



20 leaders from 13 cities around the world are practicing community transformation through listening.

## IT ALL STARTS WITH LISTENING

### Introducing the Community Transformation Certificate

#### RECRUITING

One cold afternoon in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan's westside Meadowgreen neighborhood, a group of women gathered for midday tea—meeting each other for the first time. They shared homemade Persian sweets as their children played together. While the gathering appeared mundane, Kathleen describes it as embodying shalom: “In a neighborhood so divided, isolated, and fearful of one another, these women gathered in safety and trust.”

Kathleen hosted this teatime gathering as a seed project with the Community Transformation Certificate (CTC), a program launched by Servant Partners to train people in our values and strategies, equipping them to respond to needs and opportunities in their own communities. For 12 weeks last fall, 20 global leaders representing 13 cities around the world gathered online

to learn how to transform their communities.

“Whether you're doing leadership development, community organizing, or church-planting, you need to be able to listen,” said Krista-Dawn Kimsey, the Co-General Director of Servant Partners



Canada. “We wanted to help participants listen to God, neighbor, and themselves, as a way of engaging in cross-cultural, cross-class relationships for a purpose.”

The CTC consisted of online and in-person meetings, coaching, and community engagement and reflection. The cohort interacted with training material like the theology of shalom, listening and action, sustainable spirituality, and partnership-building.

“It's not rocket science to

make transformation happen in your community!” said Liz Fung, Servant Partners' Director of Mobilization. “God is already at work in all the communities we're in, and skills like listening and creativity give us the traction we need to partner with God. Anybody can do this.”

Jeremy was another CTC participant from the Meadowgreen neighborhood who wanted to address renters' concerns about racial and class-based discrimination. After listening to renters for several months, he helped facilitate a gathering where 15 renters shared their stories, concerns, and hopes for better housing. They decided to petition their landlord to replace broken hardware in response to safety concerns.

“[Through the CTC], I learned how to work alongside a community in a learner's posture that values locally led movements,” Jeremy said. “All healthy community transformation needs to be mutual, so I'm looking forward to seeing how I will be shaped by my community.”

The CTC has since become an ongoing, multilingual recruiting and equipping experience for Servant Partners. While Servant Partners remains focused on long-term, established ministry sites, the CTC helps catalyze transformation wherever participants are, and contributes to their discernment of ministry calling. Learn more at [servantpartners.org/certificate](http://servantpartners.org/certificate).

## A LUNG IN THE DESERT

### Empowering Women Through Gardening and Self-Defense

#### NORTH AFRICA

“Would you like a tomato?” For residents of an urban desert in North Africa, this scarlet fruit meant more than mere produce—it was an emblem of possibility. Only two forms of produce are grown locally, with everything else imported. When COVID-19 collapsed markets in the region, the availability of diverse produce was stifled—except at one small plot of land: the Servant Partners ministry site and community center in North Africa.

“Even sand can be cultivated,” said Sara Oviedo, the Servant Partners site leader in North Africa. “As we grew tomatoes, spinach, and other rare, new plants, our neighbors realized the importance and possibilities of cultivating the ground.”

The community center conducts a number of ministries, focusing primarily on urban agriculture to connect with neighbors in the desert. This past year, they've hosted nearly 600 participants across courses in urban gardening, reforestation, nutrition, and more.

“I've seen the story of Genesis come to life,” Sara reflected. “All you see here is sand and buildings made by man. There are no trees or plants that would call to the heart of God. But when

we started to cultivate, we saw a whole new flora emerge. We now have this beautiful green lung growing in the midst of the desert.”

The trees this community has planted are bringing humidity, shade, and birds to the region, the plants are being adopted and transplanted to schools and government buildings, and the garden is opening unique opportunities to connect with neighbors. Most importantly, the community center is transforming the experience of the region's most marginalized population: women.

“Here, being a woman means you have no value besides getting married or having children—there's nothing else for you,” Sara said. “Many young girls don't have aspirations for anything because they've been told that nothing is for them.”

The local government asked Sara's team to facilitate a pilot project among a marginalized group of teenage girls with disabilities. These 1,500 teenage girls live in the poorest community in the region and suffer from mental health needs and developmental issues. Along with including them in agriculture courses, the community center also provides a clinic and psychologist to offer the girls therapy and health services.

“These young girls are learning new languages, to drive, to farm, and more,” Sara said. “We can see their eyes glow when they ask, ‘I can do that?’ And we proudly respond: ‘Yes, you can!’



Urban gardening is bringing new plants, produce, humidity, and animals to this North African region, and transforming the lives of its marginalized women.



These girls are experiencing a new world. Even if they must follow the rules and obligations of the current society, they're learning about unique possibilities they can still enjoy.”

The Servant Partners team started a self-defense course for women at the center, and contracted Lalla\*, the only female self-defense instructor in the whole country. Despite her qualifications, Lalla had been barred from training with men and relegated to teaching children, so when the team approached her about teaching the course, she asked the same bright-eyed question the teenage girls did: “I can do that?”

As she teaches in this new space, Lalla is almost unrecognizable—passionate, energized, and empowered. She is able to earn an income through her work, creating the rare opportunity for financial independence. The women are also animated as

they train and share this safe space, free of inhibitions.

“The world is so suffocating and small, and this space has really offered liberation for their minds and bodies,” Sara said. “My favorite time is always after training, when the women are able to talk about God, pray, and share their experiences with each other. As they share hurts and joys, they realize they're not alone.”

Being forced to marry and have children, it is not uncommon that women are sexually assaulted by their husbands. In this region, if a woman seeks recourse for a rape, the courts only value her testimony as half of a person's—so she needs two women's testimonies to equal the credibility of one man's. Amid such cruel circumstances, these connections between women are powerful and profound.

Madaya\*, one of Sara's

longtime Muslim friends in the community, began to experience a faith crisis a few years back. They shared spiritual conversations together, and the love of the God of the Bible began to slowly capture Madaya's heart. During a time of spiritual reflection with others, she tearfully penned a poem where she shared a word that God had spoken to her: “Daughter, do not excuse yourself for being a rainbow in a place that's only known for being one color.”

It is precisely in the places of barrenness, isolation, and oppression that God is doing a new thing.

## URBAN REVIVAL ACROSS ETHIOPIA

### A National Opportunity for Urban Transformation

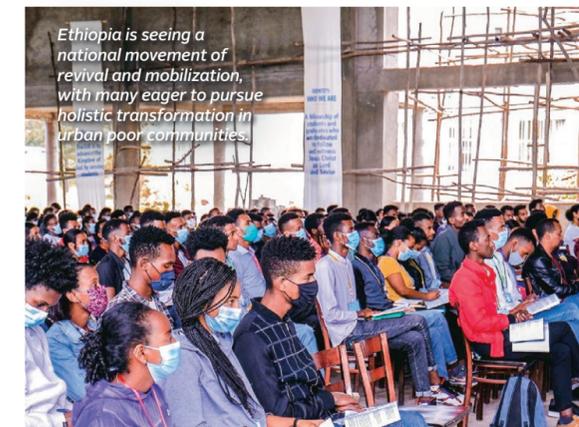
#### VISION 2030

Residents of an urban marginalized community in Northern Ethiopia were commonly called *Negede Weyto*, a name implying they ate whatever they could find—even scraps. They lived there for hundreds of years, enduring poverty and prejudice from others in the neighboring city. A ministry team in the city was working tirelessly to reach the community when they met Mekonnen\*, a local tailor living with his family among the *Negede Weyto*. Befriending the missionaries, Mekonnen introduced them to his family and neighbors.

As the team listened, built relationships, and shared the gospel in *Negede Weyto*, many began to believe in Jesus Christ! They started Bible studies, partnered with local churches, and after several months, the team and local partners decided to reclaim the town name to *Negde Selam*, or “People of Peace.”

That ministry team was sent by Horn of Africa Evangelical Mission Engagers (HOEME), an indigenous Ethiopian mission organization that facilitates church-planting, cross-cultural ministries, and mobilizes missionaries among Ethiopia's unreached groups. In the past 10+ years, HOEME has seen over 120,000 new believers, 9,000 churches planted, and 50,000 believers mobilized across churches and campuses.

“Even in the so-called ‘closed communities,’ we're witnessing God work through ordinary men and women who have dedicated their lives to the Kingdom,” said Amanuel Gezahgne, HOEME Mobilizer Senior Coach. Along with HOEME, EvaSUE—a fast-growing student movement across 150 Ethiopian campuses—has seen hundreds



Ethiopia is seeing a national movement of revival and mobilization, with many eager to pursue holistic transformation in urban poor communities.

of graduates catching God's vision to reach unreached groups throughout Ethiopia, North Africa, and the Middle East. The two organizations joined to facilitate this nationwide movement, but noticed a shared gap in their vision: an urban strategy.

Urban centers in Ethiopia and throughout Africa are expanding—along with their marginalized corners. Amanuel described that the world of urban ministry in Ethiopia was fragmented; local churches held traditional evangelistic ministries while relief organizations separately serviced the poor in their cities.

“Charity organizations can create dependency, so there is often no transformation,” Amanuel said. “We want to understand these communities, the root-causes of their challenges, and the potential of local leadership. Not many organizations are doing this work, so partnering with Servant Partners gave us vision for what God was doing in urban poor communities, and what was possible here.”

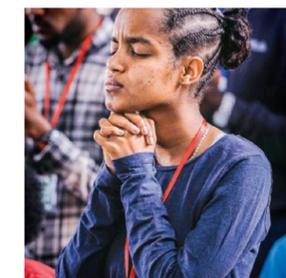
Wanting to integrate their ministries for community transformation, HOEME

and EvaSUE invited Servant Partners to train their urban missionaries. Last summer, Servant Partners staff visited Ethiopia to conduct a 3-week training of HOEME and EvaSUE missionaries, where they explored urban community transformation, trauma-informed ministry, partnership and strategic planning, and more. Along with training, God spoke powerfully to participants through times of intercession, healing prayer, and worship.

“It was amazing to hear what God is doing in different nations, among the urban poor,” said Biniam Solomon, HOEME Sending Director. “For many of the trainees, [the training] was about reflecting on their own lives and issues before going into other communities.”

This partnership arrives in the early stages of the Vision 2030, Servant Partners' campaign to build, strengthen, and bridge God's movement in urban marginalized communities around the world. These organizations have since deployed workers into urban communities in three of Ethiopia's major cities, where teams are conducting listening projects, partnering with churches, discipling local leaders, and working to create sustainable forms of transformation.

Amidst extreme poverty and a civil war, a revival is breaking out across Ethiopia's campuses, cities, and urban marginalized communities—and God has invited Servant Partners to play a part in helping it flourish.



During the Servant Partners training, God healed, inspired, and empowered Ethiopian graduates for urban ministry.



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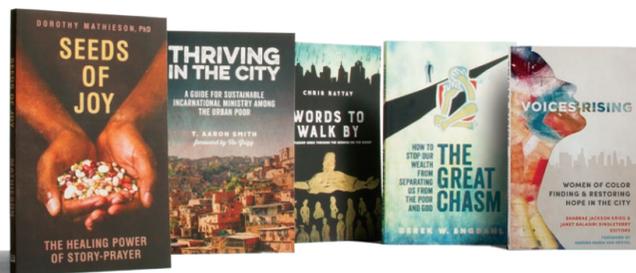
\*Names changed for security and privacy reasons.

# The Mural

SOUL OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD



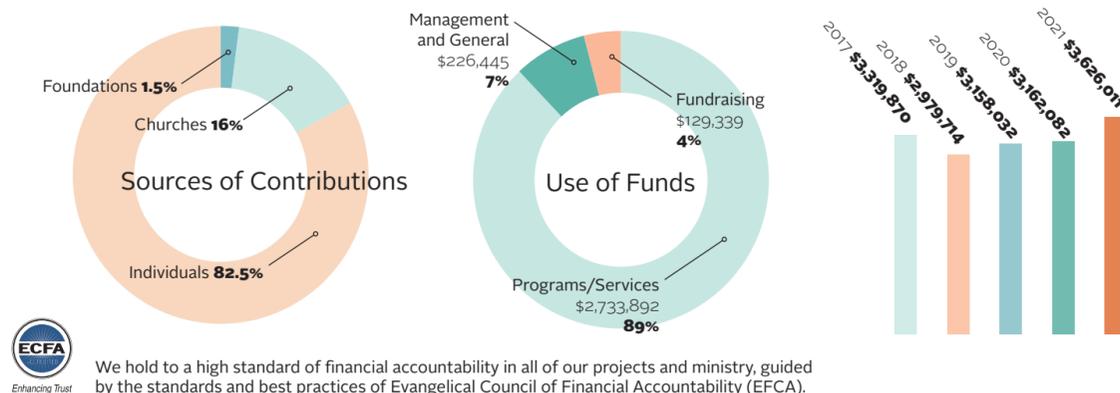
Beauty is one of Servant Partners' Nine Signs of a Transforming Community. We believe art has the power to transform the ugliness of poverty, empower the voices of the unheard, and create spaces for reflection, joy, and healing. This past year, Servant Partners Press launched The Mural, a quarterly digital publication showcasing artistic reflections from Servant Partners staff, neighbors, and wider network. Issues included Beauty in the Neighborhood, Home and Hospitality, Intersections & Contradictions, and Humans of \_\_\_\_\_. You can view all the issues at [servantpartnerspress.org/the-mural](http://servantpartnerspress.org/the-mural).



## RESOURCES FOR MINISTRY AMONG THE URBAN POOR

Currently available at [ServantPartnersPress.org](http://ServantPartnersPress.org), Amazon, and other major booksellers

## 2021 FINANCES



## VISION 2030

Learn about our ten-year vision to build, strengthen, and bridge God's movement in urban poor communities around the world at [servantpartners.org/vision2030](http://servantpartners.org/vision2030).



BUILD



STRENGTHEN



BRIDGE

# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



Transforming Communities with the Urban Poor



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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In Isaiah 43, the prophet shares God's word to the people that he is about to do something new. It is believed that this section of Isaiah was written to those who had been languishing in exile. The new thing that God promised was a return to Jerusalem, a deliverance from captivity. Undoubtedly, many who heard this prophecy struggled to hope it would come to pass. Similarly, many of us may relate to feeling captive these past few years. For some of our vulnerable friends around the world, this has been even more literally true. And yet, God has begun to do something new in the midst of dire circumstances.

In this annual report, we share some stories of the new things that God is giving birth to. These include creative ways our staff have engaged their contexts, new national partnerships that have formed, and new approaches we have developed to equip people for the work of the Kingdom of God. As war ravages Europe displacing millions, and as we continue to live with the reality of COVID-19, we may struggle to hope that something new and good is upon us. But we must remind ourselves that our God can always make a way in the desert—and if we open our eyes, we will see it. Thank you for your prayers and financial support of Servant Partners. We appreciate your partnership on our journey of hope in the midst of poverty.

In Jesus' hope,  
Derek and Lisa Engdahl  
General Directors