Strategic Plan

2025-2029

www.brightercommunities.org

Brighter Communities Worldwide

CREATING BETTER FUTURES

Contents

Leaving no one behind

In 2015, the Governments of the world adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030. These universal goals set out to 'leave no one behind', and since their inception, we have worked with communities and other stakeholders in East Africa to contribute to these goals.

In 2024, less than one-fifth of the 17 SDG Goals were on track with Covid-19, conflict, climate change and geopolitical tensions impacting progress across the world. These global issues are also having a direct impact on the communities we work with. The UN Secretary General has declared '"we must not let up on our 2030 promise to end poverty, protect the planet and leave no one behind"[1]. At Brighter Communities Worldwide, we firmly believe this.

Looking ahead

We live in a rapidly changing, unpredictable and increasingly unequal world. Whilst demographic shifts, technological advances and rapid economic and social change create opportunities for many, they also perpetuate inequalities, especially for those who live on the margins.

The unpredictability of the last few years also seems set to continue. The growing incidence of shocks and stress, not least due to the impacts of climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic, are undermining hard-won development gains. In the absence of safety nets, many households are returned to poverty.

We have seen progress

Despite challenges, there have been significant improvements in the lives of communities in the more than 20 years we have been working in East Africa. As outlined in our 20 Year Impact Report[2]:

- Health systems are stronger and more people have access to healthcare
- Communicable diseases have reduced
- More families have increased levels of income
- Children born today are healthier than those born in 2002
- Mothers and babies have a greater chance of survival
- More girls are completing their education
- Communities are stronger as a result

We have evidence that our approach works: now is the time to strengthen and sustain our engagement in order to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.

There are inadequate jobs and livelihood prospects to meet the expectations of a younger, better educated population who are critical of power holders and frustrated by the pace of change. These conditions heighten the potential for instability and social unrest.

In this context, individuals often resort to negative coping strategies. Harmful beliefs, practices and social norms hurt the most vulnerable, exacerbating the barriers and inequalities faced, especially by women and girls. Meaningful progress is hampered by weak accountability, corruption and poor governance.

Knowing that these uncertainties persist means we are focusing on building resilience in communities – focusing on the most vulnerable including women, children and youth – in order that they may be better able to respond.

1 https://unsdg.un.org/latest/stories/2024-sdg-report-global-progress-alarmingly-insufficient
2 https://www.brightercommunities.org/20-years-of-shining-a-light-on-inequality

Our vision for the next five years

This strategic plan sets out how we will work with communities and our partners in the five years leading up to the 2030 milestone for the SDGs. We have worked closely with our stakeholders in Kenya and Ireland to identify and prioritise the key actions we will take together to improve lives.

We will work together to deliver outcomes that:

- Address the root causes of inequality and discrimination;

- Build resilience to respond to external shocks;

- Focus on the most vulnerable – so that no one is left behind;

- Strengthen and sustain Brighter Communities Worldwide so that it can continue to deliver for communities.

How we will do this

Brighter Communities Worldwide is locally led with people and communities at our core. We listen and respond to needs in a holistic and practical way. Over two decades we have built relationships and trust, standing with communities through difficult times and times of celebration.

We are committed to a more sustainable future, and through the next five years and beyond, will build the capacity, capability and strength of Brighter Communities Worldwide. In turn, we can more effectively work with our partners to address local needs, while empowering communities to tackle the systemic challenges that drive inequality.

Dr Betty Langat
Chair, Brighter Communities Worldwide, Kenya

Ms Linden Edgell
Chair, Brighter Communities Worldwide, Ireland

Mr Martin Ballantyne
CEO, Brighter Communities Worldwide

Who we are, where we work, what we do

Brighter Communities Worldwide works in partnership to build resilience, enrich lives and help create equitable and sustainable futures for individuals and their communities.

We are a partnership comprised of Brighter Communities Worldwide Kenya, a registered NGO and Brighter Communities Worldwide Ireland, a registered charity: Two organisations united around a shared vision, mission, values and strategy. This plan captures how the two organisations will work together to deliver results in communities in Kenya.

Since our inception in 2002, we have expanded and developed our programmes and now work across the six sub-counties of Kericho County in Kenya, with a population of almost one million, and have shared our approach and expertise with communities in other parts of East Africa.

In partnership with local communities we deliver programmes that focus on health, education and economic empowerment, prioritising the most marginalised and excluded and empowering individuals and communities to be authors of their own development.

Our role is to catalyse change. This involves:

- Partnering with government institutions and service providers, facilitating their work and strengthening capacity to deliver;

- Directly implementing community-based programmes in partnership with local actors, where needs arise and gaps are identified;

- Linking institutions and individuals in Ireland and Kenya, sharing expertise and building meaningful connections around shared values;

- Testing out new approaches, catalysing development and fostering collaboration amongst local actors;

- Advocating for change, influencing systems and practices and amplifying the voices of those we work with.

Making a difference – contributing to sustainable change

Mother and child health

A baby born in Londiani in 2002 would most likely have been born at home in the village. At that time, less than 10% of mothers delivered their babies in health facilities. Many mothers died at home. The likelihood of the child being vaccinated would depend on how accessible the local health facility was.

Twenty years later, if that same child was born in Londiani, there would be a much higher chance of them being born safely – now over 50% of mothers deliver in health facilities. There is a higher chance of the child celebrating their 5th birthday (under-5 mortality of 1 in 32 today from 1 in 9 in 2002). Today more than 70% of children are vaccinated (24% increase) before the age of 5 due to education and the accessibility of health services.

Family health

In 2002, households had limited access to clean water and inadequate latrines exposed the child to cholera, diarrhoea and malaria. Women and girls walked miles daily to collect wood and water causing them to miss days of school. Women's health suffered from cooking over open fires causing lung disease, eye infections and severe burns.

Today, there is a significant increase in access to clean and safe water (from 48% in 2021 to 65% in 2024 across Community Units), a 31% increase in latrine coverage across the region, a reduction in malaria and improved health overall including a 92% reduction in respiratory illness.

Brighter Communities Worldwide's key achievements in community development:

79
community units

We supported the establishment of 79 community units, providing 385,479 community members with access to a strengthened healthcare system.

139,209
people

139,209 people living in remote areas have accessed health services through Brighter Communities Worldwide-supported outreach clinics.

10,025
smokeless stoves

We installed 10,025 smokeless stoves improving health and hygiene at household level, freeing women from the burden of collecting firewood and reducing the environmental impact this causes.

432
schools

We worked with 432 schools across the region helping to make the school environment healthier and safer for 144,749 children and encouraging improved school attendance, especially for girls.

2,825
young people

2,825 young people benefited from our scholarship programme, supporting them to complete their education.

34,000
women and girls

We provided sustainable, reusable sanitary kits to more than 34,000 women and girls.

25,134
boys and girls

We provided Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) education to 25,134 boys and girls across communities, improving their knowledge and confidence – breaking the silence on sensitive topics.

28,000
girls empowered

We empowered more than 28,000 girls to raise their voices against Female Genital Cutting (FGC) and to reject Gender-based Violence (GBV).

113
local groups

We provided more than 113 local groups with resources to engage in new business opportunities, benefiting 1,940 men and women and improving their standards of living.

1,975
volunteers

Over the last three years, we cultivated a network of 1,975 volunteers (847 men and 1,128 women), strengthening community ownership and sustainability in all areas of our work.

Strategic Plan 2019-2024: Reflecting on progress

In developing this new strategy, Brighter Communities Worldwide undertook a detailed review and reflection on its previous phase of work, articulating key strategic achievements, what enables us to deliver, and what we can build on, or change, to continue to succeed.

Key strategic achievements

1. **We successfully expanded our programmes** across the six sub-counties of Kericho County, building on experience gained during the pandemic, responding to demand from communities and stakeholders and evolving our model based on community feedback and lessons learned over many years of working in Kipkelion East and West.

2. **We responded swiftly and effectively to crises** and unexpected events which severely challenged the communities and service providers that we work with – including Covid-19, a major accident in Londiani, extreme weather events – demonstrating our commitment and strengthening our position as a key, trusted actor across the county.

3. **We deepened our work on gender inequality and inclusion**, supporting communities to challenge and reappraise conventional gender roles that often underpin gender inequalities and the exclusion of women and girls. Through the engagement of men and boys in our programmes we now see them accompanying women to antenatal clinic visits, assuming roles in the fight against Female Genital Cutting (FGC) and getting involved in Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) and menstrual health management activities. We demonstrated the importance of promoting inclusion through the participation of People Living with Disability in our programmes, helping to reduce stigma and increase opportunity. We worked effectively with government to identify the furthest behind or at-risk communities and to respond to their needs.

4. **We engaged more deeply and effectively in policy fora**, strengthened external communications and internal systems and policies. We fully adhered to governance, ethical and compliance practices for the Charity sector in Ireland and contributed to the development of new standards.

What enabled strong progress?

Relationships and networks built over many years.

Brighter Communities Worldwide is trusted by communities, government institutions and leaders as it has stayed the course, actively responding to crises and emerging needs, and proven to be consistently community driven. Its comparative advantage is its foundations in, and understanding of, local context and culture.

Commitment to building self-sustainability.

Our community-centred approach allows stakeholders to define their challenges and propose their own solutions to the identified challenges. This approach aims at building self-sufficiency and optimising use of local resources.

An operational structure that combines staff and a broad network of volunteers.

Cultivated over many years, this volunteer network enhances the efficiency and impact of our work. The combination of staff and volunteers creates a multiplier effect, giving Brighter Communities Worldwide the ability to reach deep in to communities as well as to broaden our reach to new communities. Our volunteer network – in Ireland and in Kenya – has been key to us successfully extending our work, including our Covid-19 response efforts.

A collaborative way of working with government.

Our programmes are aligned to government policies and systems; new programmes are co-created with government; and we work in partnership at each stage of programme implementation.

Brighter Communities Worldwide has privileged access to routine health data and receives regular information from communities, through formal and informal channels. These fast feedback loops strengthen our capacity for adaptation, allowing programmes to pivot and respond to emerging needs.

Team spirit and values.

At the heart of Brighter Communities Worldwide's success is a can-do team spirit and a commitment to the values that drive the organisation. Community interests remain staunchly at the heart of the work and staff motivation.

Income generation.

Income generation in Ireland has successfully adapted to a changing context, with a move to more online fundraising and realisation of new funding partners. This enabled us to successfully navigate income challenges that arose as a consequence of Covid-19. Additionally, we have expanded our donor base and engaged with new institutional donors.
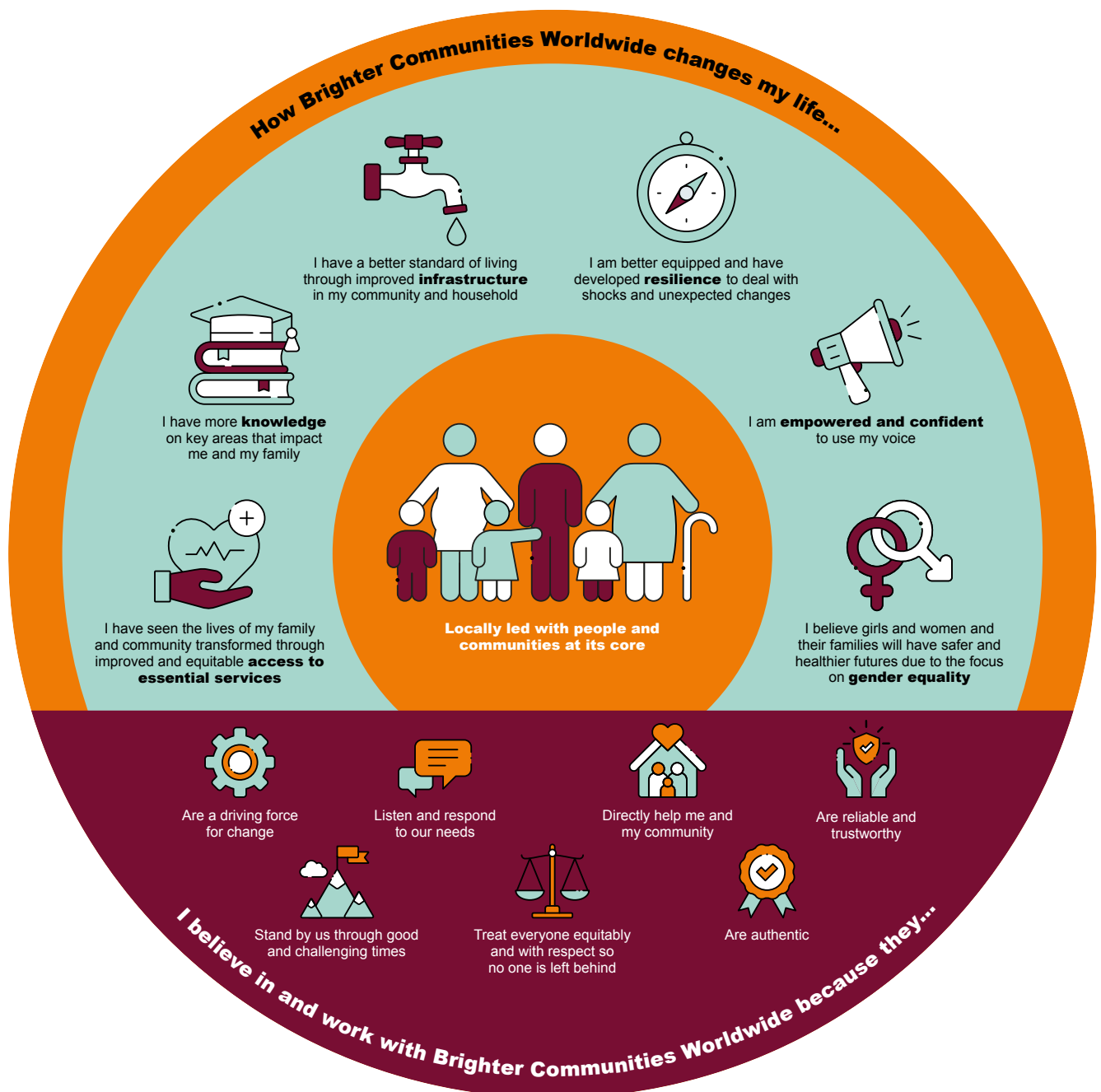
Barriers to progress

Our work was certainly not immune to challenges and the process of developing our new strategic plan provided a timely opportunity for us to identify the key strategic challenges encountered and to consider the barriers to progress that we will address as we move forward:

- **Expansion across the county has created logistical challenges** and a strain on resources as we work to meet high demand for our work and expectations from communities and stakeholders.

- **Prioritising the hard to reach and most marginalised** creates additional demands on the team and resources as we strive to meet the needs of specific groups, such as people living with disability, female-headed households or out of school youth.

- **Unanticipated contextual developments**, including policy change, political instability and the spiralling cost of living challenged our delivery models and created additional pressures on the communities and stakeholders that we work with. This challenged the ability of communities to give their time voluntarily and raised expectations relating to compensation.

- **The need to pivot quickly to respond to shocks**, such as Covid-19, localised natural disasters, road traffic accidents and food insecurity, required investment in skills training, diversion of development resources to humanitarian action and contingency planning.

- **Progress on gender inequalities** and in addressing harmful social norms is slow and constantly deterred by stigma, taboos and stereotypes that persist within society.

- **Sustaining change within partner institutions** is challenging, especially given regular movement of key personnel.

- **County level coordination** remains a challenge and this impedes opportunities for more synergistic approaches by different actors.

- **The fundraising context** has been demanding and the goal of expanding our fundraising base within Kenya has not been realised.

- **Our office location and infrastructure** in Kenya is inadequate to meet the needs of expanded programme delivery.

Sustainable, local development

Brighter Communities Worldwide has developed a unique approach to working within communities to deliver sustainable, local development. Our model is defined by the communities that we serve, reflecting their experience of what is important and their commitment to working with us to transform lives. We have captured their voices here:

How Brighter Communities Worldwide changes my life...

I have a better standard of living through improved **infrastructure** in my community and household

I am better equipped and have developed **resilience** to deal with shocks and unexpected changes

I have more **knowledge** on key areas that impact me and my family

I am **empowered and confident** to use my voice

I have seen the lives of my family and community transformed through improved and equitable **access to essential services**

Locally led with people and communities at its core

I believe girls and women and their families will have safer and healthier futures due to the focus on **gender equality**

Are a driving force for change

Listen and respond to our needs

Directly help me and my community

Are reliable and trustworthy

Stand by us through good and challenging times

Treat everyone equitably and with respect so no one is left behind

Are authentic

I believe in and work with Brighter Communities Worldwide because they...

What we stand for

Our **vision**

A world where strong, healthy communities can thrive, building sustainable livelihoods and brighter futures.

Our **mission**

Our mission is to work in partnership to build resilience, enrich lives and help create equitable and sustainable futures for individuals and their communities.

The **values** that guide our work

Integrity: We are an organisation built on integrity and good governance with a track record for delivery.

Passion: We work passionately in all that we do to realise our vision across communities.

Togetherness: We stand side-by-side with the communities we serve; we are committed to partnerships founded on respect and reciprocity.

The **principles** that shape the way we work

Locally led, community-driven: Our programmes are community-driven and designed to put local actors in the lead, strengthen local systems and respond to needs identified by communities themselves. We believe that local actors are best placed to drive decisions on their own development.

Accountability and transparency: We are committed to the highest standards of accountability and transparency in all aspects of our work

Inclusivity: We seek to promote human rights, equality and inclusion in all that we do, prioritising the weakest and most marginalised across our work.

Volunteerism: We are committed to fostering volunteerism in all areas of our work, as a strategy to drive sustainable change and to foster global citizenship.

The world we live in

In developing this strategy, we analysed the changing context in which we operate, and its implications for what we do, the way we work and the people we work with. We examined four global megatrends[1] and their likely effects including rapid technological developments, demography, environmental pressures and shifting power.

We are living through a period of global turbulence, shaped by the following key developments:

- High population growth and a 'youth bulge' in Africa, putting severe pressure on services, jobs, housing, infrastructure and natural resources.

- Climate change and loss of biodiversity and the growing tension this creates for water, land and food resources. It is predicted that agricultural production will decrease on the African continent compounding issues of chronic food and nutrition security.

- New and deepened challenges to health systems, aggravated by global and regional public health and disease threats and complex climate change and health interconnections.

- Widening inequality and an increased number of conflicts and humanitarian crises, triggering acute levels of human suffering, humanitarian need, displacement and migration.

- Political shifts and disinformation, fuelling ultra-nationalism, distrust of public authorities and institutions and negative sentiments around refugees and migrants.

- A backlash on women's rights and democratic freedoms, driving back gains made over decades, from reproductive rights to women's representation.

- Shifting patterns of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA), with an increasing share of resources allocated to conflict, crisis response and responding to illegal migration, and a declining share towards long-term development assistance.

Guiding policies

Our work is aligned to the following key policies in Ireland:

Ireland's Foreign Policy:
The Global Island and Ireland's International Development Policy: A Better World, with a focus on delivering for the furthest behind first.

Ireland's Strategy for Africa that aims to deepen and strengthen Ireland's political, economic and cultural relationships with Africa, including through people-to-people and institutional linkages.

Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy that seeks to support the public to explore how global issues interlink with their everyday lives and how we can act, individually and collectively, to build a better world.

Our work is also aligned to the Kenyan Long term Development Plan and relevant sector and cross-cutting policies.

1 https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/global-megatrends-mapping-the-forces-that-affect-us-all-620942/

SDG dashboards and trends, Kenya 2024[3]

■ Major challenges	■ Significant challenges	■ Challenges remain
■ SDG achieved	■ Information unavailable	
↓ Decreasing	→ Stagnating	↗ Moderately improving
↑ On track or maintaining SDG achievement	● Information unavailable	

Note: The full title of each SDG is available here: https://sdgs.un.org

Kenya

Whilst Kenya[1] has enjoyed faster growth than many of its neighbouring countries, poverty rates remain high and progress has not been equally shared, with stark and persistent disparities. Almost two Kenyans out of five were poor in 2021, more than before the Covid-19 pandemic. Poverty is consistently higher in rural areas, where access to services and economic opportunities are particularly uneven.

As a result of lower human capital levels and limited employment opportunities, the poor are mostly engaged in low productivity sectors. Poor households have limited strategies to cope with shocks – adverse weather events, health emergencies and other unexpected events can often set them back into poverty.

Kenya has a young and growing population, creating extreme pressure on services and for jobs. In 2024, concerns relating to escalating cost of living and national debt led to widespread activism and protests by youth, heightening political instability across the country. Kenya ranks 36th out of 179 countries on the Fragile States Index.

Promises in peril: Sustainable Development Goals

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted in 2015 as a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet. As of 2024, only 16 percent of the SDG targets are on track to be met globally by 2030, with the remaining 84 percent showing limited progress[2] or a reversal of progress.

1 https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/d9b10755940e269422bdf211d9548924-0010012023/original/Kenya-Poverty-assessment-2023-Infographic.pdf

2 https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2024/sustainable-development-report-2024.pdf

3 https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/static/pdfs/profiles/pdfs/SDR-2024-kenya.pdf

Kenya's inequality

Kenya's inequality is rooted in its history, politics, economics and social organisation and manifests itself in the lack of access to services, resources, power, voice and agency. Inequality continues to be driven by various factors such as: social norms, behaviours and practices that fuel discrimination and obstruct access at the local level and/ or at the larger societal level; the fact that services are not reaching those who are most in need of them due to intentional or unintentional barriers; the governance, accountability, policy or legislative issues that do not favor equal opportunities for the disadvantaged; and economic forces.

Exploring Kenya's Inequality.
KNBS & SID, 2013

The widening economic gap between developed and developing nations, along with the uneven impacts of the climate crisis, are of particular concern. While the decline in SDG progress is universal, poorer countries are being disproportionately affected by the consequences. As of 2024, all but 2 of the 17 SDGs are off track in Kenya.

Why Kericho?

Brighter Communities Worldwide has worked in Kenya for over twenty years, focusing on Kericho County. We began in one sub-county, expanding incrementally to work across all six. We are often asked why we have concentrated in Kericho for so long.

First, despite significant progress, the communities we work with still face significant hurdles in meeting their daily needs, particularly those who are most excluded or marginalised. These needs will continue to grow as people grapple with the impacts of economic and demographic pressures, climate change, political instability, corruption and other forces. Kericho communities have asked us to respond to these complex and integrated needs.

Second, by concentrating in one geographic location, we continue to test and refine our programmes and approaches based on evidence, and to share the learning with audiences in Kericho and beyond.

Inequality and vulnerability

Kericho is a predominantly rural county in Northwest Kenya, with a population of almost one million people. In recent years, global and national events – such as Covid-19, regional food insecurity, spiralling food and fuel prices, road trauma and natural disasters – have made life very challenging, especially for those who are most vulnerable or marginalised.

Families across Kericho are affected by rising costs of living and obstacles to decent livelihoods. Service delivery is impacted by weak governance and budget execution, a challenging geography and inadequate resources. Adolescents face the "triple threat" of rising new HIV infections, pregnancy and sexual- and gender-based violence, threatening to reverse the progress made in previous years. Communities lack access to basic services, particularly those living in hard-to-reach locations and people with disabilities. Climate change and changing weather is bringing new diseases impacting yields, incomes, health and infrastructure.

Gender inequality is endemic in Kericho. Women and girls undertake the bulk of unpaid work in the home and on the land and lack access to essential services. Girls and women are at risk of gender-based violence – ranging from female genital mutilation/cutting to unwilling sex work, to violence in the home and the still common practice of early marriage.

Kericho County key statistics

63%
of its population is under 25 years, creating a high demand for social services and jobs

Almost half the population lives **more than 5km** from a health centre

55%
of girls drop out of education after primary school

The teenage pregnancy rate is amongst the **highest in Kenya** and sexual and gender-based violence rates are high

The percentage of mothers who deliver with the assistance of a skilled birth attendant varies across the county from **20% to 63%**

1 in every 28 infants die in birth or within their first 7 days of life and **1 in 32** will not reach their 5th birthday

94%
of households rely on traditional methods of cooking, using wood as fuel, resulting in respiratory illness

81%
of households lack access to basic sanitation services

35%
do not have access to basic drinking water services

90%
of the population are subsistence farmers who rely on the crops they grow and the animals they keep for their livelihoods

Lessons learned and implications

The context in which we work has changed profoundly, with implications for the work we do and the way our organisation operates. This new strategy builds on key lessons that were identified through programme monitoring, stakeholder dialogue, internal reflection and independent evaluation.

When we designed our last strategy, we could never have envisaged the events that came to pass and that fundamentally impacted our programmes and ways of working. Going forward, we need to plan for unpredictability and continue to build capacity for adaptation.

Our assessment of the changing context is that demand for our work and expectations from the communities we serve will continue to grow as communities grapple with shocks and crisis due to demographic pressures, climate change impacts and other forces. This is particularly the case for those who are most excluded or marginalised and who are predominantly women and youth. Despite the strong progress made, there remains a pressing need to invest in health system strengthening and the social determinants of health.

We have proven our ability to flex and adapt in response to contextual developments and emerging needs, including disasters. This responsiveness strengthens our relationships with communities and stakeholders, which is key to the efficacy of our work. It is important to sustain this capacity to be adaptive and responsive, in our programmes, fundraising, communications and ways of working.

Climate change is having a significant impact on the communities we work with, perpetuating poverty and inequality. We have developed a climate change strategy and begun to embed climate action in to our programmes. Going forward we will develop the necessary expertise to expand our work with communities preparing for the impacts of climate change and building capacity for adaptation and resilience.

Our trusted status and culturally sensitive approach gives us access to, and credibility with communities to work on the root causes of gender inequality. This includes working to address harmful social and cultural practices and norms that perpetuate violence against women and girls and discrimination of the most vulnerable.

Expansion to new geographic or thematic areas is resource-demanding and requires time for stakeholder mapping, baseline assessment and relationship-building. Our volunteer network, in Ireland and in Kenya, has been key to us successfully extending our work and responding to unforeseen events.

As we expand our work on inequality we have learned the importance of tailoring programmes to the needs of different groups, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. This may require additional resources, analysis and access to expertise.

What we will do differently during this new strategic period

A heightened focus on resilience.

The inter-related crises of climate change, gender inequality and food security are impacting levels of need across Kenyan communities and increasing vulnerability and unpredictability. As communities grapple with shocks and stresses, we need to ensure that progress is sustained and development gains are not reversed. We will test out and document our approach to community resilience, evolving our model through practice and partnership.

A more explicit approach to expansion.

We will remain focused on Kericho County, adapting our work to communities' changing needs. We will be more explicit and systematic in our approach to expansion and roll-out across the county, developing clearer criteria for prioritisation, targeting and clustering of programme interventions. We will identify conditions for entering and exiting from programmes or locations, informed by evidence and an analysis of the specific needs of particular communities.

Develop our influencing work.

Whilst remaining community-driven, we will integrate an influencing lens in to our work and the way we conceive and measure results. This recognises the progress made by Brighter Communities Worldwide in influencing system-change over the last two decades, the strength of our relations with government and other stakeholders, and the invaluable role that Brighter Communities Worldwide plays in the health ecosystem.

Strengthen our organisation.

Over the next five years, we will emphasise organisational development and resilience, ensuring that we continue to build sustainable, professional and dynamic organisations, in Kenya and Ireland. We will continue to strengthen internal systems, structures, capacity and culture.

Tell the story of our impact.

We will increase efforts in documenting the longitudinal impact of our work, ensuring that this does not get forgotten over time. This will require an investment in research, documentation and evaluation and in leveraging relevant fora in Kenya and in Ireland, where we can share expertise and further develop our approach to locally-led development.

Foster global citizenship.

Brighter Communities Worldwide is committed to the aims and principles of active global citizenship as set out in Irish Aid's Global Citizenship Education (GCE) Strategy and the IDEA Code of Good Practice for Development Education. We will be more explicit in incorporating GCE principles into our approach and programmes, providing a framework for our volunteering, communications and public engagement work.

The problems we are working to address

We live in a rapidly changing, unpredictable and increasingly unequal world. Whilst demographic shifts, technological advances and rapid economic and social change create opportunities for many, they also perpetuate inequalities, especially for those who live on the margins.

Over the last twenty years, Brighter Communities Worldwide has seen huge changes in the communities where we have concentrated our efforts. People lead healthier lives and apply their increased education and knowledge to creating sustainable livelihoods and living self-sufficiently.

However, the growing incidence of shocks and stress, not least due to the impacts of climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic, are undermining hard-won development gains. In the absence of safety nets, many households are returned to poverty.

There are inadequate jobs and livelihood prospects to meet the expectations of a younger, better educated population who are critical of power holders and frustrated by the pace of change. These conditions heighten the potential for instability and social unrest.

In this context, individuals often resort to negative coping strategies. Harmful beliefs, practices and social norms hurt the most vulnerable, exacerbating the barriers and inequalities faced, especially by women and girls. Meaningful progress is hampered by weak accountability, corruption and poor governance.

Our goal is for the communities with whom we work to reach their full potential, resulting in a healthier, empowered, resilient and more equitable society.

Over the next five years of this strategy, we will work towards delivering change in four areas:

1. Tackling inequality
2. Building resilience
3. Supporting the most vulnerable
4. A sustainable organisation

High-level outcomes

1

Tackling inequality

Communities and other actors collaborating to protect and empower the most marginalised through actively addressing the root causes of inequality and discrimination.

2

Building resilience

Communities more skilled and resilient, responding to external shocks, adapting to climate change and diversifying their livelihoods.

3

Supporting the most vulnerable

The most vulnerable, especially women, children and youth, have greater autonomy over their health and improved access to quality, sustainable services.

4

A sustainable organisation

A capable and sustainable organisation that is community-driven, committed to partnerships, learning and excellence.

Our Theory of Change

A Theory of Change is an organisation's story of how and why it will make change in the world. It describes how we believe our activities will lead to the outcomes and impacts we want to achieve, and what we will need to test along the way.

The visual below depicts our Theory of Change including the results we plan to deliver, the strategies we will apply in delivering these results, the change that we expect to see and the overall impact we wish to contribute towards. Over the course of this five-year strategy period, we will test out the assumptions underpinning this theory of change and refine it as needed.

Outcomes

1 **Tackling inequality**

2 **Building resilience**

3 **Supporting the most vulnerable**

4 **A sustainable organisation**

We will focus on delivering

Communities address inequality

Most vulnerable protected

Active citizenship

Zero tolerance to GBV/FGM

Empowered communities

Strengthened response to shocks and disasters

Who we will work with

Children

Youth

Girls and women

Vulnerable groups

Local leaders

Volunteers

Government departments

Service delivery personnel

Our overarching Theory of Change. If we…

- Support communities and other actors to collaborate to protect and empower the most marginalised
- Equip them with the skills to respond and adapt to external shocks, including climate change
- Support health systems and behaviours with a focus on women, children and youth

Then… this will reduce inequalities and discrimination, enable communities to live healthy, productive lives, build resilience and foster sustainability.

Local climate action

Healthier and safer schools

Heathcare services for all

Diversified household incomes

Improved health and hygiene practices

Strengthened reproductive, maternal, child and adolescent health

Brighter Communities Worldwide

- Evolved organisational structure and systems
- A skilled, effective team
- Sustainable, expanded income base
- Effective external engagement
- Highest standards of governance and accountability

Our strategies

Technical support

Partnership

Exchange and volunteering

Advocacy and influence

Facilitation and convening

Consultation and learning

Amplifying voices

Needs-driven

1 **2** **3** **4**

Communities and other actors collaborating to protect and empower the most marginalised through actively addressing the root causes of inequality and discrimination

Sustainable development and prosperity in Kenya are held back by persistent issues of inequality and disparities across gender, geography and other variables. To drive meaningful change, there is a need to focus on the root causes and structural drivers of inequality and exclusion, including social norms and harmful practices.

Globally, we share collective responsibility to advance equality, human rights and social and environmental justice. This can be progressed through meaningful connections between communities, institutions and individuals in Kenya and Ireland, reflecting our many common values.

The change we will deliver

Priority results

1. Communities aware of harmful practices and social norms that perpetuate gender inequality, Gender-based Violence and other forms of discrimination and taking action to address these in an inclusive manner.

2. Strengthened community leadership addressing inequality and discrimination and advancing zero tolerance to Gender-based Violence and Female Genital Cutting.

3. Effective, inclusive collaboration among stakeholders to protect and support the most vulnerable.

4. Citizens are informed and engaged on issues of social justice, human rights and sustainable development.

What we will do to deliver

Priority actions
Brighter Communities Worldwide Kenya

- **Sensitisation and mobilisation interventions** with communities, youth and students on Lifeskills, Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights, Menstrual Health Management, Gender-based Violence (GBV) and Female Genital Cutting (FGC), including Alternative Rites of Passage. We will leverage our trusted position to engage more deeply with communities, including local leaders, on the root causes of gender inequality, including social norms and harmful practices.

- **Facilitate communities coming together** to discuss issues of inequality and discrimination and to build consensus around their needs and priority actions, ensuring that individuals at risk and survivors of violence are empowered to participate without fear of stigmatisation.

- **Train, strengthen and empower** our network of community volunteers (i.e. facilitators and ambassadors) to deliver programmes across communities, respond to GBV, FGC and emerging challenges and take action to protect the most marginalised.

- **Intensify efforts to strengthen coordination** and collaboration amongst local actors, at county and sub-county levels. We will facilitate inclusive stakeholder forums and partnership seminars as a means of bringing actors together to identify and advance their own issues and priorities.

- **Build relations with key institutions**, share evidence of effective approaches and advocate for enhanced coordination and services / response measures.

Priority actions
Brighter Communities Worldwide Ireland

- **Make an effective contribution** to charitable sector/international development policy and standard-setting in Ireland, through our engagement in Dóchas, Comhlámh and other fora.

- **Define our approach** to Global Citizenship Education and how our work on volunteerism, communications and public engagement contributes to this.

- **Facilitate meaningful connections** between communities, institutions and individuals in Kenya and Ireland through our Harambee overseas exchange programme and other initiatives.

- **Strengthen our communications** activity to refresh our messaging, reach new audiences and optimise digital media platforms. We commit to amplify the voices of Kenyan communities across our communications and public engagement activities.

How we will measure progress

Priority indicators

- Percentage of girls trained who report being empowered to raise their voice against Female Genital Cutting.

- Number of active community volunteers responding to Gender-based Violence, Female Genital Cutting and other emerging challenges.

- Number of coordinated actions arising from Partnership Seminars to address inequality or protect the most vulnerable.

- Number of public engagement activities organised by Brighter Communities Worldwide Ireland incorporating Global Citizenship Education messaging.

Additional performance indicators will be finalised in year one, reflecting our deepened focus on equality and social and gender norms. This may include attitudinal/behavioral indicators relating to Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights and/or Menstrual Health Management and inter-personal communication or case studies of local leadership to address harmful discriminatory practices.

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Communities more skilled and resilient, responding to external shocks, adapting to climate change and diversifying their livelihoods

Communities across Kericho are having to find ways to cope with a range of external stresses and crises, from disease outbreaks, to economic downturn, to extreme weather events. Communities are seeking support to build their knowledge and skills, and to prepare, adapt and put structures in place that will strengthen their resilience.

Small-scale, infrastructure investments in communities and schools can embed environmentally sustainable practices and shore up communities from the detrimental effects of unanticipated events.

The change we will deliver

Priority results

1. Local actors are better equipped to anticipate and respond to disasters and shocks.

2. Communities taking steps to better conserve their environment and manage the impact of climate change.

3. Vulnerable households have developed new knowledge and skills and are diversifying their income sources.

4. Healthier, safer and environmentally sustainable school learning environments.

What we will do to deliver

Priority actions
Brighter Communities Worldwide Kenya

- **Review and strengthen trauma services** in Londiani sub-county, establishing a new trauma centre and the service and systems around it.

- **Strengthen community capacity** on incident management planning through Remote Emergency Care training.

- **Develop and document** Brighter Communities Worldwide's approach to resilience. Develop new partnerships with key institutions and experts working on resilience.

- **Model innovative practices**, demonstrating the benefits of environmental health, conservation and adaptation to communities and schools, including demonstration plots, smokeless stoves, tree planting and small scale water protection schemes.

- **Build understanding** of the impacts of climate change, how our actions affect the environment and heighten vulnerability / inequality.

- **Identify, train and support** a new cohort of Climate Change Ambassadors across communities.

- **Strengthen our own organisational capacity** to design, mainstream and deliver our work on climate. This will include stakeholder mapping, building staff skills, leveraging external expertise and developing climate-smart policies.

- **Provide financial and technical business support** and expert advice to income generation groups, particularly those focused on women, youth and the most marginalised, so that they develop new skills and engage in diversified, sustainable and climate-smart livelihoods.

- **Implement the Healthy Schools Programme** in partnership with the Ministries of Health and Education. Establish a hub for community resilience and empowerment in Kericho County.

- **Support schools to improve infrastructure** – smokeless stoves, latrine and washroom blocks and ferrous cement water tanks – that is environmentally sound, climate proofed and provides a healthy, safe environment for girls and boys.

- **Harness the potential of young people** as environment and climate ambassadors through training, support and action days.

Priority actions
Brighter Communities Worldwide Ireland

- **Support upskilling of staff**, provision of expertise and institutional partnerships on climate, crisis response and trauma, strengthening knowledge and skills as well as linkages between our teams and volunteers in Ireland and Kenya.

- **Provide technical support** to the establishment of the community resilience and empowerment hub in Kericho County.

How we will measure progress

Priority indicators

- Percentage of households accessing safe water across community units.

- Number of households in Community Units implementing a new or improved kitchen garden.

- Percentage of business course participants engaging in diversified, sustainable income generating activity, including women and youth.

- Percentage of schools who report an improved attendance of students (boys and girls) due to the Healthy Schools Programme.

1 **2** **3** **4**

The most vulnerable, especially women, children and youth, have greater autonomy over their health and improved access to quality, sustainable services

Over twenty years of working in Kericho, Brighter Communities Worldwide has seen many improvements in the health of communities and the quality of healthcare service delivery. Additional investment is required to tackle inequalities, and to reach those who are furthest behind – due to their gender, ability, age, where they live and other factors.

Brighter Communities Worldwide can provide vital support and partnership to the government to implement the Community Health Strategy, ensuring that communities' concerns are heard and using its influence to seek policy and system-level change.

The change we will deliver

Priority results

1. Community members, particularly women, girls and youth, have timely access to a strengthened, more effective and equal healthcare system.

2. Increased resilience of community members, especially women, girls, and youth, through improved health and hygiene knowledge and practices.

3. Better resourced, more accessible health care services that prioritise underserved communities

What we will do to deliver

Priority actions
Brighter Communities Worldwide Kenya

- **Establish, strengthen and support** Community Units throughout Kericho County, including in the most hard-to-reach locations.

- **Mobilise communities** in support of the Community Health Strategy and build an effective network of community health promoters.

- **Strengthen healthcare services** at Londiani Sub-County Hospital through the West of Ireland Kenya partnership and targeted interventions.

- **Strengthen basic services** across Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, Adolescent Health and Nutrition at health facility level via needs-based training, mentorship and follow-up support (Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care and Continuous Medical Education).

- **Support safe pregnancy and childbirth** for women. Working in partnership with Government to establish and sustain the Ante Natal Care (ANC) tracker system and Remote Emergency Care within Community Units, with systematic monitoring, follow up and engagement of local leaders.

- **Enhance community knowledge** and adoption of effective health and hygiene practices, supporting women and youth, in particular, to exercise greater autonomy over their health.

- **Support delivery of outreach clinics** to bring health services (Ante Natal Care, Immunisation etc.) to underserved communities.

- **Advocate and seek to influence** decision makers to strengthen policy delivery and resource allocation with a focus on strengthening health care services for underserved communities.

- **Expand representation** of Brighter Communities Worldwide at county-level, working with government partners to strengthen evidence-based planning, coordination and coherence.

Priority actions
Brighter Communities Worldwide Ireland

- **Support exchange of expertise** and institutional partnership on health system strengthening and Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, Adolescent Health, including the West of Ireland Kenya partnership.

- **Develop networks and partnerships** with healthcare professionals and institutions in Ireland.

- **Support opportunities for research** and documentation of the impact of our work to inform advocacy and communication strategies in Ireland and Kenya.

How we will measure progress

Priority indicators

- Perception amongst community members of quality of healthcare delivered.

- Percentage of health facilities linked to Community Units that meet basic Basic Emergency Obstetric Care services.

- Percentage of pregnant women attending at least 4 antenatal clinics during pregnancy.

- Percentage of households in Community Units with hand washing facilities in use.

- Evidence that Brighter Communities Worldwide has influenced health-related policy and/or resource allocation at county or national level.

Additional performance indicators will be developed in year one, reflecting our focus on addressing inequality. For example, the gap between ANC attendance in the best and worst performing sub-counties in the county.

1 2 3 4

A capable and sustainable organisation that is community-driven, committed to partnerships, learning and excellence

Brighter Communities Worldwide has grown significantly over the last decade, incrementally evolving in to new areas of work, adopting new approaches and adapting its ways of working. Throughout this, we remained community-led and committed to partnership and the highest standards of accountability.

The significantly changed context we work in requires an even greater emphasis on organisational development during this strategic period, ensuring that Brighter Communities Worldwide is a sustainable, professional and dynamic organisation that can advance its vision and goal.

The change we will deliver

Priority results

1. Organisational structure and systems evolved in response to learning and strategic vision for Brighter Communities Worldwide.

2. A skilled, effective team, demonstrating commitment to organisational values and excellence in programme delivery, adaptation and learning.

3. A sustainable, expanded income base that facilitates flexibility and organisational development

4. Effective external engagement driving organisational visibility and profile.

5. Highest standards of governance and accountability maintained.

What we will do to deliver

Priority actions
Brighter Communities Worldwide Kenya and Ireland

- **Review our organisational structure**, operations and ways of working. Recruit new expertise in to the team according to new directions and/or gaps identified, including through succession planning.

- **Strengthen our management team**, ensuring it is driving strategy delivery, change management and further development of organisational systems, processes and culture.

- **Strengthen internal capacity and systems** for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning. We will invest in research and documentation of the impact of our work over time. We will maintain our regular dialogue, monitoring and feedback mechanisms with the communities we work with.

- **Foster a strong culture of accountability** amongst staff and ensure they have the requisite skills and experience to deliver high quality programmes, with effective external engagement. We will invest in staff capacity in programme priority areas (e.g. climate and resilience, gender), soft skills (e.g. influencing) and project management.

- **Nurture and develop funding relationships**, in order to grow our income, diversify our funder base and to build flexibility in to our budgets that enables us to invest in organisational and capital development.

- **Maintain robust and efficient internal systems** and policies, including financial management and human resource management, reviewing and updating these periodically.

- **Engage in relevant policy fora** in Ireland and Kenya, using openings to share lessons and approaches, especially on Locally Led Development.

- **Network and communicate** with stakeholders around our work in Ireland and Kenya to increase organisational visibility and profile. Reach new audiences, and sustain current ones, through external communications, social media and events.

- **Strengthen internal understanding** of Global Citizenship Education approaches and its links to volunteerism, communications and public engagement. Refine and communicate Brighter Communities Worldwides model of volunteerism in the Kenyan context, considering how it can sustain engagement of volunteers.

- **Continue to strengthen** the Boards of Brighter Communities Worldwide Ireland and Kenya, ensuring clarity on roles and ways of working, that Boards have the skills and experience needed to deliver, with planning in place for Board member recruitment and succession.

How we will measure progress

Priority indicators

- Operational and succession plans developed and implemented, with oversight from Brighter Communities Worldwide Boards.

- Case studies developed documenting the long-term impact and systems-strengthening influence of Brighter Communities Worldwide.

- Number and type of capacity strengthening opportunities provided to staff.

- Evidence of effective engagement by Brighter Communities Worldwide in policy fora in Ireland.

- Number of additional followers and supporters on social media.

- Board work plan developed and reviewed annually.

- Annual audit demonstrating full compliance with the Charities Governance Code.

Our commitment to strong governance and accountability

Brighter Communities Worldwide is committed to being accountable and transparent in the management and administration of our organisations. We are accountable to the communities that we work with, as well as our donors, funders and supporters, to operate to the highest standards.

Our governance

In Ireland, Brighter Communities Worldwide is a registered company limited by guarantee and a charity registered with the Charities Regulatory Authority. In Kenya, Brighter Communities Worldwide is a registered Non-Governmental Organisation and is compliant with the terms of the NGO Coordination Act of 1990 and the attendant regulations of 1992.

Both organisations are governed by a separate Board of Directors which is responsible for making sure the organisation is governed in accordance with its mission, vision and legal obligations. All our Board members (trustees) are voluntary and bring specific expertise to their governance responsibilities.

Day-to-day management is undertaken by the Chief Executive Officer and the staff teams. Staff teams are supported by volunteers in both Ireland and Kenya.

Our standards of good practice

We are signatories to the following codes and standards that promote good practice in governance, fundraising, volunteer sending, safeguarding, images and messaging and accountability to the communities we support. We review these codes each year to check our compliance and make sure we are living up to the standards we seek to achieve.

- Charities Governance Code – we undertake an annual audit to maintain full compliance and submit this to the Charity Regulator.

- Guidelines for Charitable Organisations on Fundraising from the Public – as devised by the Charities Regulator.

- Comhlámh Code of Good Practice for Volunteer Sending Agencies – to ensure we deliver a volunteer programme promoting responsible international volunteering.

- Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability – a voluntary standard for humanitarian response to improve the quality and effectiveness of assistance provided.

- Dóchas Guide to Ethical Communications – ensuring we are accurately and fairly representing the communities we work with in our images and messaging.

- Dóchas Charter, outlining what it means to be a member of Dóchas – a network of international development and humanitarian organisations who have a shared vision of a just, sustainable and equal world.

We have been awarded the Triple Lock Standard by the Charities Institute Ireland because we operate with best practice in reporting, fundraising and governance demonstrating openness, transparency and integrity to our beneficiaries and donors. We submit an annual self-certification to Charities Institute Ireland to make sure we maintain our standards.

We prepare our Annual Report and Financial Statements in full compliance with the Statement of Recommended Practice for Financial Reporting by Charities. We publish our reports online with the Charity Regulator Authority and the Companies Office and make them available on our website. We have been shortlisted by the Carmichael Good Governance Awards for the quality of our reports.

Our safeguarding

We are committed to creating brighter futures and we believe for that to happen we have to promote justice, equality, solidarity and respect for human rights as being the norm across all that we do.

We are signatories to the Dóchas Safeguarding Code because we want to ensure that everyone working in and with our organisation is aware of the importance of safeguarding and understand their role in keeping everyone safe. We have put in place approaches to safeguarding to protect the communities and children we work with and keep them safe from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation.

- We have policies on child safeguarding and protecting vulnerable adults.

- We have a beneficiary feedback mechanism to encourage everyone involved in the programmes we deliver to speak up and know that their voice will be heard and their opinions valued.

- We endorse the Comhlámh Put Children First: End Orphanage Care Campaign.

Brighter Communities
Worldwide
CREATING BETTER FUTURES

Brighter Communities Worldwide is a registered charity in Ireland CHY16505; Charity Regulatory Authority Number CRA 20059583

Brighter Communities Worldwide is a registered NGO in Kenya OP 218/051/2005/0295/3731

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