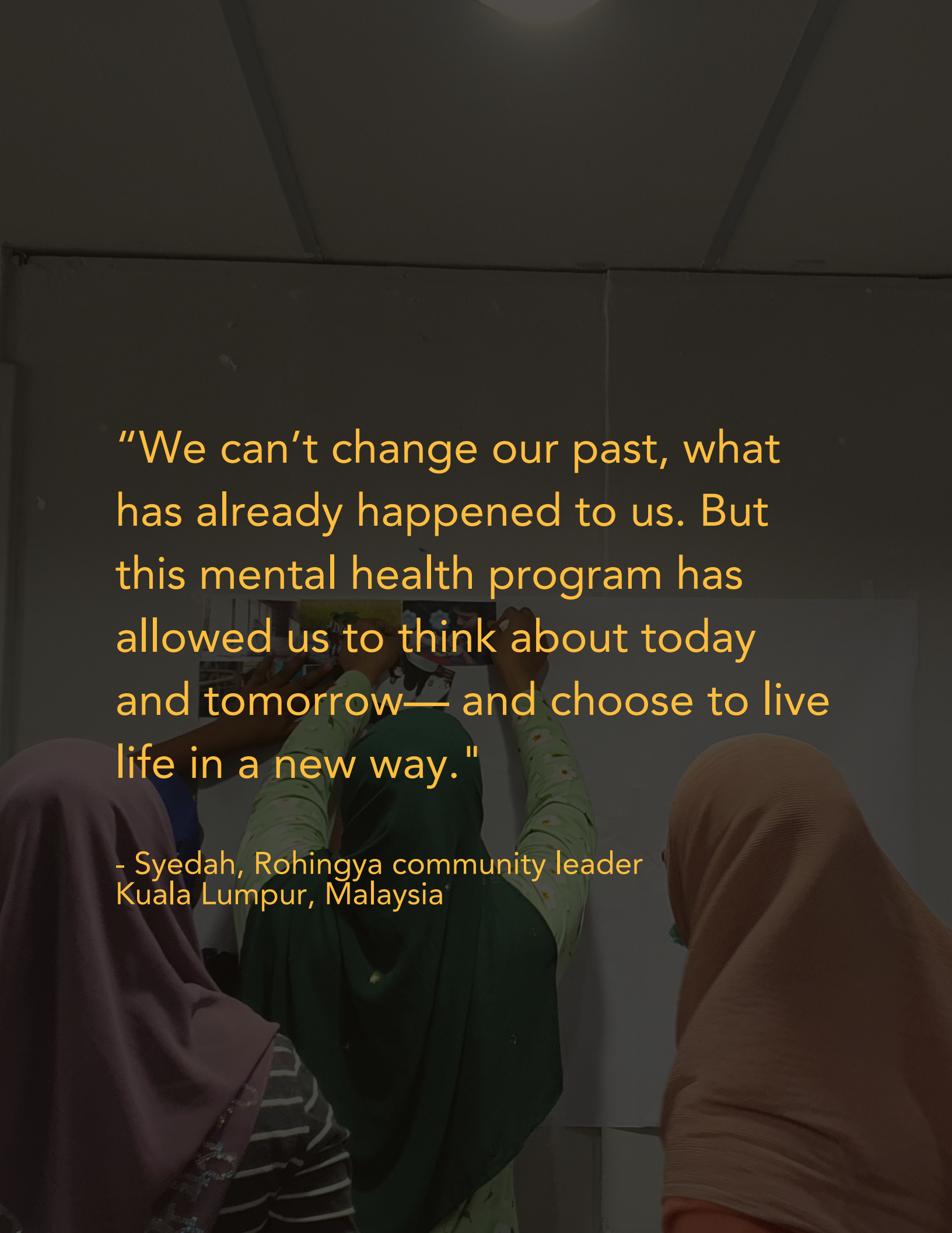




2023

ANNUAL REPORT

A group of women wearing hijabs are gathered around a wall, looking at a poster or document. The scene is dimly lit, with the primary light source being the text overlay. The women are seen from behind, their heads and shoulders visible. They appear to be in a community meeting or a workshop setting.

"We can't change our past, what has already happened to us. But this mental health program has allowed us to think about today and tomorrow—and choose to live life in a new way."

- Syedah, Rohingya community leader
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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about Brio

Every person is created to flourish. But the burdens of violence and injustice fall heavily on the shoulders of marginalized communities, where as many as 2 in 5 people are at risk for poor mental health. This vicious cycle of marginalization and poor mental health threatens our collective wellbeing and our shared future.

Raising awareness and providing treatment are important, but ultimately insufficient to address the global scale of this problem. We must also cultivate positive mental health—helping individuals and communities build psychological skills that reduce their risk of illness, while promoting freedom and agency in difficult circumstances. Only when we address mental health at the community and population level will the tide begin to turn.

Brio advances global mental health and wellbeing through design and collaboration with local leaders and organizations. Through partnership, training, and resource creation, we are building a world where marginalized communities lead our collective liberation.

our approach



What we do:



We Collaborate:
designing mental health
skill-building programs
with social change
organizations through
deep, multi-year
collaborations.



We Equip:
scaling effective initiatives
through training and
consultation for social-
sector leaders to advance
well-being in their systems,
strategy, and culture.



We Share:
creating accessible tools,
resources, and case studies
from the front lines of
mental health and
wellbeing innovation.

Cultivating psychological flexibility at scale:



We center the programs we design on the framework known as Acceptance and Commitment Training, or ACT (pronounced “act”)— a proven transdiagnostic behavioral approach to improving mental health by helping people shift their inner mental processes, connect with their chosen values, and take committed action. As a framework, ACT seeks to cultivate **psychological flexibility**, which has been proven across thousands of studies to support individuals in a wide range of contexts. As a construct, psychological flexibility encapsulates the ability to actively engage the full range of the human experience while choosing to take action toward one’s chosen values. [Learn more about our process here.](#)

Brio by the numbers



5 years of collaborating with local leaders and communities to promote mental health



10 deep partnerships with social change organizations in Latin America, Asia, and the United States



130,000 people reached directly by programs we created and implemented with our partners

Letter from the executive director



dear friends,

Brio turned 5 years old in 2023. I still remember the phone call that started it all in August 2018: a conversation with our community-leader friends in Ecuador about the challenges they were facing in their neighborhood. “We’ve been trying to figure out how to help our kids and their families with their mental health,” they said, “but we need partners to accompany us on this journey.”

We became those partners, and we have learned and grown so much over the years. But the root of the issue we seek to address remains largely the same. **Social change leaders the world over want better ways to help their communities respond to life’s hardships, to move toward healing and flourishing in their contexts.** And they want programs that speak to local lived experiences, build positive mental health skills, and integrate well into the local systems they navigate daily.

This year, our direct impact scaled from 10,000 individuals to 130,000 individuals through a government partnership in India. I also had the privilege of sharing our work at TED2023 and leading a series in the Stanford Social Innovation Review on mental health and social change, which has been read by 25,000 people as of my writing this letter. In many ways, our 5th year has been a dream come true.

Yet, while scaling proven programs or new ideas is critical to growth, these milestones don’t answer the big existential questions for me. What keeps me up at night is not our numbers, but whether all of this work is truly building the kind of world we want to see — one where people in marginalized communities have the dignity and agency to lead lives they are proud of, even while pain remains present in their lived experience.

Small, intimate conversations and stories offer much better answers to my existential questions. It’s a gift that we get to work with extraordinary partners who show up daily for children, adolescents, and adults whose lives are touched by deeply painful realities. I love hearing them share how the skills they’re learning with us are helping them change their own responses to pain, and making them better leaders for it.

And I am deeply moved by the real human impact we've created with our partners. There are too many stories I could tell about how we have changed and sometimes saved lives together. Of the thousands of people we have reached, some have dared to come forward and describe how they used the resources, ideas, and skills they learned in a moment of unbearable mental pain— pain enough to want to end their lives— and chose to live another day. Our collaborations have helped educators respond to young students with kindness rather than rage. We have helped refugee women claim their agency and voice as people without rights, gathering to build collective power and to care for each other. We are cultivating practices and activities to help young people build inner strengths to imagine and pursue futures that honor their whole, creative selves.

Perhaps what moves and inspires me most is what we can overcome— not alone, but together. **In the presence of immense pain where disengagement, despair, and even death become alluring choices, we and our partners have helped individuals find that life is still worth living.**

Even so, I frequently call to mind the words of Howard Thurman, who said “Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

Have mental health concerns increased since the pandemic? Yes. Does the world need better ways to address mental health at scale? Absolutely. But on this point I agree with Thurman: the world's greatest need is not the end of mental illness or any other problem, but the coming-aliveness of all people— flourishing for everyone. And I find myself coming alive in the quiet moments when I catch a flicker of that possibility.

Thank you for all the ways you've been with us on this 5-year journey. May you experience some of this coming-aliveness too, across life's mountains, valleys and all the places in between.

Yours,

Daisy Rosales
Executive Director, Brio



mental health for social change

Mental health is critical to lasting social impact, and we work with organizations who are on the forefront of change across numerous sectors and issue areas.

Partners in 2023:



Key areas of impact:



Youth development and leadership: Creating spaces and activities for youth and young people to build psychological skills for positive mental health, with Amadeus, Fundación Mi Sangre, and City Year.



Education: Expanding the reach of our 21-day well-being program for teachers in government schools in Rajasthan and Bihar, India. Co-creating a children's mental health program with government officials and local teachers with Kshamtalaya.



Menstrual health: Designing spaces for adolescents to explore what it means to respond to external and internalized stigma around menstruation with Uninhibited in India.



Refugee communities: Helping Rohingya refugee women build psychological skills to navigate traumatic pasts and uncertain futures with HumanKind in Malaysia.



partnership stories

Colombia

We were thrilled to launch our partnership approach in Medellín, Colombia in early 2023 with [Amadeus Fundación](#), an extraordinary organization that supports youth affected by gang violence through classical music. Since the 1980s, Amadeus has helped more than 10,000 young people find themselves through the joy and affection that a music community can create.



After a year of diving deep into understanding the context, participants, and leaders, we have co-created a youth mental health skill-building program that fits our partners' mission and hopes for impact.

These programs include stories, illustrative activities (utilizing art and music), and reflective conversations to promote psychological flexibility for navigating the ongoing challenges of being a young person in Colombia today.

In 2024, we are launching a pilot of this program in several music schools with 5 teachers and 50 youth, with a vision of creating a new model for engaging young people through the arts to promote mental health.



in their words

"The environments where we work are difficult and the kids and youngsters need attention, affection, understanding, accompaniment, as they deal with very serious issues..."

In that same proportion we need tools and strategies to not only understand them but to be able to give them the strength and the guidance so they can emerge from the heavy waters and see an opportunity, a different world.

Brio has brought that strategy and tools and we find so many ways to present or deal with a subject in a way that allows us to reach the kids and offer them support and company. It is not only how to deal with problems but how you approach life and become more conscious of yourself and others."

-Juan Guillermo Ocampo, Founder of Amadeus Fundación



"Our collaboration with Brio has meant bringing to life the dream of structuring our educational philosophy in a grounded and conscious way towards the implementation of a model that promotes emotional well-being through specific activities and strategies with therapeutic and psychological foundations, as well as educational ones.

In this way, its implementation aims to create a safe and respectful space for personal growth in the communities of vulnerable children and youth where Amadeus operates."

-Daniela Ocampo Sanchez, Creative Director, Amadeus Fundación

Malaysia

Since 2021, we have partnered with HumanKind in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to design a mental health promotion programs with Rohingya refugee women. The program uses storytelling, art, and conversation to build psychological skills that help women navigate the extraordinary challenges they face.

Several women leaders have been at the center of this entire journey, offering their insights and suggestions for content, recruiting women to join, and facilitating alongside HumanKind staff.



After a successful pilot in 2022, the program has been replicated several times with new social change organizations supporting marginalized populations in Kuala Lumpur.

We had the honor of visiting HumanKind in 2023 to work with their team of therapists on how to facilitate mental health promotion programs. We were thrilled to hear that the program we designed promoted openness and mutual support in the midst of stressful community work, offering new ways to respond crisis with a sense of stability and connectedness.



in their words*

“What was my favorite part of the program? The whole program! We wait eagerly for every Friday when the lady comes to tell us the stories.”



“I love this program because it’s the only program for us that allows us to talk with each other and share our experiences.”

“I shared these stories with my sister who is still in Myanmar. She used to get really angry at her kids... and now she is calmer and kind to her kids.”

“So many people come to us telling us how bad our lives have been. How bad it is to be married as a child. How bad it is the way we are treated by our husbands. We can’t change our past, what has already happened to us. But this mental health program has allowed us to think about today and tomorrow—and choose to live life in a new way.” - Syedah, community leader

*For security reasons, names and photos of some participants have been withheld.



Going to scale



the story of *hausla*

In 2020, the founders of Kshamtalaya Foundation in India reached out to us to partner with them in the design of an effective emotional wellbeing program for teachers in the early days of Covid. What has evolved is a unique 21-day experience that incorporates daily audio lessons, live facilitation, and personal reflection. The program is called *Hausla*, which means “courage” or “resilience”.

Since those days, *Hausla* has reached thousands of individuals— first in the schools where Kshamtalaya works, then through a district partnership in Rajasthan where it was offered to 2000 teachers. **Now through a government partnership in Bihar, all 120,000 newly hired teachers as of 2023 have experienced it as well.**

design, evaluation, and growth

This 3.5-year story illustrates the dream for many of our Brio partnerships. The initial design centered the experiences of teachers who shared their concerns and needs at a time of acute stress and crisis. **Over time, through developmental evaluation and refinement, we created a program that offers scalability (through low-tech WhatsApp integration) as well as depth (through live facilitators who offer outreach and vision-building).**

Thanks to supporters including Pinterest and numerous individuals, we were able to build a wellbeing facilitator training program alongside *Hausla*, empowering social-sector professionals to offer spaces of reflection and connection while teachers experienced *Hausla*. In a pre/post evaluation conducted last year, the data from teacher participants was very exciting:

- 69% improved in wellbeing on the WHO-5 Wellbeing Index
- 59% improved in mindfulness on the Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills
- 38% improved in resilience on the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale

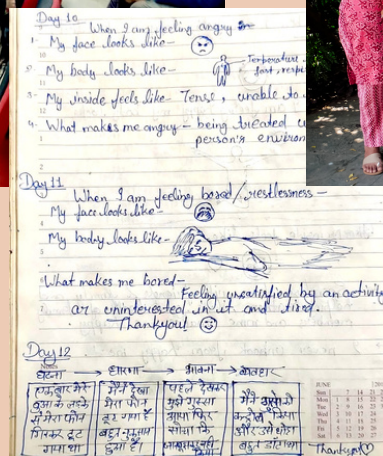


In their words: click on the video to hear from our partners, and two teachers share what it was like to participate in *Hausla*.

scaling to 120,000 teachers

In October 2023, Kshamtalaya team members invited Brio to visit with leaders of SCERT, the teacher training office of the Bihar state education department. Timelines aligned perfectly with the hiring of 120,000 new teachers in Bihar, and we were invited to train all of the trainers who would be leading the onboarding of these new teachers in *Hausla*.

Since then, the program has become a part of new teacher training in the state, increasing the feasibility of a statewide implementation and long-term integration with further support. We are thrilled with these possibilities and look forward to continuing a sustainable, mutually supportive partnership with education departments where Kshamtalaya works.



narrative shaping in social change

Covid-19 brought a renewed focus on the importance of mental health— not just as an area of concern but also of possibility. But even as more and more social change organizations are focused on mental health, there are not enough articulations as to why.

In May 2023, we partnered with our colleagues at the Catalyst 2030 Mental Health Collaboration to launch a series called *Global Perspectives on Mental Health and Social Change*, starting with an introduction to the series articulating why mental health and social change need each other. **The series was published in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.**

[Take a look at the series here.](#)



Beyond publicity, we are thrilled to be able to highlight the ideas and work of people across different continents and contexts, all working to integrate mental health into their approach to social change— not just because of the hardships their communities face, but because of its potential to strengthen and sustain the impact they seek to have.

Furthermore, Daisy participated in TED2023 as a small cohort of Acumen Fellows invited to share our vision for a renewed world with other TED attendees. We are so grateful for opportunities to share about the promise of positive mental health in the world's marginalized communities.

Join us for 2024 and beyond!

Mental health alone will not solve all of the world's problems— but it's a pillar to living with purpose, dignity, and agency. As we find freedom to do what matters to us, we can take committed action that brings about communal healing and liberation.

Whether you're new to mental health or a seasoned wellbeing champion, we'd love to have you join us on this journey. Because across continents, contexts, and cultures, we have seen the power of mental health to bring about true flourishing— for everyone.



Co-Founders

Daisy Rosales, Executive Director

Aaron Rosales, Director of Mental Health

Board of Directors

Jennifer Guerra Aldana

Jihye Gyde

Jasmine Park



startbrio.org
@startbrio
admin@startbrio.org

