



## **Firelight's Work in FY21 – Annual Report July 1 2020 to June 30 2021**

### **Continuing to respond to COVID 19**

While COVID 19 continued to take a heavy toll on people's health, wellbeing, freedom of movement and economic opportunity, Firelight was pleased to continue our support of community-based organizations as they work with families, youth, children and their broader communities to address systems for children and youth. Our grantee partners were extraordinary in their ability to integrate COVID 19 prevention and support activities into their daily work and we were proud to continue to support them to do this with extra funds and support.

In FY21, the Firelight team was honored to conduct webinars for the International Education Funders' Group (IEFG), the Elevate Children Funders' Group (ECFG) and the Tri-State Area African Funder Group members on the importance of community action for children and families in the face of COVID 19.

### **New additions to the Firelight Board**

Firelight was thrilled in FY21 to announce the addition of five new members to our Board of Directors – Joyce Malombe, Rose Maruru, Sibongile (Bongi) Mkhabela, Paula Nimpuno-Parente and Gerry Salole. All five of these extraordinary African leaders come to Firelight with a history of extensive accomplishments and a deep belief in the critical need to support communities and community structures as fundamental agents of systems change for children and youth in Africa. You can read their full biographical details here:

<https://www.firelightfoundation.org/blog/2021/4/15/firelight-welcomes-five-new-african-leaders-to-our-board-of-directors>

### **Expansion of Firelight's Grantee Clusters**

Firelight was thrilled to onboard 15 new community-based organization grantee-partners in Malawi and Zambia who will be working with their communities to strengthen and improve early childhood systems. You can read more about this work here:

<https://www.firelightfoundation.org/supporting-true-communitydriven-early-childhood-systems-for-sustainable-early-childhood-outcomes>

Firelight was also thrilled to onboard 5 new community-based organization grantee-partners in Malawi who are working with youth, their communities and families to explore the root causes of an community responses to/action against child marriage. You can read more about this work here: <https://www.firelightfoundation.org/communitybased-interventions-in-the-fight-against-child-marriage-in-malawi>

## Continuing to Support Existing Grantee Clusters

Firelight was honored to continue to support 6 existing community-based organization grantee-partners in Rwanda to pursue community-based and girl-centered support for vulnerable girls and young women in Rwanda. You can read more about this work here:

<https://www.firelightfoundation.org/girls-empowerment>

Similarly, Firelight was honored to continue to support 12 existing community-based organization grantee-partners in Tanzania to explore community ideas around and action against child marriage. You can read more about this work here:

<https://www.firelightfoundation.org/child-marriage>

## Saying Goodbye to Grantee Clusters After Five Years

In FY21 Firelight was honored and proud to transition 28 grantees from our funding after a period of between five and seven years of funding from Firelight. These grantees had been working on community-based approaches to improvements in early childhood in both early childhood centers and in the home and community. We are so deeply proud of what they achieved and are delighted to share their progress and lessons learned here. You can read all about it here: [Strengthening community-based organizations' capacities to develop and implement local solutions for ECD - Impact and Learnings \(2019\)](#)

## Asking Communities, Children, Youth Where They See The Greatest Challenges and Opportunities in Child and Youth Rights – Zambia/Tanzania/Malawi

In FY21 we began conducting mapping studies in Malawi, Zambia and Tanzania to assess areas of need and opportunity for community-based solutions towards systemic change for the

realization of children’s rights. The objective of these studies is to supplement and deepen country-level perspectives and statistical data with community-level realities, perspectives, and priorities, to map where communities, children, youth and families see the challenges or opportunities for children as the greatest, and where they believe community action for children’s rights could be the most powerful. We would also like to understand what the major challenges/obstacles are to those communities, organizations, solutions and networks that might keep them from thriving in service of the long-term permanent realization of children’s wellbeing and rights. The findings from these studies will inform Firelight’s future investments in community-based organizations, systems and solutions relating to child protection, child wellbeing, and the realization of child rights. The findings will also be used to inform the broader philanthropic field.

## Supporting the Field of Child and Youth Philanthropy/Development by Sharing Community-Driven Approaches

In May 2021, Firelight was delighted to launch a new framework for grantmaking strategies that create effective, sustainable change with communities leading the way. The report, *Community-Driven Systems Change: The Power of Grassroots-Led Change for Long Term Impact and How Funders Can Nurture It*, provides foundations, philanthropists and other donors with practical actions they can take and questions they can ask themselves to move away from Global-North directed programming towards a model that centers the leadership and expertise of communities and community-based organizations in social change. Firelight’s report was created over a three-year period across nine countries, beginning in 2017. The Firelight Foundation undertook a process of inquiry, learning, co-creation, and validation with community-based organizations (CBOs) that produced these recommendations for philanthropic reform. The report provides a robust outline for how funders can center CBOs in their philanthropic work by moving through the “what, why, and how” of community-driven systems change. The report highlights the gap between how the global development sector and CBOs from eastern and southern Africa conceptualize success, effectiveness, and sustainability, while providing tools for donors to bring their work more into alignment with CBOs on the ground in communities. You can read the full report and see the tools here - <https://www.firelightfoundation.org/cdsc>

## Releasing Our Evidence and Learnings

In FY21 Firelight was delighted to share our evaluations, impact analyses, and learnings with several of our grantee clusters. You can see some of these highlights here:

[Community action to reduce child marriage in Shinyanga, Tanzania – Impact and Learnings \(2021\)](#)

[Community action to improve girls' secondary education in Malawi – Impact and Learnings \(2020\)](#)

[Five key things we have learned about how to support communities to mobilize around early childhood development \(2020\)](#)

## **Sharing the Voices of Others in Service of Community-Driven Systems Change for Children and Youth**

In FY21, Firelight was delighted to have a number of opinion-editorial pieces featured in various publications and blogs. These pieces featured the voices of our brilliant community-based organization grantee-partners as well as our own staff. You can see some of the highlights here:

[The heroes of COVID 19 - Africa's community-based organizations](#)

[The future with and beyond COVID 19 - a community view from Tanzania](#)

[Localisation is not a “trend” or an “outcome” that can be achieved by outside-in actors. Firelight responds to Janez Lenarčič of the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office](#)