Advantage Africa
pathways out of poverty

Strategic Framework

Better Lives for the Most Vulnerable People in East Africa

Agreed at Trustees' Meeting 10th September 2025

To be reviewed annually

1. Summary

Our **vision** is vulnerable children, women and men to be respected as equals, free from poverty, discrimination and fear and to have appropriate education, good health and sustainable livelihoods.

Our **strategic goal** is better lives for the most vulnerable children and adults in East Africa.

Our **objectives** are (1) to support the most vulnerable and excluded women, men and children to overcome poverty,

(2) to contribute to changing the conditions, attitudes, policies and practices that keep them in poverty.

And (3) to create a more resilient and sustainable organisation.

2. Need

Many millions of people in East Africa continue to live in relentless poverty, excluded from the benefits of economic growth taking place in the region. Among the most vulnerable people of all are those affected by disability and HIV who are often disregarded, stigmatised and denied their basic human rights so that they lack self worth, opportunity and hope.

3. Vision

Our vision is for the most vulnerable children, women and men in East Africa to be respected as equals, free from poverty, discrimination and fear and to have appropriate education, good health and sustainable livelihoods.

4. Approach

4.1 Reaching the most vulnerable people

Advantage Africa identifies and directly supports local partner organisations to provide vital support, opportunities and services for vulnerable people, especially those affected by poverty and the stigma arising from disability (including albinism) or HIV. This helps these vulnerable people, often unreached by mainstream NGOs, to secure their rights, reach their potential, and become more self-reliant. It helps them to help themselves, gain respect from others around them and have improved confidence so they can build a better future for their families and communities.

4.2 Working in partnership

Advantage Africa's partner organisations are led by exceptional individuals with strong leadership potential and a passion to help the most vulnerable. Our relationships with them are characterised by shared goals and responsibilities, trust, honesty, commitment and friendship. Our local partners' are embedded in the communities they serve and our national level partners are well-linked with similar local partners and demonstrate expertise and authority in their field of work. We support these partners to build their management/technical skills and capacity so they can implement life-changing, sustainable development projects. This support ensures that the resources we provide are used effectively and our projects make a life-changing, practical difference to vulnerable people by improving their education, health and incomes.

5. Current Context

5.1 Background

Since our foundation in 2002, Advantage Africa has worked with a dozen partner organisations to improve the lives of thousands of vulnerable people. It has built a solid reputation as a small and responsive charity using its resources effectively. It has pioneered work in the prevention of sexual abuse against people with disabilities, the transition of children with learning disabilities from school, and provision of life-saving services for people with albinism.

5.2 Charity sector challenges

Small UK-based charities (<£1m turnover) like Advantage Africa are facing increasing difficulties in securing funds while AI levels the fundraising playing field. We are vulnerable to increasing natural disasters caused by climate change, increasingly unpredictable political and economic changes and declining public trust in charities. Within the development sector, governments are abandoning their aid commitments and responsibilities and even their belief in the secondary benefits of aid. Some power is rightly being shifted to the south, experimentation is taking place with new funding models / social enterprise and the need for more rigorous data and stronger safeguarding is being highlighted.

5.3 Specific challenges and opportunities

Financial and organisational sustainability, the demands of larger donors and over-reliance on the founders are among the specific challenges facing Advantage Africa. While holding on to our core values, we need to be more outward facing, bolder, collaborative and flexible in order to be sustainable, embracing the risk this might entail.

Advantage Africa has supported some of its existing partners for over ten years. While their capacity to plan and implement life-changing work during that time has improved substantially, some are still entirely or largely reliant on Advantage Africa and have been unable to attract the support from local sources they need to sustain their activities. Some are reluctant to plan for succession should their founders retire. There is a need for further progression in these partnerships and in our project portfolio for us all to thrive and achieve even greater impact among vulnerable people.

Despite these challenges, immediate and substantive opportunities exist for Advantage Africa. These include shifting our HIV prevention work towards high risk groups, expanding the school-to-home transition of children with intellectual disabilities, building on our autism and dyslexia research and growing skin cancer prevention project among people with albinism to cover the whole of Uganda. They also include the possibility of flexible funding to invest in the organisation and bring in new people. This Strategic Framework aims to guide us in addressing these challenges and utilising these opportunities.

6. Our strategic goal is better lives for the most vulnerable children and adults in East Africa.

7. Our first objective is to:

Support the most vulnerable children, women and men to overcome poverty and meet their basic needs in a sustainable way.

We aim to reach the most vulnerable people and help them transform their lives for the long term. We will ensure they have opportunities they've never had before through better access to education, healthcare and sustainable incomes, as well as greater acceptance within their communities.

We expect that most of our effort, will be concentrated on this objective, which is largely about addressing the immediate *effects* of poverty. To achieve it we will undertake the following activities:

7.1 Support our partner organisations to provide essential services to improve the education, health and incomes of vulnerable people.

We will focus on the most vulnerable people (not sector) to ensure that development is genuinely 'leaving no one behind'. Projects will support people with disabilities (including people with albinism), people affected by HIV, single parent families and women / girls vulnerable to sexual abuse.

We will take a holistic approach, so interventions might include water, health, education and livelihoods or a combination of these to ensure change is achieved at depth.

While small community-based partners are likely to remain the core of our programme, we will be open to working with new partners which genuinely focus on reaching the most vulnerable but have potential for wider impact than groups working purely locally.

Our programme will be purposefully driven by the needs our partner organisations identify and our passion to help as many vulnerable people as possible.

7.2 Build the resilience and capacity of our partners to sustain their activities

Advantage Africa will provide direct support towards planning, implementing and monitoring effective projects through on the job technical advice, support and mentoring provided in project planning, management, monitoring, finance, fundraising and networking. We will also support our partners to undertake formal training courses, including distance learning and exchange visits, to enable them to learn from each other. We will identify mutually reinforcing activities with and across partners to ensure our support is efficiently delivered.

Our support will bring all our partners to the point where they reach agreed standards of project/financial management and monitoring, as well as organisational governance.

We will agree simple time-bound road maps for each partner that complements their strategic plans that will guide our progression with them. The type and level of support will be tailored according to the length of our relationship across the following spectrum:

(i) New start ups - needing intensive support.

(ii) Existing partners with a focus on ongoing self help activities - quite intensive support.

(iii) Existing partners with a focus on supporting fundraising and governance on a planned path to exit.

(iv) Existing partners with a plan for exiting - support lessening over exit period.

8. Our second objective is to contribute to:

Changing the attitudes, policies and practices that keep the most vulnerable women, men and children in East Africa in poverty, so that they can secure their rights and meet their basic needs in a sustainable way.

Under this objective, we aim to promote widespread public acceptance and inclusion of vulnerable people by creating awareness of their needs and potential, disseminating the results of our practical work and advocating for its adoption by others. We will also hold relevant authorities to account regarding their responsibilities towards vulnerable people and lobby for changes in policies and practices at local, national and international level that serve to keep people in poverty The pursuit of this objective will enable us to 'scale up' our work and have more life-changing impact than ever before.

We appreciate that some partners will be better placed and able to do this work than others but in our programme development we will ensure that at least some can complement their practical work with promoting vulnerable people's inclusion through events, media and targeted advocacy initiatives, and support them to do so within their reasonable reach. We will aim to have at least some partners who are able to document and disseminate their work towards national level advocacy and campaigning.

To achieve this objective we will undertake the following activities:

8.1 Awareness-raising

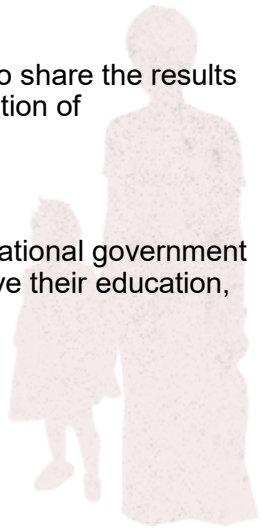
We and our local partners will hold events and use relevant print, visual, and social media to address the discrimination and stigma surrounding disability, albinism, single parenthood and sexual abuse and promote the greater acceptance and inclusion of vulnerable people. Events are likely to focus on international days such as World AIDS Day, International Day of Persons with Disabilities and International Albinism Awareness Day.

8.2 Dissemination

We and our partners will build evidence from our partnerships and projects in order to share the results of our practical work among other organisations and networks and promote the adoption of methodologies and learning among other CBOs, NGOs and donors.

8.3 Advocacy and campaigning

We and our partners will advocate for changes in policies and practice at local and national government level that will result in new opportunities for the vulnerable people we serve to improve their education, health and incomes.



9. Our third objective is to:

Create a more resilient and sustainable organisation.

This will ensure that Advantage Africa is able to thrive amid a difficult climate for small charities and help vulnerable people in East Africa for many years to come. It will also contribute towards ensuring a viable succession from the founders so that the charity continues its life-saving work beyond them.

We will balance the activities below to achieve this objective with those we do in pursuit of objectives 1 and 2 to ensure we are always meeting the immediate needs of our beneficiaries and partners. We will be open with our partners about funding challenges that may put their work at risk or necessitate withdrawing from partnerships ahead of the times scheduled in the road maps described in 7.2.

9.1 Organisational resilience

We will strengthen our team and ensure all our staff and trustees are contributing toward the organisation reaching its full potential. We will explore new ways of working through the emergence and addition of new outsourced providers, staff and volunteers and be open to different structures within our workforce to achieve our objectives. This will include improved monitoring and evaluation of projects to demonstrate impact.

We will explore new partnerships with other NGOs, individuals, donors and actors to ensure greater effectiveness and a more even spread of responsibilities. These activities will reduce reliance on the founders and ensure we are operating within the reasonable means of our human, physical and financial resources and can continue doing so in the future.

9.2 Financial resilience

We will play to our strengths to compete in a challenging fundraising environment in order to build meaningful relationships with our supporters and fund the activities required to reach the objectives outlined this Strategic Framework.

To this end we will implement a Fundraising Strategy with annually-renewed targets for individuals, trusts and foundations arising from our budgeting process. While allowing for unpredictability of income, and the need for maintaining a diversity of sources and timescales, the Strategy will guide us towards growing sustainable unrestricted sources of income that improve the prospect of successful transition from the founders. Performance against the Fundraising Strategy will be monitored quarterly.

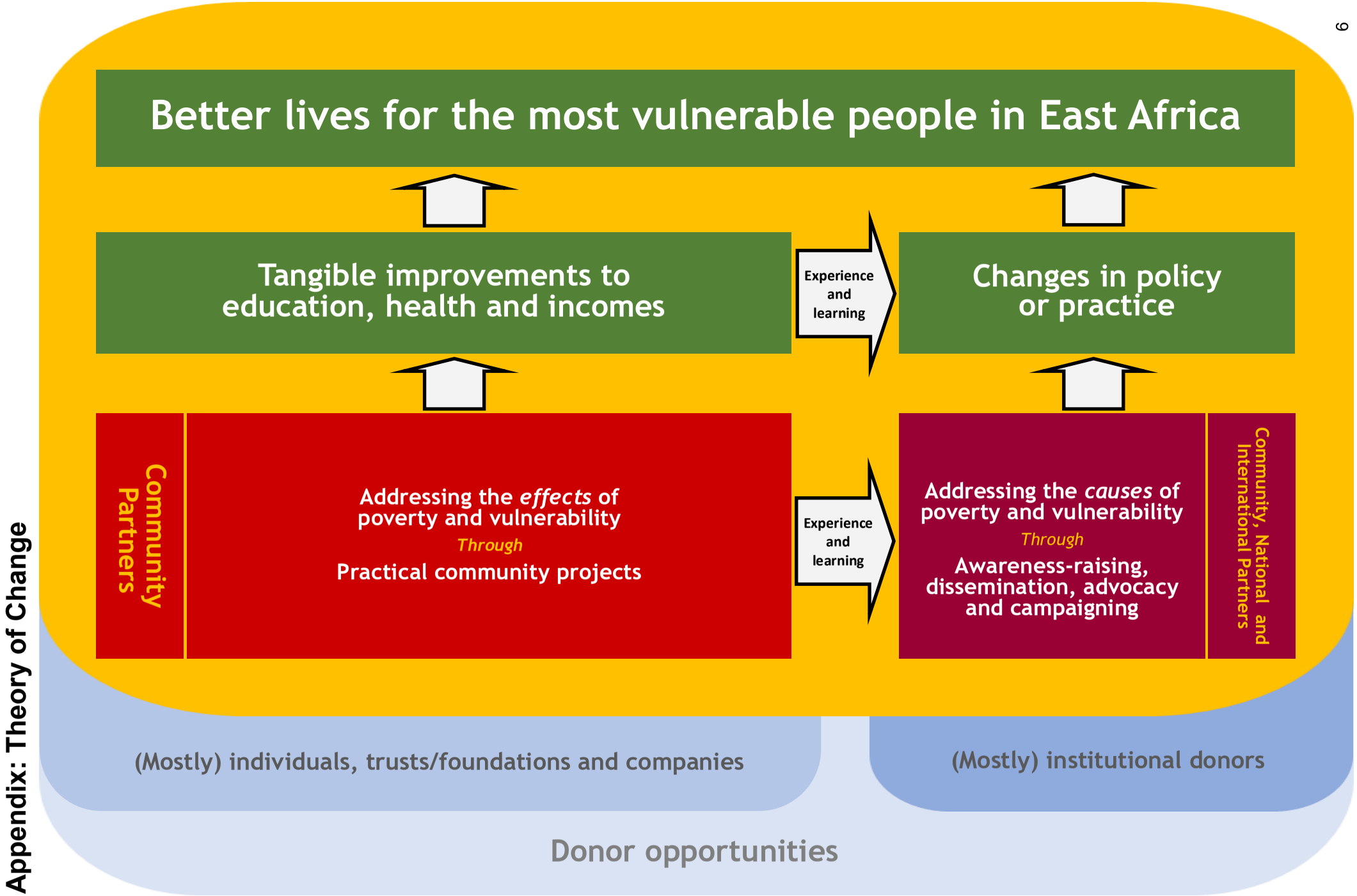
10. Measuring our Achievements

The implementation and monitoring of our Strategic Framework Plan will be embedded into:

10.1 Our Partnership Agreements and partners' reports.

10.2 Staff members' work plans, reviews and appraisals.

10.4 Trustees' meetings.

In this way, we will monitor performance against the Strategic Framework and make adjustments according to learning and circumstances, so the Framework remains relevant and achievable and Advantage Africa's work is sustained long as long as the needs we meet remain.

Appendix: Theory of Change