

The Greenlight Movement

Overview and Brief

March 2023

By Laura Bergh

The Greenlight Office, South Africa



The
Greenlight
movement

The power of the green light

The Greenlight Office

Supporting the Greenlight Movement in South Africa

Table of Contents

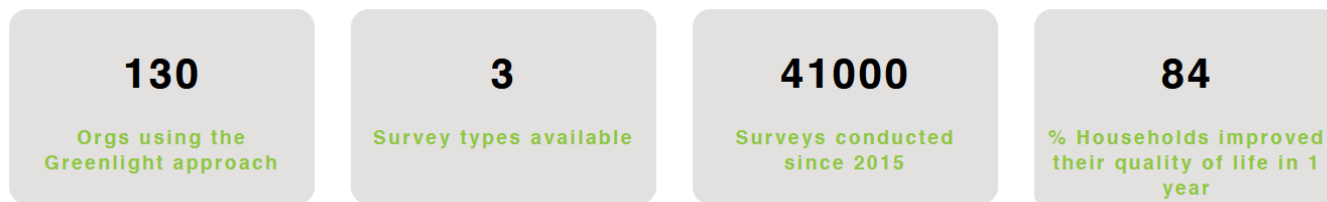
PART A - Overview	2
PART B – Ramping up for Future Collaborations	4
PART C - Main insights after 8 years of data	6

PART A - Overview

The Greenlight Movement

“There is a growing movement of organisations who recognise that in order to move the needle of transformation, a joint effort is required by those seeking to escape poverty and the organisations that support them in their efforts.” – Laura Bergh, Chief Enabler, The Greenlight Office

Originally built as a project within the walls of the multiple award-winning social enterprise called Taking Care of Business (previously called The Clothing Bank), [The Greenlight Office](#) is a non-profit company that exists as a virtual office with a national footprint. This initiative is acquiring a strong reputation through word-of-mouth as the go-to movement that assists in improving the success rates of organisations delivering social impacts in poverty-related and enterprise development programmes, through use of the tool called “Greenlight”.



The number of organisations that have joined the Greenlight Movement: **130** of which **63%** are active.

- Non-Profits and Social Enterprises = **75%**
- Businesses = **25%**

We are choosing to implement the Greenlight approach in South Africa through the creation of a **Movement** because there is a need to formalise and control the use of this tool in order to leverage aggregated data, which then offers a better perspective of the real issues at hand in specific areas of the country and scaling for a national snapshot in time. The benefits of sharing data and leveraging aggregated data are just too good an opportunity to pass up. The Greenlight Movement meets in various cities as communities of practice, called **Forums**.

The benefits of the Greenlight Movement and Forum sessions are:

- A collaboration space for organisations working to eradicate poverty in South Africa.
- Enabling organisations to measure outcomes against a common framework.
- Aggregation of data which offers a better perspective of the real issues at hand.
- Referral pathways that will ultimately inform stakeholders of priority areas for engagement.
- The establishment of a community of practice.
- Enabling organisations to collectively engage in the evolution of a tool that is gaining traction in Africa.
- The more policy-relevant information there is available on poverty, the better equipped policymakers will be to reduce it.

It is The Greenlight Office's ambition to:

- **Raise interest and awareness** within organisations about the importance of people being engaged in their own upliftment and to participate and own their journeys out of poverty (helping people to help themselves).
- **Provide a platform** to equip and enable the adoption of a new approach that reflects this philosophy – the Greenlight approach – that provides a clear line of sight of how to get there and a common set of indicators against which organisations can measure their objectives.
- **Catalyse a paradigm shift** in which poverty can be eliminated with an integral approach using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, brought about by co-ownership.

There are currently 3 Greenlight surveys in the portfolio of metrics:

- Poverty
- Resilience
- Disability

New Greenlight metrics are in development – Techer Wellbeing, Inclusion & Diversity in Schools, University Student Wellbeing.

Changing systems is imperative

The Greenlight Office has a theory of change that is designed to **change systems**. The work done impacts *directly* on the organisations who implement the Greenlight approach within their programmes and *indirectly* on the beneficiaries they serve (i.e. individuals within households or employees who are motivated to find solutions and change their mindset and behaviour to eradicate poverty). Thus, there is a dual benefit that moves in both directions: top-down as organisations design programmes that influence beneficiaries to own their journeys out of poverty, and bottom-up as grassroots (families and employees) take on the responsibility of changing the quality of their lives, manifested through changed behaviour.

The Theory of Change promotes a cycle of affirmation:

- by facilitating organisations to use the Greenlight tool to engage transparently and honestly on their results, the smarter and better-designed programmes will influence for greater change as they evolve their programmes to achieve the sweet spot, with other organisations adopting lessons learned and ramping up their own efforts.
- And the more explicit the change is on the ground, the more this will motivate organisations to keep evolving their programmes to apply solutions that ACTUALLY work.

Some of the biggest impacts that The Greenlight Office is having on member organisations are:

1. **Sharing insights and perspectives on social impact trends** – what’s working on the ground and what is not – gained through collecting longitudinal assessment data from socio-economically disadvantaged households who have self-diagnosed their level of poverty and ongoing improvement using the Greenlight tools. This is encouraging organisations to evolve design and leapfrog to tried and tested activities, through shared learning.



Community of practice sessions

“The work that The Greenlight Office is doing is making organisations question their programme strategy, and question their impact, and question their purpose. Sometimes this is very uncomfortable, but these are really important questions, things we need to ask and know.” – Tracey Chambers, CEO, Taking Care of Business

“By working with so many other organisations, The Greenlight Office can see the trends, what works, the pitfalls – they ask very strategic questions and this got our thinking clearer. Up to that point we were very excited to use the Greenlight tool, but the strategy sessions helped us define where we were going and how to achieve impact. It’s really nice to have a central office to link with, strategise with, learn from and to work with other organisations” – Louise de Marillac, Senior Social Worker, Christel House

“We were doing too many things. The strategy sessions and forum helped us to focus on what really works ... and not just grab onto any outcome we could achieve.” – Nodumo Ndengez, Programme Manager, Beautiful Gate

2. **Changes in the way organisations design their programmes and implement M&E practices** - organisations are becoming aware of the need to measure, assess and report on social impact in order to justify their existence as well as be able to respond transparently to stakeholders such as beneficiaries, employees, funders and investors.

“The hard, raw data is very important to us, in terms of building up a base of knowledge, in terms of getting provincial and national authority engaged with what is going on ... it’s absolutely critical, and having a consolidated area where that information exists, is vital.” – Richard Saner, General Manager, Westlake United Church Trust

“The Greenlight Office is very hands on. So, if we need things, we get information immediately, and The Greenlight Office is proactive. They will often push and send emails and reminders of things. We just like that sense of “on the ground”, they’re running with us, and it’s been really good ... you feel they are part of the process with you. They’re just as excited about Christel House, unpacking our strategy, and our implementation as we are. It doesn’t feel like a business to them. It’s a passion for them, which we like.” – Louise de Marillac, Senior Social Worker, Christel House

“Whenever we need The Greenlight Office, they are good with data, and we’ve asked them in a number of cases to assist in analysing specific things we want to interrogate, where we want to understand trends, and the product that I’ve got back has exceeded my

expectations every single time. And it's been incredibly valuable to help us to communicate results to our donors, our board, to really package it in a way that people can start to see trends." – Tracey Chambers, CEO, The Clothing Bank

3. **Networking and collaborations** – these are arising between members because of the conferences, community of practice forum sessions, and the realisation that partnerships and collaboration will result in bigger and quicker social impact. Members who do not have competence or capability in a specific area are encouraged to refer their beneficiaries/employees to trusted, credible organisations who are delivering the right kind of support and to rate that support. The aim is to encourage networking between organisations and to attack the issue of poverty from all sides, in an integrated approach, where the sum of all efforts will be stronger than individual, isolated energies.

"You can't be all things to all people, so the cross-pollination is critical – Richard Saner, General Manager, Westlake United Church Trust

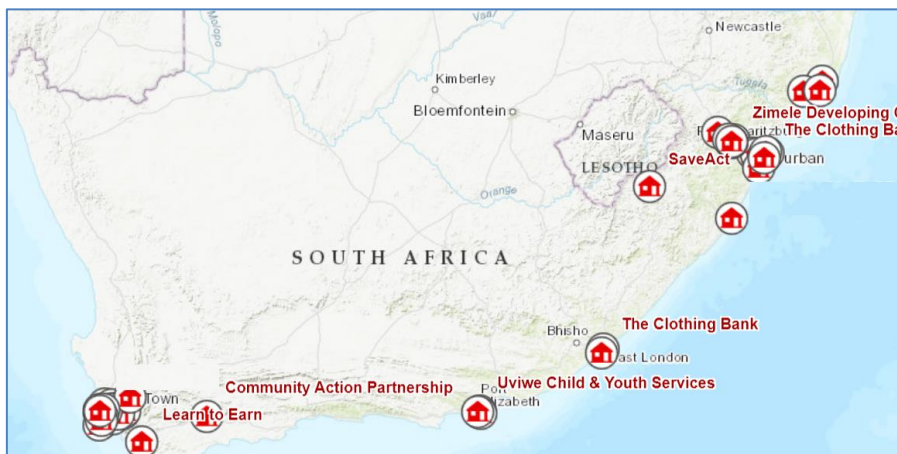
"As part of the forum and working with The Greenlight Office, we've now met many organisations working in the enterprise development and poverty alleviation space, and they've got different competencies to us, so we've really built a better referral pathway network. We now know what the problems are, and we are very deliberately referring and making sure that connection does happen. We can only get better by working and sharing information across the sector. We're going to really get a deeper understanding of where we are having impact and start referring beneficiaries to each other's organisations ... and stop the duplication! We've generated a significantly bigger network through being part of the movement and the work that The Greenlight Office does is connecting and joining the dots ... and it's invaluable." – Tracey Chambers, CEO, Taking care of Business

"We've had a lot of information from the team at The Greenlight Office. I've been very appreciative of the time they've spent with myself and the team building understanding of what it (Greenlight) is, and what the tool can do for us, and to best approach it. I'm looking forward to The Greenlight Office supporting us in finding like-minded organisations that are going through this so that we can share best practice and learning and also find NGOs and other who can support and provide input when we start to discover the key issues that our employees are going through." – Andrew Millson, Sustainability Manager, Food Lover's Market

PART B – Ramping up for Future Collaborations

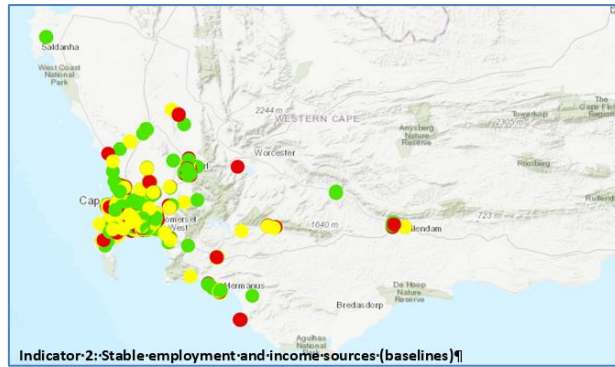
Articulating changes on the ground through the lens of Greenlight

The Greenlight Office is starting to map Members of the Greenlight Movement - who they are and what they do (for referral pathways and collaboration opportunities).

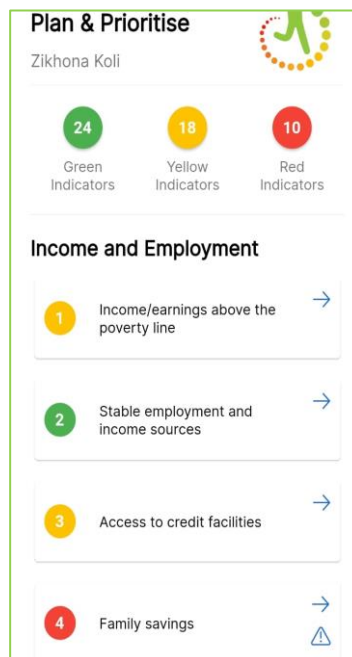
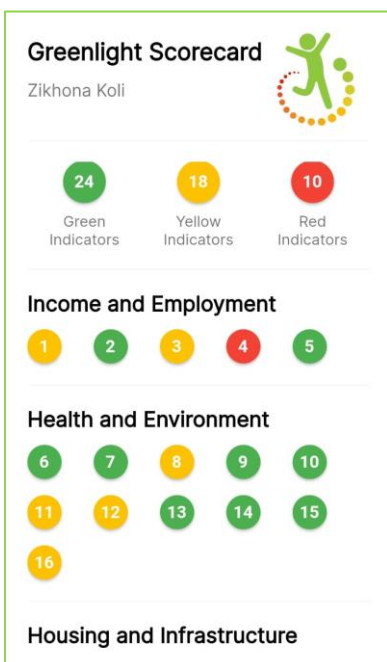
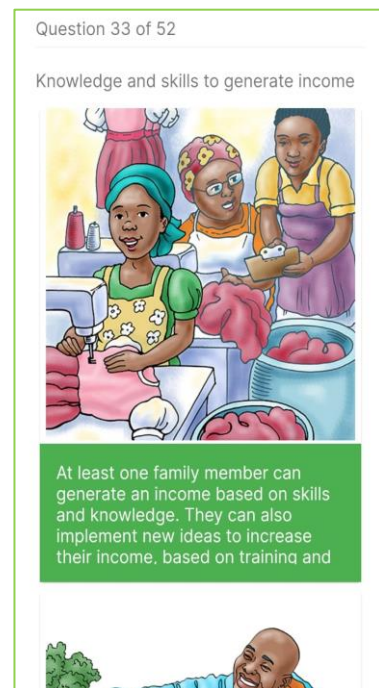
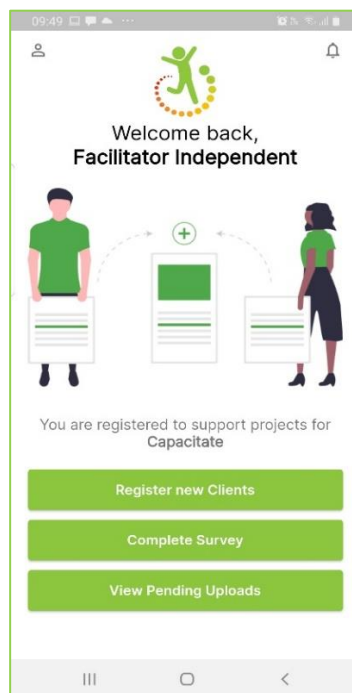


The Greenlight Office is starting to map Greenlight survey data – longitudinal (baseline, 12 months, etc) as well as across time (2015, 2016, 2016, etc), making sure the POPI Act is not breached.

The power of the green light ... you don't know what you need until you know what you've got!



After 18 months of software development with our partner Capacitate, the new Greenlight app and web-based platform is live and our 100+ Greenlight members will have their data migrated onto the new system. This new system has application programming interface (API) functionality (an open backend) that will allow for 3rd party partners (Greenlight members) to access their specific surveys data from the Greenlight system. Those orgs wishing to call the system using the API function will be issued with relevant credentials.



PART C - Main insights after 8 years of data

From the Greenlight Office's perspective, we are identifying interesting trends and insights from 8 years of data.

According to over 41,000 Greenlight surveys (taken at various stages of the programmes - baseline, 12 months, 24 months, 36 months), we can now provide input on:

- Main challenges to families across South Africa.
- What people change first when starting to earn income.
- What seems to be important to change first.
- What stays red (stuck) and is hard to change.
- What people really need vs. want.
- Programme design: what's working and what's not. Helping with relevance of activities, effectiveness of design, sustainability and impact of programmes.

a) The main challenges across South Africa appear to be ...



b) Good news is that ...

- 84% of households surveyed by orgs in The Greenlight Movement have improved their quality of life in 1 year, i.e., they move by an average of 10 points from baseline to 12 months.
- People reporting green for the *Self-awareness & Motivation* indicators are the first to move to the over 40/50 green metric mark for the whole survey and are the quickest to get there!

c) From the qualitative data and stories that we hear ...

- Having a JOB does NOT equate to being out of poverty.
- Having a HOUSE does NOT equate to being out of poverty.
- Charity and handouts do not work if you are trying to achieve social development – there is no movement in people's lives. In fact, it creates more dependency and can lead to entitlement.

d) Context signposts the type of poverty

Context plays a huge part in South Africa's poverty. We have seen how poverty in one area can have a completely different flavour to another area just 8 km away! Context signposts the type of poverty ... programmes should never adopt a 'one size fits all' philosophy!

e) What's working?

The most effective programmes appear to contain 3 main elements (or partner/collaborate to ensure they are covered):

- a) Economic development (building financial skills)
- b) Personal development (building personal skills, life skills, and knowledge)

c) Healing (past trauma, social contact, trust)

Of these 3 elements, the most important is *healing*. Research on our data shows that people with green indicators in the *Self-Awareness & Motivation* dimension are able to turn the rest of the indicators yellow and green the quickest and they tend to sustain this position.

f) **Elements of successful design**

Programmes appear to be seeing better levels of impact with beneficiary/client/employee engagements if design includes:

- Length of engagement time >6 months.
- High number of “touchpoints”, e.g., discussions about family planning is more than just 1 conversation/module.
- The messenger is ‘credible’.
- For business and enterprise development – programme is extended to include mentoring for a period up to 1 year.

g) **Collaboration for optimum impact**

Where programmes do not have the competency, capacity, or resources to work with a particular individual or family, referral pathways have been critical in ensuring that social impact is not lost due to working in isolation.

h) **A safe container**

A nurturing environment goes a long way in supporting people as they start trying to take responsibility for themselves! It also encourages agency ... pushing for self-awareness, shaping critical thinking skills, prodding for identity, and holding the space for healing.

“I think in time, once we’ve got a sufficient number of people using the Greenlight tool, the information that we are going to share is going to be the most important part of The Greenlight Movement, and if individuals were doing this themselves, we wouldn’t have the place where this data is going to be consolidated. It’s being part of a community that believes in the very work we are doing, a non-competitive community, because often, surprisingly, non-profits are competitive and now people are focusing on what they are good at and are happy to refer to other organisations where they are not intending to have impact, releasing everybody to chase after the bigger picture rather than their own agendas” – Tracey Chambers, Taking Care of Business