



Initiatives of Change  
International



# Annual Report 2023

## Message from Leadership

As we look around at the world today, we see varying degrees of chaos and confusion. In his book *Transitions*, noted author, William Bridges calls a time like this the “neutral zone”, the time that exists between an “ending” and a “new beginning.” Rather than fighting against the chaos and confusion, Bridges suggests, we should live deeply into this time and see what it has to teach us. It is a time of preparation for a new way of thinking, acting, and being. We can look backwards and piece together a narrative about how we got to the current moment.

We can see this year where poor decisions, selfishness or greed may have impacted relationships. We can see where self-interest or national interest shattered community. We can see where greed contributed to environmental degradation. We can see where impure motives led to manipulation, abuse, and worse.

What happens when we look forward? We were created with hindsight; our foresight is not as well developed. Perhaps this was for a reason. Perhaps we were meant to learn from the past, but to choose what sort of future we wanted to participate in creating in the years to come.

Imad Karam, Executive Director



## International Council



The International Council provides leadership to the global network in line with the goals of Initiatives of Change International and the decisions of the annual Global Assembly.

The 2023 International Council members and Executive Leadership are, pictured above, top left to bottom right: Gerald Pillay (President), Mounir Beltaifa (Vice President), Zacharia Muturi Karimi (Treasurer), Imad Karam (Executive Director), Roweida Saleh, Maria del Pilar Griffin, Marta Dabrowska, Yofrina Octika Gultom, Cecilia (Thembi) Silundika, Assaad Chaftari and Patrick McNamara

## What is Initiatives of Change?

Initiatives of Change (IofC) International is a non-profit organization registered in Switzerland, existing to represent and advance the work of IofC globally. The 36 national teams and international programmes, which comprise its voluntary association membership, each operate autonomously, but work towards taking focused action in one, or more, of these areas:

Our starting point is that creative social change depends on personal change. Everyone can examine their lives and align their actions with the values of honesty, unselfishness, purity and love; thus 'being the change' they want to see in the world.



Trustbuilding



Ethical Leadership



Sustainable Living





**What Drives Us Forward**

**Our Vision:** a just, peaceful and sustainable world to which everyone, responding to the call of conscience, makes their unique contribution.

**Our Mission:** to inspire, equip and connect people to address world needs, starting with themselves.

**Our flagship programme** is the International Trustbuilding Program, which aims to build trust across the world's divides by developing ethical and trustworthy leaders at all levels.

**Our History**

Initiatives of Change (IofC) began as a spiritual and social movement more than 90 years ago, drawing on the idea that, by applying guiding values of honesty, unselfishness, purity and love in daily life and being open to the divine spark within, anyone could help create a better society.

Today, IofC International is a donation- and grant-funded nonprofit organization, registered in Switzerland, which serves as the central hub for a global network of national teams and of individuals who are leading community-based initiatives. Our grassroots approach encourages local ownership and focuses on accompanying, strengthening and empowering individuals to be the change they want to see in the world.

**IofC Highlights in 2023**

**Caux Forum Returns:**

The Initiatives of Change 2023 Caux Forum was an unforgettable experience. It brought together 550 people from 72 countries, representing diverse cultures and sectors, with the aim of inspiring, equipping and connecting participants to build a just, peaceful and sustainable world. The 2023 forum offered a wide range of dialogues and workshops focusing on two pressing themes: Healing the Wounds of the Past and Trust and Integrity in Democracy. The 2023 Caux Forum was especially meaningful as it was the first convened in person since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. New relationships were forged and old ones rekindled within the grounds of the historic Caux Palace. These connections are the very heart of the legacy of Caux.

**IofC Launches Trustbuilding Awards:**

At the beginning of 2023, IofC launched the Trustbuilding Awards, with the purpose of raising the profile of individuals and organizations around the world that are working to end violence and inequality by bridging polarized groups, healing historical wounds and fostering trusting relationships in communities. Awards were presented at the Caux Forum and recognized three winners in the categories of Trustbuilding Award of the Year, Young Trustbuilder of the Year and Lifetime Achiever. 'Trust is essential for nations to work together effectively to address climate change terrorism and economic inequality,' said Talia Smith, IofC Trustbuilding Program Manager. 'Highlighting trustbuilding efforts is a small step to working towards a more cohesive and resilient global community for us all.'



## Trustbuilding Program

The Trustbuilding Program (TBP) helps communities in conflict reconcile and create lasting peace from the ground up whilst cultivating leaders to bridge local divides. A recipient of the prestigious United Nations Cultural Innovation Award, the Program is based on lofC USA's long history of trustbuilding and racial reconciliation work in Richmond, Virginia. It is designed to build the capacity of community leaders to apply lofC principles and values to localized social contexts of racial, ethnic, class or religious division (and multiple other places where trust has been broken), and it offers a methodology for implementation.

In 2023 the TBP launched a new national initiative in Cameroon, bringing the total number of participating TBP countries to 13. Each country team employs the TBP methodology to their unique communities, from bridging divides between civil society and police forces in Nigeria, to healing historical wounds with First Nations peoples in Australia.

The TBP offers specific, tangible and scalable impact to local and global communities, and examples of this are found with the national teams in South Africa, Indonesia and Australia, where the TBP methodology is applied in trustbuilding trainings for companies and schools. Talia Smith and Cleo Mohlaodi, the Trustbuilding Program manager and South Africa Trustbuilding Program manager respectively, delivered three workshops to 80 BMW employees, which proved that the TBP curriculum can successfully adapt to corporate audiences.

During the 2023 lofC Caux Forum, the TBP hosted an in-person Training of Trainers for nine of the TBP country teams. Over four days at the forum, the training provided new content and practical exercises, and allowed the national teams to bolster their global community of practice.

The Program's work also featured prominently at the 2023 World Democracy Forum in Strasbourg, France, where lofC delegate John Bond presented the TBP methodology to activists and policymakers.

## Trustbuilding Story of Transformation

In Burundi, the local trustbuilding team is working to heal historical wounds created through ethnopolitical conflicts (Hutu, Tutsi and Twa ethnic groups) and restore community trust in Burundi.

One of the ways the team is doing so is by working with youth in displacement camps near Bujumbura, who had to leave their villages during the deadly crisis. These camps are divided by ethnic groups, thereby preserving the deep divisions.

One of the youth participants, Chandelle, reflected on their experience with the TBP:

'I was born in 1999 in a camp for displaced people from Bugendana. The effects of the killing of the democratically elected president and the mass killing that has followed have affected me personally. The violence has been cyclical, with each ethnic group seeking revenge on the other at all costs, thus making the violence perpetual. Members of all ethnic groups have been killing each other.'

I grew up surrounded by only people from my ethnic group, all survivors of the massacres of Bugendana, where many people died. Because we are mono-ethnic in the camp, we share the same narrative of what happened to my community and the country. Those who are not from my ethnic group and stayed in the villages are demonized, judged inhumane and held responsible for all the misfortune that has befallen us. I have never been exposed to another narrative because I grew up in this environment of people from one ethnicity with much social and psychological trauma. In consequence, they still consider all villagers as executioners.

After attending this workshop, I understood how important forgiveness is and how important it is to open our hearts and cultivate inner peace to allow us to be no longer afraid of "others" and start good relationships with them. Now I feel transformed and know we are not the only ones who suffered from the past violence.'





## Foundations for Freedom

Foundations for Freedom (F4F) was initiated in 1993 as a programme of Initiatives of Change in the UK and works primarily in Eastern Europe. The initiative is now officially recognized as an international NGO registered in Ukraine since 2009. Foundations for Freedom aims to foster the development of truly free, democratic and just societies, where people live in commitment to their values, in particular honesty and personal responsibility.

After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Foundations for Freedom has faced extreme challenges along with Ukrainians who are fighting for their survival and freedom. During this ordeal, F4F continues to support Ukrainian people, mainly through the Trustbuilding Program and the personal initiatives of the F4F community and Board members. F4F has a crucial role to play in supporting Ukrainians with their struggles and building a foundation for the challenges of the post-war recovery.

In 2022-2023, the F4F team initiated 13 Trustbuilding Dialogues (TBDs) in Ukraine to foster trust among Internally Displaced Persons, local authorities and residents. The team expanded their efforts with retreats called 'Society. Trust. Changes.' The retreats were composed of 15 participants from TBDs, representing various regions including Kyiv, Lviv, Poltava, Mariupol, Bakhmut, Kherson, and Crimea. Using quiet times, non-violent communication and interactive games, they aimed to empower participants who care about Ukrainian society. Looking ahead to 2024, they plan to support these participants in becoming facilitators, equipping them with trustbuilding skills and knowledge so that they can provide leadership and run activities in their communities.



## Creators of Peace

Creators of Peace (CoP) International is a global, women-led programme of Initiatives of Change and an Associate Member of the Initiatives of Change International Association. Core to CoP's methodology is the Creators of Peace Circle, which brings together small groups to address 10 'Gathering Points' on subjects such as 'What is Peace Anyway', 'Qualities of a Peace Creator' and 'Inner Peace'. Spread across the world, CoP women volunteers contribute generously to creating peace within themselves, their homes and communities.



The inspiring stories reported from 16 countries across continents in 2023 catered to young and old, men and women, and specific groups as well as organizations. Participants from some of these special Creators of Peace Circles and taster sessions included widows in Nigeria, new mothers in Uganda, couples in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, alumni and friends of Caux in Switzerland, women in leadership in the United Kingdom, members from a reading club in the Middle East, and a blend of women from South Sudan, Australia, Kenya, and Cambodia in Australia. In addition, Latin America offered facilitator training, and welcomed newly trained, bilingual facilitators.

### Highlights of Impact Stories from 2023:

**February 2023** - In a collective effort by CoP India and CoP Nepal, a Creators of Peace Circle was facilitated in India for Kolkata Sanved, a women-led pioneering organization working in the field of Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) for trauma healing and empowerment of marginalized populations.

**March to November 2023** - Creators of Peace International partnered with the Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace (GHFP) on the pilot project of the UNESCO Collective Healing Initiative to work on healing the wounds of slavery and colonialism, and was implemented in Nigeria, Kenya, UK, USA and Colombia.

**May 2023** - At the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) annual conference - Rooted Futures: Visions of Peace and Justice in Trinidad and Tobago, Creators of Peace facilitators held a taster

session of Advocating for a New Story of Our Shared Humanity (ANS), which is a programme of Creators of Peace International.

**October to December 2023** - Creators of Peace International successfully executed the Spotlight Initiative Caribbean Region Programme, an initiative that spanned multiple phases and focused on addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in the Eastern Caribbean. This was enabled by a grant from UN Women awarded to Initiatives of Change International earlier in 2023 under the Spotlight Initiative funded by the European Union. Creators of Peace was the designated implementation partner for Initiatives of Change.

**December 2023** - In December, Creators of Peace in partnership with Chagai Foundation facilitated Creators of Peace Circles for women leaders in South Sudan.



## Initiatives for Land, Lives and Peace

Can the climate and environmental crises rally humanity to address a common challenge? The IofC programme 'Initiatives for Land, Lives and Peace' goes to the heart of this question.

Land provides the principal basis for human livelihoods and well-being. At the same time, ownership of land is a major driver of conflict. Land also has a substantial impact on the earth's climate systems and is in turn impacted by them. The unique contribution of ILLP is that it addresses land, lives and peace simultaneously. It does so through the lenses of trust-building and collaboration, underscored by the conviction that change in human motivations, attitudes and behavior is possible.

In 2023 several members of the ILLP network participated in COP28, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) conference in Dubai. COP28 was the first UNFCCC Conference of the Parties to formally



recognize that climate change and peace are interconnected. Initiatives of Change International, represented by ILLP, was a signatory, along with more than 40 other

peacebuilding agencies, to a series of Peace@COP Policy Asks.

ILLP Executive Group member Dr Alan Channer, from the UK, represented IofC International at a UNFCCC side-event on the role and rights of indigenous and local communities in relation to the need for integrity in the international carbon market. During his presentation, Dr Channer noted that 'connectivity, trust, transparency and integrity are critical for multi-stakeholder, deep collaboration'. Dr Lauren Fletcher, a climate entrepreneur and member of the ILLP Steering Group from the USA, participated in numerous fora on mangrove, peatland and forest restoration, which he noted are now getting the attention they deserve at UN Climate COPs, while at the same time increasingly putting the needs of local communities at the forefront.

Individuals in the ILLP network engaged in practical land restoration activities throughout the year in Kenya and North-East India, notably through Earthbanc, a climate technology company, which has its origins in the Caux Dialogues on Land and Security, in Switzerland, organized by ILLP. Dr. Irina Fedorenko-Aula developed mangrove planting projects in Indonesia and Senegal with her company Vlinder, and Dr. Lauren Fletcher developed drone-planting trials for forest restoration in Peru.

During the 2023 Caux Forum, ILLP organized a Summer Academy workshop, in partnership with the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, Triple Capital (Namibia), Caux Initiatives of Change and the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform. Funded by Earthbanc, the Summer Academy workshop brought together 23 participants from five continents, with the goal of 'strengthening the climate resilience of conflict-affected and vulnerable communities'. Participants of the workshop developed a policy brief for governments, funders, nonprofits and community-based organizations, which was published by the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, and shared widely by other international agencies.

## Farmers' Dialogue International

Since 1994, Farmers' Dialogue International (FDI) has been mobilizing farmers committed to the production of food for everyone's needs, responsible stewardship of natural resources and advocating for policies and processes that facilitate sustainable agriculture. It aims to reinforce the values that make farmers partners rather than competitors, no matter their age, gender or cultural background. FDI actively demonstrates the link between personal change and global change, with agricultural community development as a common goal.

Throughout 2023, regional teams continued their work by training younger farmers, providing care to women farmers and executing projects related to conservation and climate change.

Jean-Pierre Emeriau (FDI chairman - France) and Pierre Lokeka (FDI secretary - DR Congo) represented FDI at the General Assembly that took place during the Caux Forum 2023. Pierre Lokeka was also invited to take part in the workshop, 'Strengthening climate resilience in conflict-affected and socially-fragile contexts,' which was organized in Caux by the Geneva Centre for Security Policy.

The FDI holds a close partnership with the Centre Kitumaini, an organization that uses agriculture to facilitate healing and empowerment among female victims of violence and rape from the ongoing war in Eastern Congo. With the support of the IofC Burundi team, the Centre Kitumaini has developed 'peace circles' for the women it cares for, and in 2023 the centre trained some of the women participants to become facilitators for future peace circles. Additionally, the French FDI team continued to link up with AFDI, French Farmers and International development, in support of farming projects at Centre Kitumaini.

Throughout 2023 the FDI held monthly meetings, which are an important opportunity for the programme staff and participants to hear from those who are farming in difficult situations, including wars (such as Burkina Faso, Uganda and Ukraine), and confirming the sentence: 'No bread without peace - No peace without bread'.





## Where can I find Initiatives of Change?

The map shows the countries, indicated in dark green, where Initiatives of Change is actively at work in local communities.

Americas • Africa/ Europe • Asia Pacific

Everyone, everywhere, has a part to play and a story to tell.

### INITIATIVES OF CHANGE CENTRES

Throughout the history of our organization, hospitality has played a pivotal role in helping to build bridges across the world's divides. We own and operate buildings and conference centres across the globe.

Our teams and programmes aim to be inclusive of all people and perspectives; we do not discriminate based on sex, age, race, ethnicity, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, religion, culture, or individual political opinions.

#### ARMAGH Melbourne, Australia

Since 1956, the Australia-Pacific Centre for Initiatives of Change in Melbourne has hosted lofC conferences, events and training courses, notably the Life Matters workshops which draw participants from all over the Asia Pacific region. Indigenous Australians often contribute their culture, spirituality and stories to programmes at Armagh, which is situated on the land of the Wurundjeri nation.

#### ASIA PLATEAU Panchgani, India

Some 4,000 people attend programmes at Asia Plateau in India's western hills every year. Created in 1967, the lofC centre runs training courses in character development for people in industry, government, the armed forces, and NGOs, as well as for school and university students and for families. Its rural development and environmental centre, Grampari, teaches communities to protect their water sources, reduce and manage waste, and to farm sustainably.

#### SITIO SÃO LUIZ Petropolis, Brazil

Sitio São Luiz, the conference and training centre of Initiatives of Change in Latin America, was acquired through the sacrifice of many people in 1965 and has offered a range of programmes and events over the years.

#### CAUX CONFERENCE AND SEMINAR CENTRE Caux, Switzerland

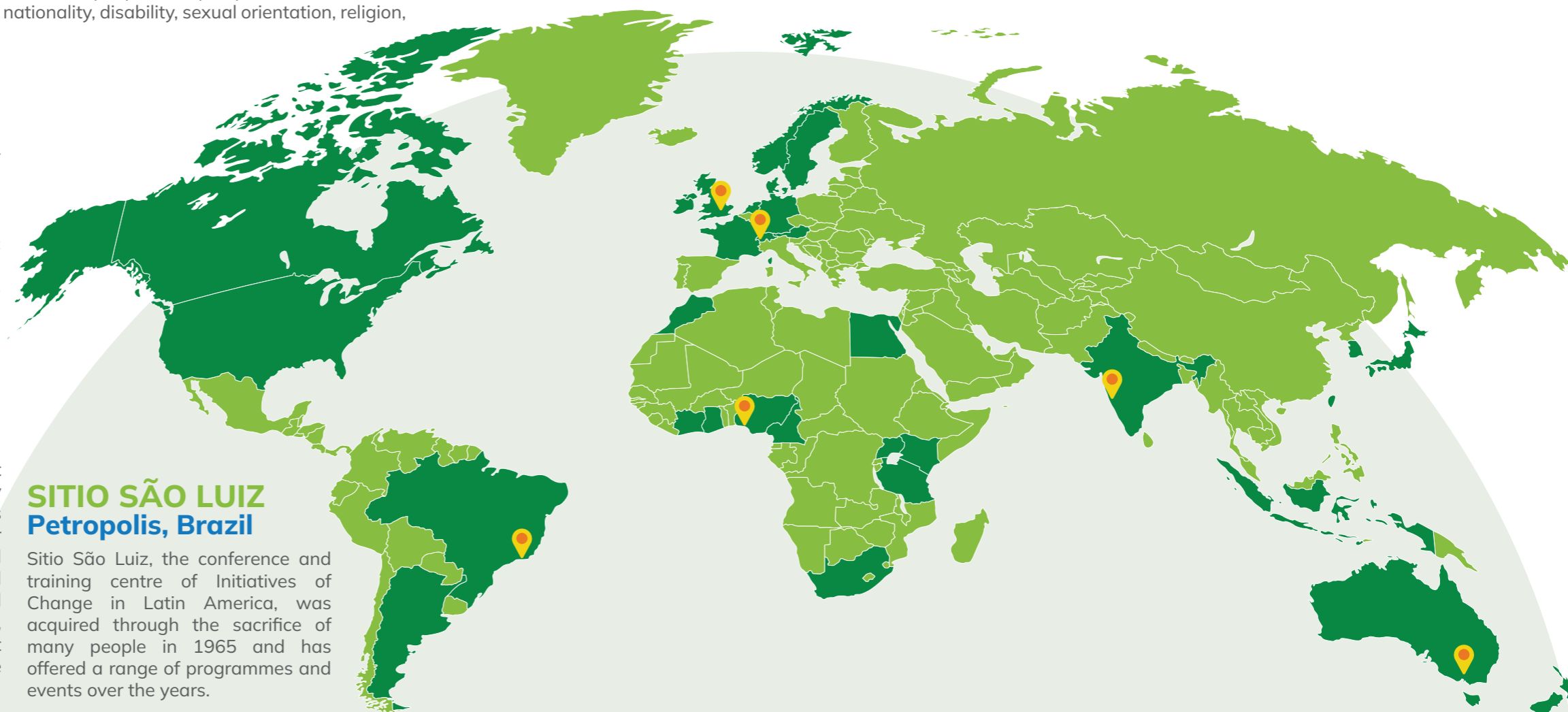
In 1946, around 100 Swiss individuals and families bought the Caux Palace and transformed it into an international conference centre for Initiatives of Change. Immediately after World War II, hundreds of French and German people met there, creating a solid basis for further reconciliation efforts in Europe. Over the years, Caux's work of reconciliation and trustbuilding has continued through its summer conferences.

#### GREENCOAT PLACE London, United Kingdom

lofC's centre in central London is the hub for lofC UK's work in empowering refugees, building trust between and within communities, and promoting ethical leadership. Public events take place throughout the year.

#### IKOYI CENTRE Lagos, Nigeria

The Ikoyi Centre has brought together more than 2,000 participants of various programmes since it opened its doors in 2013. The space is well equipped to host training for corporation staff, teachers and community groups, with its own library, office space and a small events hall.



## What Can I Do?

### Be the Change

Initiatives of Change has a distinctive approach to generating change, which is rooted in our shared values of honesty, unselfishness, purity and love. We believe that each person has the capacity to:



#### Reflect

An honest look at one's own motives and behaviour is where change begins. By placing people at the centre of our approach, we believe that we can create sustainable impact built on commitment and conviction.



#### Listen

Honest conversation, undertaken in an open spirit, builds bridges of trust and community between people of similar, different, and even antagonistic backgrounds.



#### Volunteer

Until the turn of the century, our operations were carried out entirely by volunteers. Even today, our teams rely on volunteers to provide support in their communities. If you have time and talents you would like to give, then please reach out to us!



#### Act

We seek to strengthen the foundations of society and to bring healing where there is conflict. Use the insights gained from reflection to discern the next steps in your journey towards social change.



#### Donate

Your gift enables our programmes and initiatives across the globe. Our teams are working tirelessly in their local communities to carry out the mission of IofC, and every donation provides the necessary resources to support their efforts!

### Partnerships

Change cannot occur in a vacuum. Partnerships across sectors and between organizations ensure that we can address societies' needs in a more holistic and inclusive manner!

- Fetzner Institute
- Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace (GHFP)
- Spirit of Humanity Forum
- Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers

### Affiliations

As part of our desire to inspire change at all levels, we seek out relationships with like-minded organizations with an international focus. We are actively engaged with:

- United Nations Economic and Social Council (Special Consultative)
- Council of Europe (Participatory Status)
- International Organization for Migration (IOM)

## Community of Support

**No matter your age, income, or culture, if you believe in the power of honesty, unselfishness, purity, and love, then you have a community to support you in tough times.**

As an organization whose aim is to support and facilitate personal change, during the pandemic we listened to the needs of our global community and provided members with various opportunities to connect through virtual gatherings:

### iListen

iListen is the virtual version of the IofC practice of 'quiet time', an open invitation for participants to reflect on their lives and seek inspiration. This safe and inclusive space, where everyone can share what's on their heart, gives a chance to receive encouragement from others and help discern what changes may be needed in one's life. Initially developed in English, iListen sessions are also hosted in French, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Hindi and Ukrainian.

### Living History

Living History – Across Generations offers opportunities to engage with changemakers from across the globe and gain practical

knowledge that can be applied to participants' personal journeys as advocates for change.

### Global Community Forum

The Global Community Forum is a monthly gathering for committed community members to discuss the deeply personal, and often spiritual, approach to societal change in a guided sharing format.

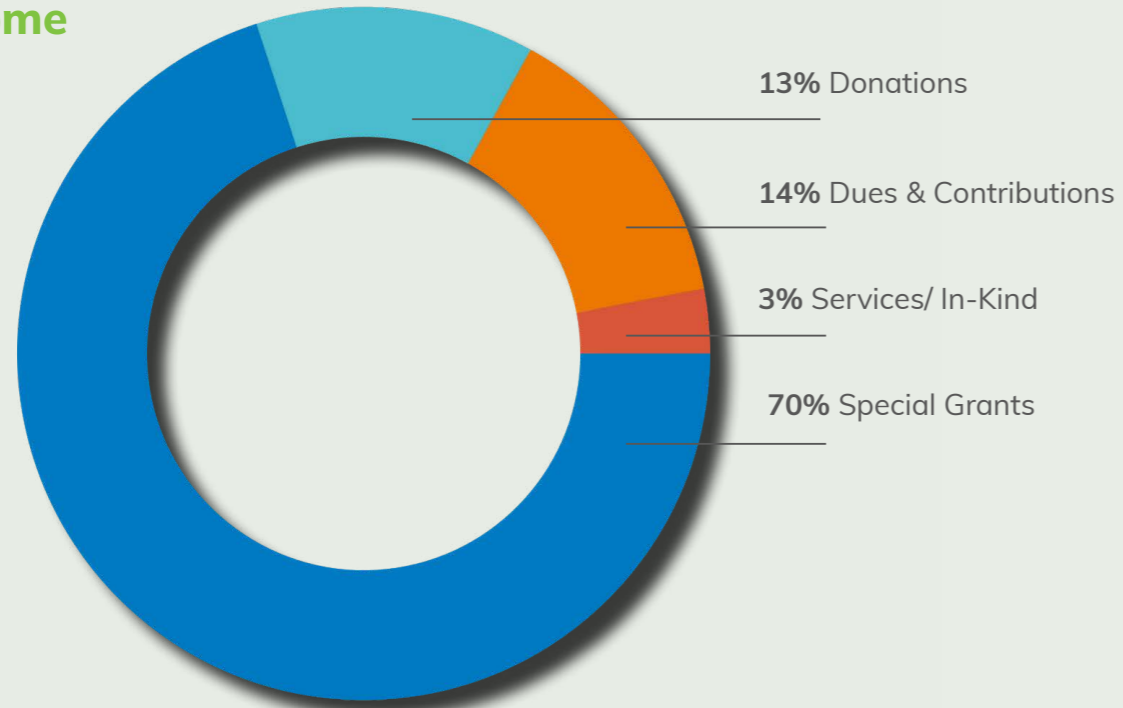
### The IofC Hub

The Initiatives of Change Hub 2022 hosted a wide range of discussions, talks, films, training, music, and other artistic events, and was led by people active with IofC across the world.

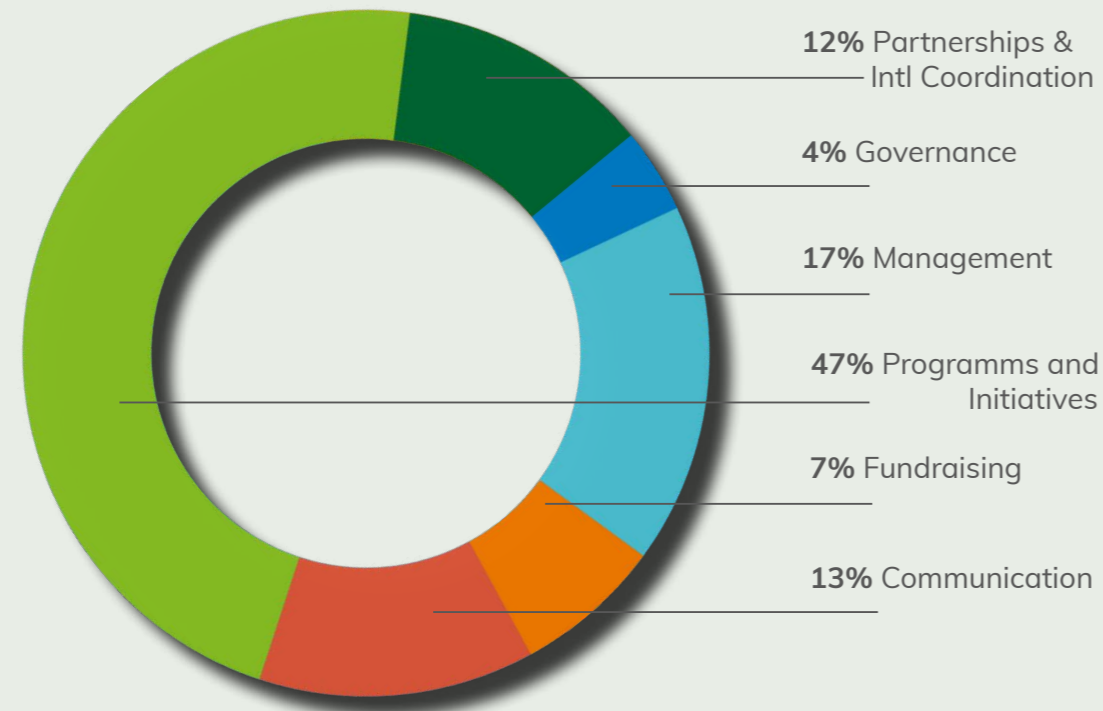




## Income



## Expenses



## Thank you!

Initiatives of Change could not continue its work without the countless individuals, on all continents, who have committed themselves to be the change they want to see in the world. From the very beginning, our people and programmes have been supported by generous individuals, who have given accommodation, financial resources or time because they are inspired by our mission and our people.

We are grateful to all those who have contributed towards creating a lasting, positive impact. Thank you to everyone – past, present and future – who has supported our vision!





[www.iofc.org](http://www.iofc.org)

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