

FACILITATING MEANINGFUL CHANGE

Kathryn Bean and Shannon Salentine describe the impact of the Hunger Project's integrated coaching programme for global community development leaders.

Global non-profit organisation The Hunger Project (THP) is on a mission to end hunger for good. They pioneer sustainable, grassroots, female-centred strategies to fight starvation and poverty around the world. Instrumental in the community-led development movement, THP mobilises communities to develop solutions, advocating for the adoption of similar approaches at every level of government. Between 2020 and 2022, EthicalCoach joined forces with THP to give leaders in this sector the tools and resources they need to thrive.

One of the first collaborative projects these organisations undertook was to create an integrated coaching programme that would support 30 THP leaders representing the US-based team, and 21 country teams throughout Africa, south Asia and Latin America. Coaching would be made available in several languages, including English, French, Portuguese and Spanish (based on the leader's preference). During two initial cohorts, 50% of participants were women.

Packaging multiple coaching approaches and tools, this programme specifically addressed the unique challenges and the type of social impact work these leaders undertake. At the end of the programme, leaders had strengthened their team, boosted their confidence as leaders and were able to drive stronger organisational effectiveness.

The Hunger Project realises that sustainable development requires individual empowerment and growth. That is why it champions a form of transformational leadership that inspires long-term, positive change in community members as a core part of its commitment to community-led development. An integrated coaching programme was designed to respond to the nature of the organisational structure of THP: multinational, multilingual, decentralised teams working at a fast pace, and located in various geographies and time zones.

There were two key goals driving the design and implementation of this integrated programme. Firstly, to improve the leaders' effectiveness through enabling them to know themselves and their teams better, and develop their team leadership capabilities. Then, to increase their problem-solving initiative so that individuals could develop solutions and options, taking the lead in solving problems.

PROGRAMME DESIGN

The programme included both individual and group-level support:

- **LPI (leadership practices inventory):** a 30-question survey as a first step in building a culture of self-awareness and reflection, establishing a clear vocabulary around leadership. It is also an opportunity for leaders to build their development goals around feedback.
- **Connection meeting between coach and client:** a 90-minute conversation to help leaders establish key issues, goals and guidelines for the coaching process.
- **Meeting between the leader, their supervisor and the coach:** a meeting intended to bring the expectations and focus of supervisors into consideration during the coaching process.
- **Individual leadership coaching for leaders:** six months of coaching sessions, twice per month (10 sessions in total).
- **Development and sharing of go-forward plan with supervisors:** helping leaders to stay accountable to the things they learned and the ways they grew.
- **Group coaching sessions:** virtual, one-hour 'leadership circle' sessions, convened five times over the six months to share

experiences, learn from one another, and receive training and resources from the coach facilitators in order to integrate new leadership practices.

- **A final 90-minute individual meeting between the coach and client** to summarise accomplishments and agree on future strategies.

OUTCOMES

Overall, leaders reported that the biggest benefits from their coaching experience were in terms of self-awareness, confidence, honesty and innovation. Overall, feedback was very positive: 96% of leaders said they would recommend this coaching programme to their colleagues at The Hunger Project, while 74% said that the positive shift they experienced with coaching is a permanent one. Ninety-six per cent of leaders also said that the programme met their expectations, while 61% said that the programme exceeded their expectations. The biggest take-away was that leaders changed meaningfully. Individual coaching drove specific, outcomes in three key areas:

- **Leaders became more confident, capable and aware of their impact.** They developed skills vital to the functioning of their team and the pursuit of their mission. Leaders reported having increased confidence and increased capacity to navigate tension between management and leadership. Overall, leaders also found that the programme supported a deeper awareness of professional behaviours affecting them. As one leader shared: 'It helped a lot to organise my leadership. It also opened up new visions and made me realise more ways to be a good leader.'
- **Teams got stronger.** There were significant improvements in the leaders' capabilities to motivate and empower their teams. One leader shared how their team became committed to specific goals that the programme helped them illuminate: 'The programme helped in working better with others and getting them to be their best. I am able to better listen, direct and delegate at the same time. I've also reduced the number of instances that I unintentionally antagonise others.'
- **Programmes worked better, advancing the mission of the organisation.** Whether it was enabling innovation or helping teams to align to the strategic direction of an existing project, leaders saw meaningful change in the capability with their team. This included innovating the work, solidifying strategies, thinking strategically, analysing solutions and making informed decisions. According to one leader, they were able to shift from focusing only on short-term, urgent matters to longer-term objectives: 'The programme helped me to identify faster what gets us closer to our mission.'

MEASURING SUCCESS

To calculate return on investment, EthicalCoach and THP used three key measures of leadership within an organisation, established through the LPI.

- **Self-awareness:** an understanding of strengths, weaknesses and limitations, of how to gather and process information, and of how to handle ambiguous and stressful situations. It also sheds light on others' perceptions and the quality of interactions with others.

- **Business ownership:** the control over an enterprise, providing the power to dictate operations and functions.
- **Strengthening leadership:** a leader's confidence to lead and influence in a collaborative and respectful way, while providing praise and recognition to their team.

Leaders' feelings about their relationship to these leadership measures were surveyed, working on a scale from one to 10, before and after their participation in the programme. Every one-point change was equated to two hours of time saved. The number of hours saved was then multiplied by the hourly wage of the leader in United States dollars to provide a measure of return on investment (ROI).

Looking at leaders across Africa, south Asia and Latin America who participated in the programme, including an estimated hourly rate of the coaches that volunteered their time for the programme, the return on investing in a leader's development was 237%. Removing coaches' hourly rate because they volunteered their time increased the ROI to 932%.

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LEARNINGS AND PROGRAMME EVOLUTION

The programme has evolved to serve fast-emerging employee and organisational needs. From inception, the strategy has been to learn from each cohort and refine the programme to offer the best experience. The sustainability of an integrated programme is dependent upon ensuring that, at all phases, it continues to support the needs of the clients. Systematic 'learning moments' are gathered through a post-coaching client survey, a mid- and programme-end coach survey, and annual, qualitative interviews with organisational leaders.

In response to feedback, the programme evolved in the following ways:

- **Client education:** EthicalCoach and THP came to understand that the audience's familiarity with the principles of coaching must not be assumed. Continuous education for future coaching clients, and their employers, is essential. The introduction of a welcome webinar for clients (taking place before they are matched with their coach) provides a coaching demonstration, an insight into lessons learned from a previous cohort and an opportunity for new coaching clients to ask questions.
- **Focus on individual coaching:** establishing where client is at in their leadership journey.
- **Building internal champions:** after learning about the need to educate organisations, the programme has evolved to provide coaching to leaders at different levels. When senior leaders receive coaching, they serve as advocates for the benefits of coaching.

- **Streamlining the integrated programme:** the content has been modified to only include components that are most impactful and accessible to clients. This involved removing the group coaching due to time and language constraints, the three-way meetings with supervisors and the 360° assessment.

FINAL THOUGHTS...

An integrated coaching programme is a uniquely powerful tool when working at the community level to stimulate development through local leadership. The adaptability of the practice allows local visions and perspectives to be factored into the leadership development process. The focus on transforming leaders' mindsets and capabilities enables sustainable change through deep investment in the right human capital. Finally, this programme has shown that an integrated approach creates meaningful outcomes at each level of the organisation – team, personal, and programmatic.

Ethical Coach is always looking for new volunteers and partners; discover more at ethicalcoach.org. Visit thp.org to find out more about The Hunger Project

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Kathryn Bean is a certified human resource leader who has led national teams of learning specialists, coaches, business analysts and customer service agents, specialising in talent management with deep experience in coaching, change management, learning and development, employee engagement and strategic resourcing. She is the director of coaching initiatives and partnerships for EthicalCoach. Kathryn is leading pro bono leadership coaching engagements globally, with organisations such as Global Shapers Community, UNHCR, the WILD Network, The Hunger Project, Amref Health Africa and Justice Innovation Lab.



Shannon Salentine is an executive leadership coach, facilitator and global development consultant. She works with individuals and groups to find clarity in their purpose, take action and make a difference in the world. Shannon believes that radical self-trust, understanding your life purpose and acting courageously are keys to living the fully integrated and authentic life you deserve. She is the founder of Lead for Good, a coaching company that supports leaders and organisations to reimagine, reconnect and recommit support for those who are taking the steps to make a difference in our world. www.leadforgood.co