

# Annual report 2024

Empowering communities through knowledge, connection, and sustainable development



## Foreword

2024 has been a year of growth, global connection, and tangible impact for **COMMEET** Fellowship. As a Dutch non-profit foundation with a worldwide focus, our mission is rooted in facilitating grassroots change by empowering local communities to address global challenges—through education, innovation, and mutual exchange. With projects flourishing in Bangladesh, Uganda, and Malaysia, the launch of new toolkits, and deeper academic and institutional collaborations, we have taken decisive steps toward building a more inclusive, just, and sustainable world.

At the heart of **COMMEET** is our belief in local ownership. We do not “deliver solutions” to communities—we create frameworks and tools that allow communities to build their own. This year, we are proud to have seen communities take these frameworks and transform them into action.

## Highlights of 2024

the key achievements and milestones that defined our work throughout 2024. From expanding our global network to launching essential resources and cultivating strategic collaborations, these highlights demonstrate the strength of our grassroots-driven, collaborative model.

- Five global communities actively contributing to the COMMEET Experience Centre;
- Three completed toolkits published and two new ones in final editing;
- New toolkit under development on early childhood needs;
- Strengthened partnerships with The Schumacher Institute, Zuyd University and Maastricht University PREMIUM;
- Launch of a new campaign towards a sustainable financial future.

## Introduction

### Bringing UBUNTU to the modern world

COMMEET Fellowship is dedicated to empowering communities worldwide by providing them with the tools, knowledge, and support needed to address pressing challenges. Inspired by Nelson Mandela's philosophy of UBUNTU — "i am because we are" — we strive for a world where cooperation, shared responsibility, and solidarity shape a more sustainable and equitable future.

As a ngo, we work toward realizing the United Nations sustainable development goals (SDG's) through grassroots-driven community empowerment. Our approach is based on collaboration, inclusivity, sustainability, and continuous learning. Over the years, we have successfully developed toolkits, supported regional initiatives, and fostered international partnerships to help communities achieve sustainable growth.

*"if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."*

Throughout history, humanity has survived and thrived through cooperation, solidarity, and mutual care. In small villages, people knew and supported each other, and solutions were found together. This was not seen as extraordinary, but as a natural way of life.

### The change

However, in recent decades, our world has been shaped by individualism and competition. Society has increasingly placed personal success and financial gain above collective well-being. While technological progress has soared, we have witnessed a decline in social cohesion and human connection. More and more, people feel isolated, even in a world that is more connected than ever.

COMMEET Fellowship believes that we must restore the power of community and bring back a sense of shared responsibility. This is where ubuntu comes in where Nelson Mandela reminded us that true happiness and success can only be achieved together, through collaboration, empathy, and understanding.

### Our mission

Our mission at COMMEET is to revive this philosophy in a modern context, empowering communities to ownership of their future while leaving no one behind. We focus on practical action—supporting local initiatives, providing essential toolkits, and fostering global partnerships —to help individuals and groups become drivers of sustainable, long-term change.

### Board development and organizational growth

As part of our growth, 2024 marked the beginning of an important internal transformation: the expansion of our board. This decision aims to distribute responsibilities more effectively and to position COMMEET for long-term strategic planning. A more diverse and skilled board will allow us to move with greater agility, take on new opportunities, and ensure the sustainability of our vision.

### Fellow newsletters: staying connected

In 2024, we also decided that as to 2025 we introduce a quarterly newsletter exclusively for our fellows. These newsletters serve as an internal channel to share updates, project insights, opportunities for collaboration, and behind-the-scenes reflections. It strengthens our global network by keeping all members informed, inspired, and engaged.

Let's make this year one of collective impact, shared and meaningful change—together.

### The COMMEET Experience Centre

A Platform for shared wisdom and local solutions.

The **COMMEET** Experience Centre acts as our central digital platform, where community stories, ideas, and grassroots innovations come together. It is the living heartbeat of our network—a space of exchange, growth, and solidarity.

The **COMMEET** Experience Centre has evolved into a digital and intellectual hub, showcasing real-life case studies, lived experiences, and community-led innovations aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In 2024, it served as the central meeting ground for communities in Bangladesh, Uganda, and Malaysia to engage in knowledge exchange, propose ideas for toolkit development, and inspire one another across borders.

The core philosophy guiding our work as mentioned before is Ubuntu - “I am because we are.” The Centre presents what we call forgotten knowledge: indigenous wisdom, grassroots methodologies, and systems of support that often get overlooked in dominant economic and development discourses. Through the platform, these voices gain visibility—and power.

In 2024, a fifth community joined:

Upendo Ni Baraka Uganda (UNBU), led by Betty Wuzu, which focuses on childcare and community resilience. Their involvement expands the Experience Centre’s scope to include early childhood and family welfare, a theme now reflected in our 2025 toolkit development.

## Community Impact Stories

**COMMEET** is not defined by programs—it is defined by people. This section features some of the many courageous and inspiring efforts made by our community partners in 2024. Their stories reflect the diversity of our network and the power of locally led change.

### Bangladesh: Oasis for Posterity – Balagram

Oasis for Posterity (OfP) made measurable progress across education and healthcare:

- Education: OfP prioritized primary and technical education, steering landless families away from child labor and toward school enrollment. At OIST (OfP Institute of Science & Technology), students benefited from a new computer lab, upgraded civil engineering equipment, and modern teaching tools.
- Scholarships: The Laura Scholarship was introduced to honor a loyal donor and support deserving students.
- Public Health: The OfP Health Centre emphasized preventive care and chronic illness screening, while new sanitation facilities improved hygiene at primary schools.

OfP's strategy shows how a comprehensive, multi-sector approach—grounded in community ownership—can dramatically improve quality of life.

### Bangladesh: Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD)

SEHD's most significant 2024 achievement was securing a 42-month EU grant for a major project titled:

“Protecting forest communities from drastic forest loss, plantation economy, climate change and landgrab.”

Beginning in 2025, this initiative will operate across the Chittagong Hill Tracts and central Bangladesh, focusing on indigenous and forest-dependent communities. In parallel, SEHD launched the Brattyajan Resource Centre, a knowledge hub dedicated to defending the human rights of marginalized groups.

### Malaysia: Usrah in Action – Kuantan

This year, Usrah in Action delivered critical training to Rohingya refugee children, teaching them CPR and first aid. Conducted in partnership with International Islamic University Malaysia, the program equipped 31 students with the confidence and skill to respond to medical emergencies—an especially vital intervention given their limited healthcare access.

This program didn't just build skills—it built dignity, agency, and future readiness.

### Uganda: Peace for Women – West Nile

In 2024, Peace for Women expanded its reach through:

- 103 gender-based violence (GBV) awareness sessions reaching over 500 women;
- Music and drama programs engaging 1,500 community members on issues of consent and healthy relationships;
- Women Rise Project, supporting 60 women with leadership, entrepreneurship, and mental health training;
- The ASIANZU Women's Group running successful group farming and microcredit programs;
- Increased organizational capacity and new office space were secured, laying the foundation for sustained growth.

### New Partner: Upendo Ni Baraka Uganda (UNBU)

UNBU joined the **COMMEET** network in 2024 with a mission to support women, children, and families, regardless of background or belief. Their expertise and experience will be central to the development of **COMMEET**'s upcoming early childhood toolkit.

### Toolkit Development and Dissemination

Toolkits are central to the **COMMEET** philosophy. Each one is a co-created knowledge product—grounded in community insight, tested in real settings, and refined through expert review. In 2024, our toolkit strategy moved from concept to delivery. Therefore, toolkits remain at the core of **COMMEET's** methodology, serving as practical, co-created knowledge products that bridge local wisdom with global challenges. Developed in close collaboration with communities, each toolkit is piloted in real-world settings and refined through expert input. In 2024, this strategy matured from early-stage concepts into actionable, widely disseminated resources.

Three toolkits were finalized and published this year:

1. Promoting the Wellbeing of Migrants and Displaced Persons;
2. Developing Sustainable Livelihoods through Technical and Vocational Education; and
3. Community Climate Action.

Two additional toolkits have reached the final editing phase, with publication planned for early 2025.

1. Anti-Racism: A Guide for Local Communities; and
2. Promoting the Empowerment and Wellbeing of Women

Looking ahead, the team has initiated development on a new toolkit focused on early childhood needs. This resource will address the foundational role of early years in sustainable development, informed by partners such as Upendo Ni Baraka Uganda (UNBU). Dissemination strategies include public webinars, detailed case studies, and full integration into the **COMMEET** Experience Centre.

### Strategic Partnerships

Our partners bring new perspectives, capacities, and credibility to our work. Whether through academia, research institutions, or innovation hubs, collaboration remains at the core of our model. Therefore, collaboration continues to be a central pillar of COMMEET's approach. In 2024, we deepened our strategic partnerships with several key institutions, whose expertise and engagement have significantly strengthened both our toolkit development and organizational learning.

Our collaboration with The Schumacher Institute (TSI) resulted in the co-creation of the Community Climate Action Toolkit, accompanied by a series of dynamic webinars. Looking forward, we are jointly exploring new thematic toolkits focusing on resilience building, indigenous knowledge systems, and alternative economic models.

Similarly, the PREMIUM honours programme at Maastricht University has provided valuable contributions through student consultancy projects. These included content development for toolkits (content), enhanced outreach strategies, and organizational analysis—demonstrating the power of cross-sector collaboration between academia and civil society.

### Financial Sustainability Campaign

As **COMMEET**'s impact grows, so too does the need for a robust and sustainable financial foundation. In 2024, we began building toward a long-term funding model that aligns with our values and mission. It should be a transitioning from a primarily volunteer- and donor-driven model to one supported by long-term, diversified funding streams. This campaign is a critical step toward ensuring we can serve more communities, more effectively.

This process will include mapping relevant funding landscapes, crafting tailored proposals for institutional donors, and initiating conversations with potential co-funding partners. **COMMEET** is also exploring innovative funding mechanisms, such as social impact investments. These efforts are supported by a dedicated student team from Zuyd University of Applied Sciences, helping to design a strategy that aligns with our values and community-led mission.

### Financial Report

This chapter will include a detailed overview of income, expenditures, funding sources, and financial projections.

### Looking ahead to 2025

As we enter 2025, **COMMEET** remains firmly committed to our mission of empowering communities to shape their own futures through shared knowledge, mutual support, and grassroots innovation. Our priorities for the coming year reflect both continuity and ambition.

Our priorities for the coming year include:

- Launching the new Early Childhood toolkit;
- Continuing global webinar series for each toolkit;
- Deepening relationships with new and existing communities;
- Expanding the Experience Centre into a multilingual, multi-platform knowledge base;
- Advancing the financial sustainability strategy;
- Publishing a Fellows' Voices anthology to elevate frontline perspectives.

### Gratitude and Closing Reflections

To our fellows, donors, institutional partners, and volunteers: thank you. Your commitment, knowledge, and belief in our shared mission are the lifeblood of **COMMEET's** work.

To the communities we support—and who in turn support us through their wisdom and courage—we express our deepest gratitude. You remind us daily that transformative change begins at the local level and that the spirit of UBUNTU is not just an ideal, but a lived reality.

In a world often overwhelmed by global challenges, **COMMEET** offers a powerful counter-narrative: change is happening, led by communities, sustained by solidarity, and rooted in shared humanity.