing and the role that Unreasonable has played in their growth.





Photo courtesy of Kingo Energy, a 2012 Unreasonable Global venture providing sustainable solar energy services to off-the-grid communities in Guatemala.  
[kingoenergy.com](http://kingoenergy.com)

# UNREASONABLE GLOBAL AT-A-GLANCE

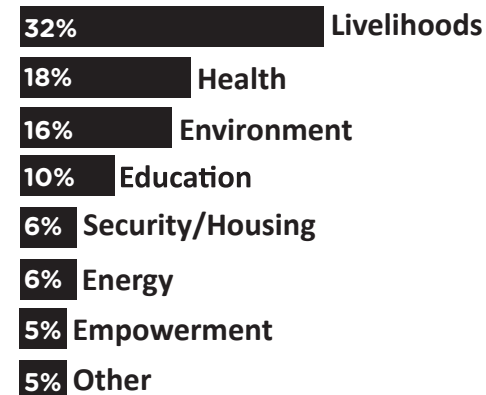
→ **93** ventures have participated in the Global Institute, creating impact in **59** countries

## VENTURES BY YEAR

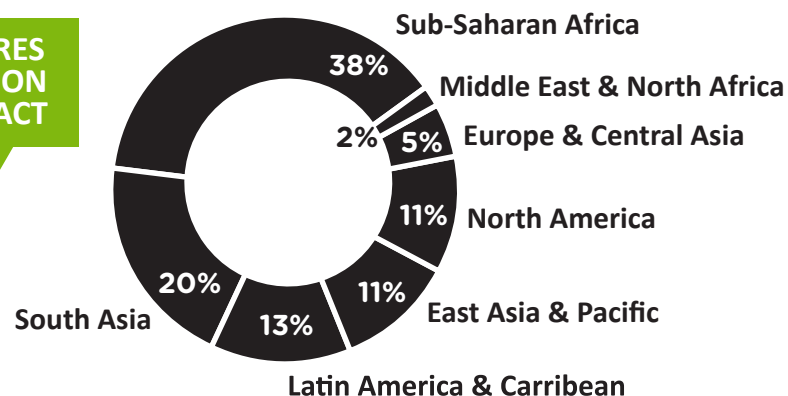


Our Institute class size has shrunk over time, as we have increasingly focused on customizing the experience for each venture.

## VENTURES BY SECTOR



## VENTURES BY REGION OF IMPACT



**WE  
HAVE...**

**186**  
active  
mentors

**543**  
active  
funders

**219**  
partners who  
help us find  
the best  
entrepreneurs

**11K**  
email  
newsletter  
recipients

**30K**  
Twitter  
followers

**22K**  
Facebook  
fans

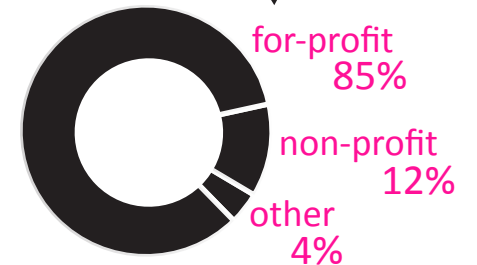


Photo courtesy of 17 Triggers, a 2013 Unreasonable Global venture applying marketing to help people live healthier, happier lives. [17triggers.com](http://17triggers.com)

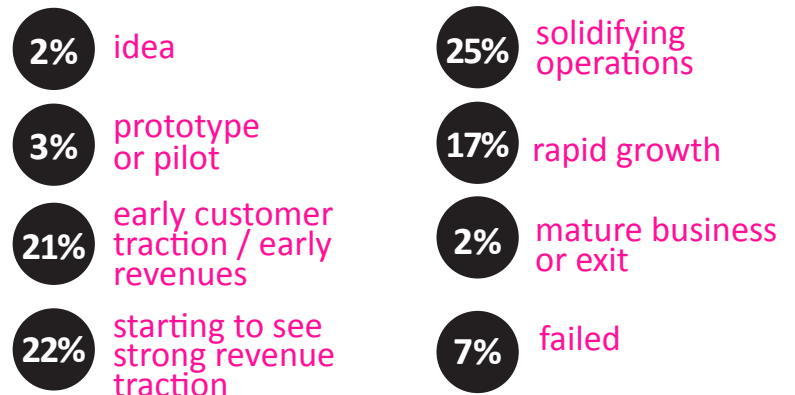
# OUR UNREASONABLE VENTURES



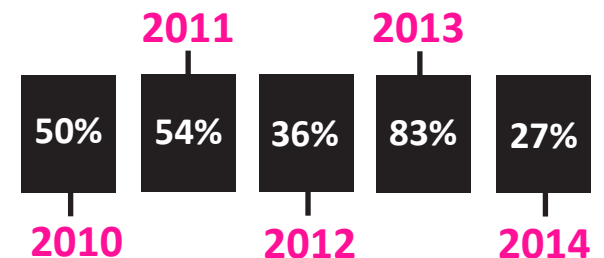
## ACTIVE VENTURES BY LEGAL STATUS



## VENTURES BY CURRENT STAGE



**52%**  
OF VENTURES  
WITH AT LEAST ONE  
**FEMALE  
CO-FOUNDER**





# VENTURE FUNDING & GROWTH

→ **93%** have raised funding, totaling over **\$72M**  
of ventures since the Institute

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Equity	\$27.6M
Debt	\$27.5M
Philanthropy	\$15.7M

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AVERAGE GROWTH IN REVENUES

1.8x	one year after the Institute
9.7x	after two years!

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Average growth in funding

**7.2x**

one year after the Institute

Average growth in team size

**5.6x**

two years after the Institute



Photo courtesy of Yellow Leaf Hammocks, a 2014 Unreasonable Global venture empowering hill-tribe communities in Thailand through job creation.  
[yellowleafhammocks.com](http://yellowleafhammocks.com)

# SCALE OF IMPACT

OVER  
**8M**

LIVES  
BENEFITTED

VENTURES  
CURRENTLY  
EMPLOY OVER

**2,900**  
PEOPLE

(Full time, part time and  
seasonal employees, not  
including founders)

## WHERE OUR VENTURES CREATE IMPACT

### Sub-Saharan Africa

Benin – 1 venture  
Botswana – 1  
Burkina Faso – 1  
Burundi – 2  
Cameroon – 2  
Cent. African Rep. – 1  
Chad – 1  
Congo (DRC) – 2  
Congo – 1  
Côte d' Ivoire – 1  
Eritrea – 1  
Ethiopia – 1  
Gabon – 1  
Gambia – 3  
Ghana – 1  
Guinea-Bissau – 1  
Kenya – 8

Liberia – 3  
Madagascar – 1  
Malawi – 1  
Mali – 2  
Mozambique – 1  
Niger – 1  
Nigeria – 3  
Rwanda – 1  
Senegal – 1  
South Africa – 1  
Sudan – 1  
Swaziland – 1  
Tanzania – 1  
Togo – 1  
Uganda – 5  
Zambia – 1  
Zimbabwe – 2

### East Asian + Pacific

Australia – 1  
Cambodia – 1  
Dem. Rep. Korea – 1  
Mongolia – 1  
Papua New Guinea – 2  
Philippines – 1  
Thailand – 1  
Vanuatu – 1

### Europe + Central Asia

Italy – 1  
United Kingdom – 1  
Russia – 1  
Slovenia – 1

### Latin America + Caribbean

Belize – 1  
Brazil – 1  
Colombia – 1  
Guatemala – 3  
Honduras – 2  
Mexico – 3  
Peru – 2

### Middle East + North Africa

Egypt – 1

### South Asia

India – 9  
Pakistan – 2  
Sri Lanka – 1

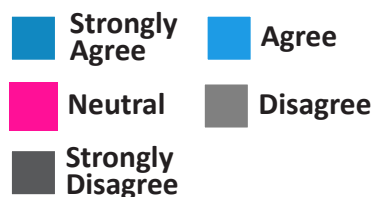
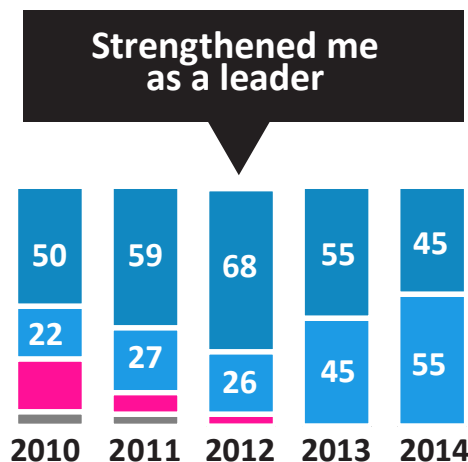
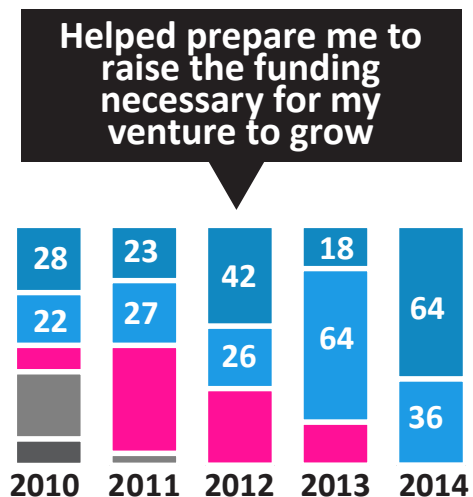
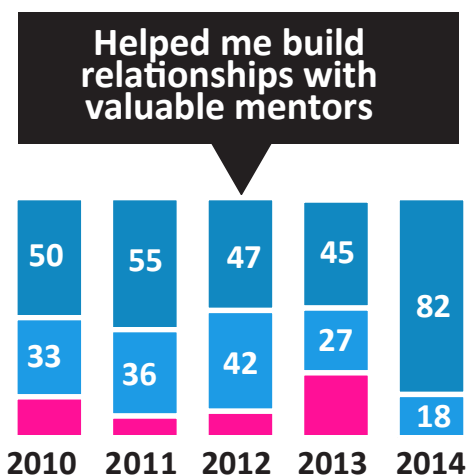
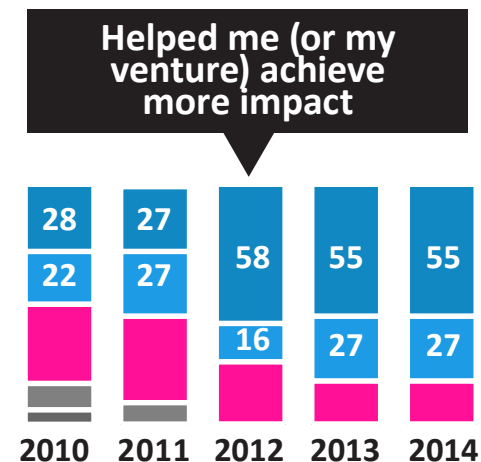
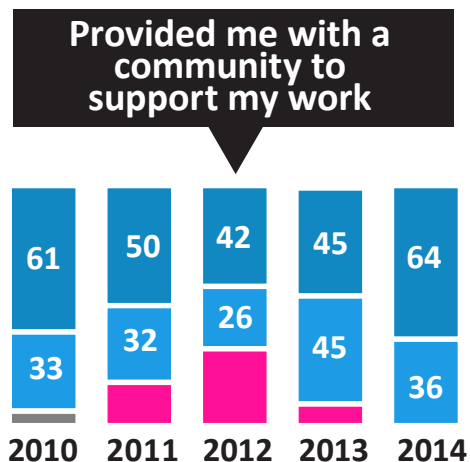
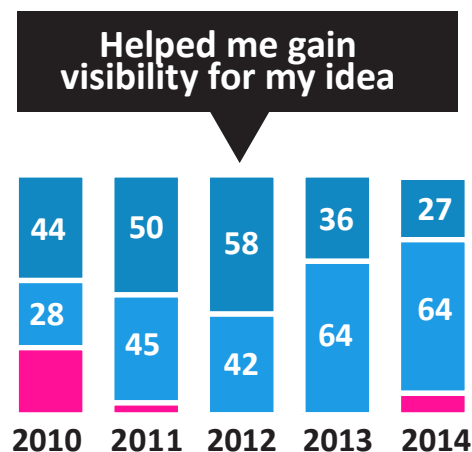
### North America

United States – 7



# THE UNREASONABLE EXPERIENCE...

We want to know how valuable the Unreasonable Institute was for our entrepreneurs - so we asked them. Going forward, we will continue to ask these same questions, every year, to our new classes of entrepreneurs, so that we can track the extent to which the advantage we provide lasts over time.



Our goal is for 100%...

of our ventures to report that the Unreasonable Institute profoundly empowered them through each of these key elements of our program. We're not there yet, but are encouraged that our performance has consistently improved year-over-year as we've applied learning and adjusted accordingly.

**75%**

of entrepreneurs

are still in touch  
with the mentors  
introduced to  
them at the  
Unreasonable  
Institute

**60%**

of entrepreneurs

report that a  
connection or  
introduction from  
someone they met  
through the  
Unreasonable Institute  
directly resulted in  
their venture securing  
funding

**98%**

of entrepreneurs

are still in touch  
with members of  
the Unreasonable  
community

**86%**

of entrepreneurs

(and 100% of the  
class of 2014) report  
that the skills they  
learned or practiced  
at the Institute  
empowered them to  
identify and build  
relationships with  
new mentors

**84%**

of entrepreneurs

(and 100% of the class  
of 2014) report that  
the skills and  
resources provided by  
the Unreasonable  
Institute empowered  
them to identify and  
connect with funders  
on their own

**95%**

of entrepreneurs

have recommended  
the Unreasonable  
Institute to a fellow  
entrepreneur

Photo courtesy of Greenlink  
Energy, a 2014 Unreasonable  
Global venture transforming  
schools and health facilities  
in Africa through solar  
installations. [greenlink.solar](http://greenlink.solar)





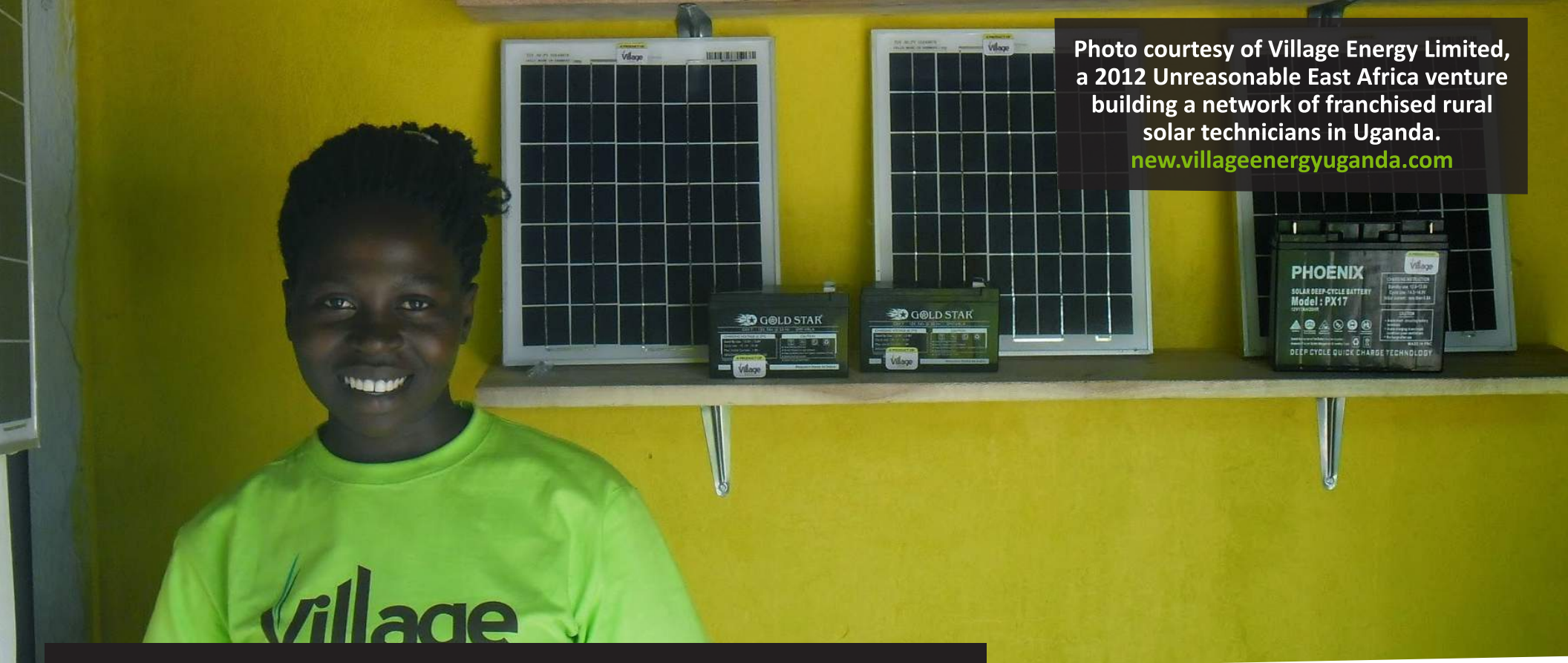


Photo courtesy of Village Energy Limited, a 2012 Unreasonable East Africa venture building a network of franchised rural solar technicians in Uganda.  
[new.villageenergyuganda.com](http://new.villageenergyuganda.com)

## The Limitations of Our Impact Data...

While we are incredibly excited that the data we've collected allows us to learn more than ever before about how we can better serve our ventures, we also want to acknowledge the limitations of the metrics we are tracking. We know that numbers will never tell the whole story. For instance, calculating growth in revenues, funding, and team size is helpful for us to understand the rate at

which our companies are scaling. However, averaging year-by-year growth for early-stage start-ups, which are by their very nature volatile, can be misleading. Likewise, we report aggregate lives benefited to provide a sense of the scope of impact that Unreasonable companies are creating, but also recognize that this one number cannot account for the differences in depth of impact reported by our ventures;

transparent in acknowledging the role some "lives affected" represent truly life-saving or life-altering impact, whereas others may represent shallower encounters. Finally, we want to be transparent in acknowledging the role of "outliers" in high-level reporting. For instance, our ventures collectively have raised over \$72 million in funding, but

\$41 million of that was raised by 2010 venture Mosaic (which is why we have chosen not to report average funding raised per venture, as the figure would not be representative of an "average" venture's experience). All this to say, we are proud of the progress we have made in better assessing our impact, but recognize that there is still a long way to go!





# STORIES OF IMPACT

Numbers alone can't fully represent the impact Unreasonable has on our entrepreneurs. So we are gathering their stories, listening for where they were before attending the Institute, how we helped them overcome challenges and scale their ventures, where they are today, and where they're going in the future. We are proud to share two such stories here; for more case studies, please check out

[unreasonableinstitute.org/  
stories-of-impact](https://unreasonableinstitute.org/stories-of-impact)

Photo courtesy of MANA Nutrition, a 2013 Unreasonable Global venture curing children of severe acute malnutrition. [mananutrition.org](https://mananutrition.org)



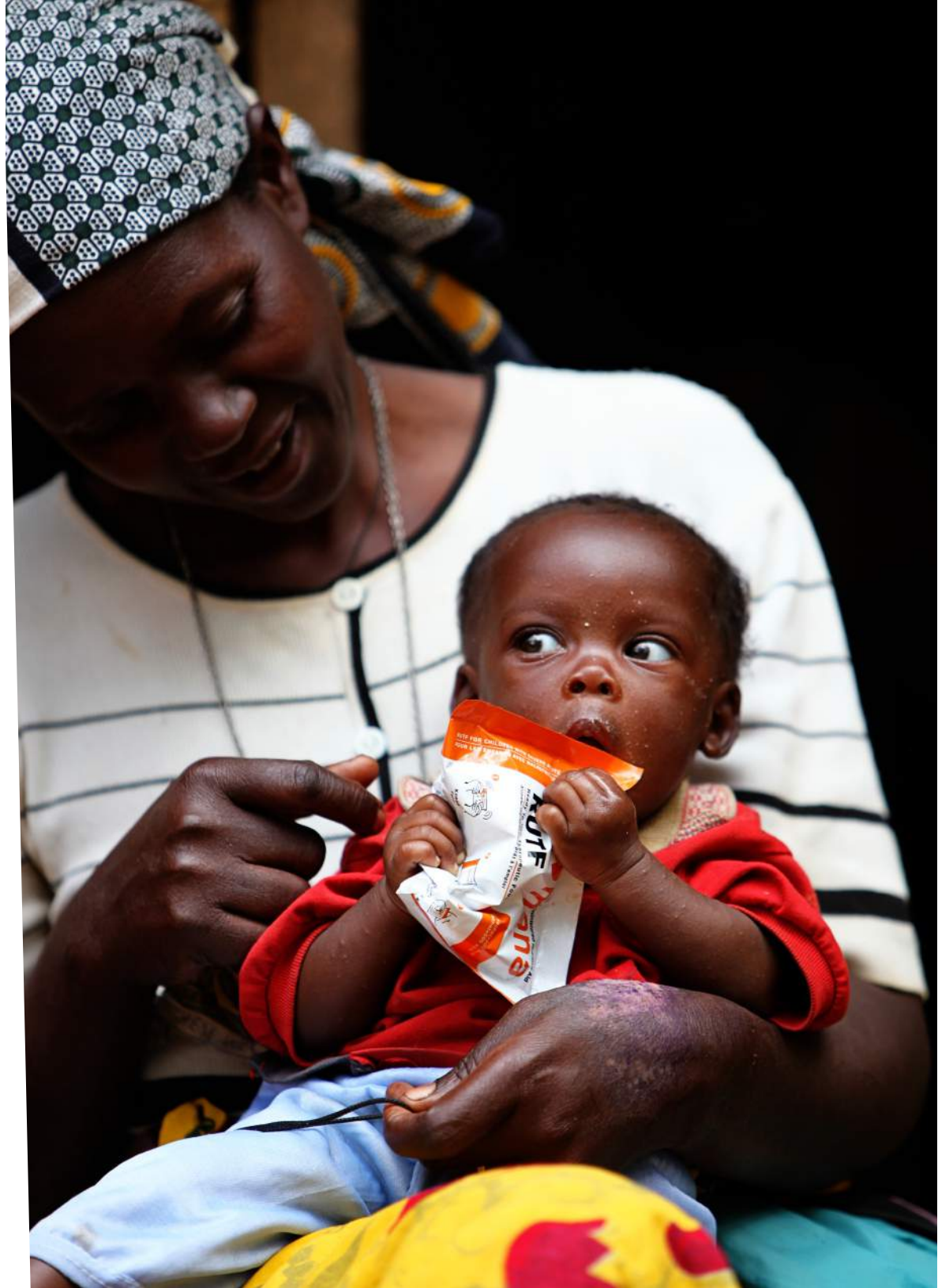
# MANA NUTRITION

MANA Nutrition is on a mission to cure children of severe acute malnutrition.

A 12-week treatment of their nutrient-enriched peanut butter can forever cure 95% of kids. When co-founders Mark Moore and Troy Hickerson attended the Unreasonable Institute in 2013, they were already changing lives by delivering nutrition-enriched peanut butter packets to over 300,000 kids around the world. But MANA was bottlenecked by aid budgets and needed to devise an independent business model that could reach millions more children.

So they came to Unreasonable Institute with a new idea: The Calorie Cloud, a technology platform that would convert the calories burned by physical activity on one side of the world into life-saving food for undernourished kids on the other. Through the Calorie Cloud, people in the US would be able to track the number of calories they burn; MANA's partners would then sponsor the equivalent number of calories to be distributed to malnourished kids via peanut butter packets. It was a bold idea.

But could it work?



**With a little help from  
Unreasonable, MANA is turning the  
Calorie Cloud vision into reality!**

- Unreasonable Mentor Kevin Starr, Executive Director of Mulago Foundation, provided MANA Nutrition with \$50,000 of “figure it out money” to experiment with their new model.
- Unreasonable Mentor Vamsi Sistla connected MANA to JP Morgan Chase, who granted MANA \$500,000, helped code the Calorie Cloud platform, and advised MANA on developing their offering for additional corporate sponsors.
- Unreasonable Mentor Rick Sterling, founder of the global branding consultancy Sterling Rice Group, joined MANA’s board and enlisted his whole company in prototyping the Calorie Cloud. He also opened up Sterling Rice Group’s massive network of Fortune 100 corporations to MANA.
- Unreasonable Mentor Rajesh Anandan, Senior Vice President of Strategic Partnerships at UNICEF-USA, became a close advisor and facilitated a joint venture between MANA and UNICEF. As a result of the partnership, UNICEF provided MANA with nearly \$300,000 in funding.



Today, MANA has cured over 1 million children of severe acute malnutrition and delivers 500,000 packets of their peanut butter to children in need every single day.

With the guidance and connections of Unreasonable mentors, MANA secured \$850,000 in funding, built the Calorie Cloud technology platform, prototyped a new partnership structure, and launched a joint venture with UNICEF with the goal of getting one million more malnourished children nutrient-enriched peanut butter.





## SOLIDARIUM

Solidarium was born from the vision to link the 8.5 million artisans in Brazil with larger markets for their handmade products

When founder Tiago Dalvi came to the Unreasonable Institute in 2011, he needed a whole new strategy for taking his company from the offline world and bringing it online. As he says, “We knew we had to change and create something different or else the company would fail.”

While at the Institute, Unreasonable mentors and connections helped Tiago reshape Solidarium into what it is today: the fastest-growing marketplace for handmade products in Brazil.

- Unreasonable mentors Fred Vernack (Chief Investment Officer, Institute for Innovative Training), Daryn Dodson (Venture Consultant to the Board of Directors, Calvert Funds) and Adriana Halloran (founding member of Halloran Philanthropies) helped develop a new strategy and business model.
- Unreasonable connected Tiago to Walmart US, who introduced him to Walmart Brazil. Tiago credits that introduction with planting the seed for his new business model. Through that connection, the former CEO of Walmart Brazil, Flavio Dias, has become a close advisor, investor, and Board member of Solidarium.
- Tiago got to know Adriana Halloran at the Institute, and she quickly became a close advisor and supporter. Immediately following the Institute, Halloran Philanthropies invested \$75,000 in Solidarium, a grant that was “vital to get the marketplace model off the ground.”
- Unreasonable introduced Tiago to Ashoka and eBay, who shortly after the Institute awarded him a prize accompanied by a grant of \$50,000 that helped enable Solidarium to launch the first version of its online platform.

Today, Solidarium attracts more than 3 million page views every month, with more than 25,000 artisan sellers and 60,000 products listed on the platform.



They have also formed commercial agreements with all the top retailers in Brazil, including Walmart, Lojas Renner (JC Penney), Tok Stok (Ikea), and Mercado Livre. Solidarium attracts almost 2,500 new artisans every month, most of whom double their income within six months and become the main breadwinners for their family. In the next five years, Tiago aims to reach at least 1 million artisans, and replicate the Solidarium business model in other countries.



Every day, we ask ourselves two questions:

1. What does it mean to provide a lasting unreasonable advantage for an entrepreneur?
2. And how can we best deliver it?

# WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

We've experimented boldly to answer these questions, and each year's Institute has represented a fresh attempt to do better.

We've learned a ton over the past five years, and want to share that learning with entrepreneurs, mentors, funders, other accelerator programs, and anyone else committed to solving the greatest social challenges of our time through entrepreneurship.

Photo courtesy of EFK Group, a 2014 Unreasonable East Africa venture producing energy and agriculture products in a no-waste process using the Croton nut. [ecofuelskenya.com](http://ecofuelskenya.com)







## SELECTION MATTERS MOST

We can get everything else right, but if we select the wrong entrepreneurs, our impact will be limited. Selecting entrepreneurs with the potential to create substantial impact at scale, who will truly create path-bending change in the issue they seek to address, is remarkably challenging. But over the years we've seen some common characteristics among our most successful entrepreneurs. These are the traits that we now evaluate for in our selection process.

### DEEPLY FAMILIAR WITH THE PROBLEM AND DEEPLY COMMITTED TO SOLVING IT

Mosaic, for example, which has now raised \$41 million by creating a “Kickstarter for solar energy,” was founded by an entrepreneur who had been committed to solar energy projects for over 10 years. Eco-Fuel Africa, which provides green charcoal to over 100,000 people in Uganda, was founded by an entrepreneur who grew up personally affected by the problem he is now solving.

### CAPABLE OF RIGOROUS THINKING

Rigorous thinking requires a healthy amount of self-skepticism and a perpetual willingness to question your own assumptions in the quest for the truth. The best entrepreneurs we've seen are the ones who are constantly re-evaluating, seeking improvement, and formulating a convincing path to the impossible.

### RESOURCE MAGNETIC

The strongest entrepreneurs are able to mobilize people and resources, even when they have little traction. This isn't about personal charisma, but rather about deep integrity paired with an ability to help people understand why a problem must be solved.

### STRONGLY ALIGNED WITH CO-FOUNDERS

The number one reason for failure in the ventures we've worked with is conflict between co-founders. The best entrepreneurs have the ability to have hard conversations with their co-founders and teammates, grounded from a place of deep respect and trust in one another's commitment to solving the problem.



Photo courtesy of 17 Triggers, a 2013 Unreasonable Global venture applying marketing to help people live healthier, happier lives. [17triggers.com](http://17triggers.com)



Photo courtesy of MANA Nutrition, a 2013 Unreasonable Global venture curing children of severe acute malnutrition. [mananutrition.org](http://mananutrition.org)



2

## ABOVE ALL, GOOD ENTREPRENEURS NEED GOOD PEOPLE TO SUPPORT THEM

We have seen that entrepreneurs need three key things: (1) clarity, (2) people, and (3) capital. But in our experience, the most important of these is people. The right people bring processes, structures, expertise, and insights that help achieve clarity. And they inspire confidence in funders, who above all bet on teams. So our number one priority in

providing entrepreneurs with an unreasonable advantage is to help them build lasting relationships with the right people – people who can help them overcome their challenges and succeed. And we've optimized the Unreasonable Institute to do just that. We rigorously diagnose the needs of our entrepreneurs and recruit mentors who have

expertise in addressing those specific needs. We train our entrepreneurs to effectively engage mentors and create trusting bonds that lead to lasting relationships. We train our mentors on how to provide meaningful support to entrepreneurs. That's what we've found has the most profound effect on the growth and success of our ventures.



3

## OUR SWEET SPOT IS EARLY-STAGE VENTURES THAT ARE POST-PROTOTYPE AND POST-REVENUE, BUT PRE-PROFIT AND PRE-MAJOR FUNDING

It's at this exploratory stage when a startup is still building its foundation where we're best able to add value. At this stage, we can most profoundly affect the future trajectory of a startup. It's also at this stage that we find entrepreneurs most value our mentorship model and building a lasting network of partners and peers.

Photos courtesy of (left to right):  
Solidarium, 17 Triggers and  
Greenlink Energy

4

## COMMUNITY IS CRITICAL

As much as entrepreneurship is a struggle of creativity and innovation, we've come to believe that is an emotional struggle above all else. The entrepreneurs who succeed are the ones who persist, despite setbacks and deep moments of doubt. They are the ones who hear "no," feel deflated, but then pick themselves up and keep moving. And that is extremely difficult to do without a community of peers who are going through the same struggles, and who believe in you. While it may seem soft and squishy, providing a lasting community is one of the most important benefits we provide for entrepreneurs. It's why 98% of our entrepreneurs are still in touch with the Unreasonable community.



5

## WE NEED TO LOCALIZE

Given the extent to which our model rests on building lasting relationships and lasting community, we have to build strong, sustainable ecosystems of support where our entrepreneurs are based. We have to be able to deliver them mentors, funders, and community in the markets in which they work. That's why we're now focusing on localizing the Unreasonable Institute. It's why we launched Unreasonable East Africa and Unreasonable Mexico. And it's why we are now launching Unreasonable Labs, with the hopes of establishing additional Institutes around the world. Not only will this approach allow us to reach vastly more high-potential entrepreneurs, but it will also allow us to provide the depth of ongoing support they need to grow and scale their ventures.





A huge thank you to all our incredible Unreasonable entrepreneurs, not only for doing the hard work of tackling the world's greatest challenges, but for their willingness to share their data, struggles, and successes with us. Thank you to our generous mentors, funders, and partners, who magnify the impact of our entrepreneurs every day. And thank you to designer Zoë Banks for the beautiful design of this report. If you have any questions, ideas, suggestions, or want to know more, please contact our VP of Impact & Partnerships, Leigh Fiske, at [leigh@unreasonableinstitute.org](mailto:leigh@unreasonableinstitute.org).

## NOW BACK TO WORK...

While we are excited and encouraged by the impact we've helped create so far, we know we still have a long way to go to create the full impact we set out to achieve. Thank you for helping us celebrate successes along the way and continue striving to improve.  
And now back to work!



**unreasonable**  
institute

Photo courtesy of Kingo Energy, a 2012 Unreasonable Global venture providing sustainable solar energy services to off-the-grid communities in Guatemala. [kingoenergy.com](http://kingoenergy.com). [kingoenergy.com](http://kingoenergy.com)