



# Skees Family Foundation

2017 ANNUAL REPORT



The Skees Family Foundation — **family helping families** — supports self-help programs for youth and families worldwide to advance **education** and promote **job creation** and **economic development**. We value love in action to create equal opportunity for all.





## Radical Collaborators: Co-Designing Grants WITH Nonprofit Partners

By: Suzanne Skees, Founder and Board Chair, Storyteller

Our family believes that if you're going to collaborate, you ought to begin by asking how you can help. We've restructured our entire grantmaking program to adapt to changes requested by the [changemakers](#) we're privileged to support.

Unfortunately, we hear from our nonprofit partners that designing grants *with* rather than *for* them is as radical and rare as it is welcome.

In case our "radical" methods might prove useful to others, I'll share how we: elicit blunt feedback from our partners, change the way we do philanthropy, and rally our family to debate ways to end poverty . . . All with nearly \$0 administrative cost. (See section 5, below.)

### 1: Using Stealth and Surprise in Partner Selection

Since we're too small and understaffed to review grant proposals, we've adopted a grantee-partner selection process that's virtually all behind-the-scenes.—Thus, until a nonprofit receives a happy email from us, announcing our incoming multiyear, unrestricted grant, they don't even know we exist.

Here's how we do it:

- **Landscape survey:** Year-round perusing of industry trends (see what we're reading [here](#)) culminates in a springtime gauge of methodologies that have been tested, proved, or debunked in global efforts to reduce poverty through education and employment.
- **Potential grantee database:** We keep a database of nonprofits that could be a good match for our next grant cycle, sourced from social-enterprise and nonprofit incubators and contests, news and blogs we read, and most importantly, referrals from current partners.
- **Due diligence:** We DIY due diligence. Rather than commanding long forms and reports from nonprofits, we conduct an efficient online search of their mission, impact, people, and financials.
- **Staff selection:** Our small family staff, in conjunction with objective

[social-impact professionals](#), culls our list to around fifteen finalists, whose solutions to social inequity and poverty seem especially fresh, viable, sustainable, and scalable.

- **Board consensus:** Our board studies the finalists, weighs our options against a matrix of ten values (such as targeting ultra poor and using technology to extend reach), reaching for geographic and population (all ages and genders) balance.
- **Grant investments:** We select 5-8 new or nascent "Seed," 2-3 stable and scalable "Catalyst," and hardworking "Partner" grantees (read more about all types of our grants [here](#)). And then, the real work of being their partner begins.

### 2: Eliciting Blunt Feedback That Helps Us Grow

We keep asking: **How can we improve our side of this partnership?** We elicit feedback from all around us:

- **Partners:** Annual feedback loop from annual, 30-minute conversational surveys (conducted by an outside [strategic consultant](#) and a cornerstone of our programming), anonymous reviews on [GrantAdvisor](#), and ongoing, open conversations with partners.
- **Clients:** Site visits to programs and client interviews for stories, to deepen our own understanding and advocate through storytelling.
- **Board:** Annual retreats at which we evaluate our progress as individuals and a team, review feedback from partners, and implement these findings into concrete changes.

### 3: Adapting Our Grants

When our board receives the results, we pore over them; and each year, we make adjustments based on this feedback. For example, we restructured our entire grantmaking structure from single-year to multiyear grants purely based on this feedback.

Over time, our partners have begun to trust that we really want to know them better. So, more and more, they tell us what they're really thinking.

Also, traveling with and to our

partners' U.S.- and global-based offices, conversing with staff and clients, has made an enormous difference.

### 4: Remaining Hands-Off, Yet Available

As we note with each grant we send: "We are honored to continue to support you, and we require nothing of you but that you continue your worthy work. Please don't hesitate to reach out if we can assist you in any other way—listening, offering feedback and moral support, co-creating stories, matching you to colleagues, or anything else in our capacity."

We believe our role is to INVEST, THEN TRUST.

When asked, we've provided programmatic and strategic advising, sharing stories of partners' innovations and impact, matching grants, and industry matchmaking. We also advocate for our partners in other grant contests and applications.

### 5: Counting Every Dollar

Given our minuscule size, we maximize our grants by giving to smaller startups and moving more of our corpus into [social-impact investments](#), while shrinking our already-low expenses. How?

- By not paying rent for offices or retreats,
- Offering substandard pay for our two part-time staffers,
- Extracting ongoing volunteer work from our board members, and
- Using distance technology for staff and board meetings—and even site visits. Our fiscal discipline has allowed us to give almost as much as we currently

hold: **We've given \$1.86 million in grants and manage a current corpus of \$2.4 million.**

### 6: Adapting Family Engagement

Using feedback from our family and board, we also redesigned our family grants this year:

- We phased out our "Local 2 Global" individual discretionary grant based on volunteer hours logged, in favor of . . .
- Expanding our "family grant" program to include "aging-in" members of our third generation and a more expansive, inclusive definition of "who is family?"
- And, we invented a new "[Generational Grants](#)" program (see page 2) that gets peer members of each generation working together to research, debate, and select on-mission grants. Collaborating through SFF elevates us to our higher selves. We end up inspired by each other's passion and amazed over our partners' accomplishments.

### 7: Re-Checking Our Compass

What motivates our family has remained consistent over time. We've discovered that it's the same in 2017 as in 2004 (although this was completely unintentional):

**We believe all humans are created equal and deserve equal opportunity to build lives of prosperity and choice.** Our compass will always be this core value, which is reflected in our mission statement to support self-help programs in education and job-creation to youth and families to end poverty worldwide.

FINANCIALS	
2017	Projected 2018
GRANTS   \$88,870	\$74,500
EXPENSES   \$49,884	\$72,250
PERCENT PAYOUT   5.7%	
TOTAL CORPUS   \$2,409,414	

# LETTER FROM A BOARD MEMBER

## A New Family Tradition: Launching Generational Grants

By Elisabeth D. Tarullo, Vice President of Communications & Grantee Relations

Early one summer Sunday in 2017, my family—three generations—gathered in a hotel conference room in Ohio to start a new family tradition: collaborative generational grantmaking. To understand how we got here, it helps to know how and why we were founded.

The Skees Family Foundation was started in 2004 by my aunt, Suzanne Skees, who wanted a way to share and honor the family legacy of “Midwestern middle-class philanthropy.” Our mission has always been to alleviate poverty through scalable solutions—education and job creation.

She first recruited her parents, my grandparents, to serve on the board. They helped her craft the vision and invest in our original partners. In 2013, she recruited four more board members—two more sisters and two nieces. As a team, we’ve grown tremendously over the last four years.

As the Board gathered for our annual retreat in September 2016, we discussed many family engagement opportunities that would also help reduce spending. I thought how incredible it would be to share what we’d learned about grantmaking with the extended family.

Cut to Summer 2017. We split up into our respective generations and the grantmaking session began. Each

“G” had picked four different potential partners, and the healthy debate as to who should receive the grant was off to a running start. After we introduced each organization—mission, budget, impact so far—we had a free discussion of what resonated and what needed clarification. Cousins weighed the benefits of a nonprofit that had already reached multiple continents versus a simple solution that was capable of scaling. In the other room, siblings discussed impact investments compared to grants.

In the end, both generations decided to split the total up and give to two organizations: 2G: Destiny Foundation and Voix & Actions and 3G: Strong Minds and The Education Department of the Pacific Aviation Museum.

There was a feeling of accomplishment in the room. In a few short hours, we had come together to discuss not T.V. or upcoming vacations -- but mental health in Africa, the lack of women in engineering jobs, and human trafficking.

The next time we’ll gather in this way will be 2019. Our youngest will be entering college and it’s possible there’ll be a 4G napping somewhere around. I can only hope that this new family tradition keeps us connected to the themes that really matter as we all grow up and become independent citizens of the world.



## GRANTEE IMPACT

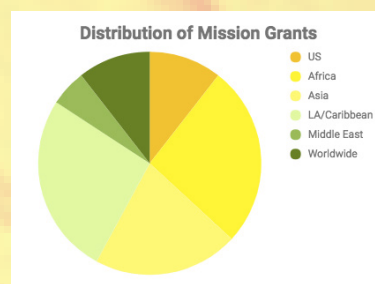
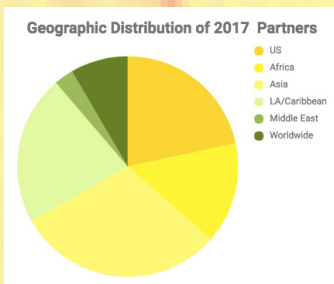
### 2017 Grantmaking Cycle

25 grants issued  
 \$88,870 total amount granted  
 70% Education: 37% Job Creation\*  
 78% Global: 22% U.S. (by dollar amount)

\*over 100% because some organizations work in both areas

### Grantmaking Since Inception

201 grants issued  
 \$1,866,523 total amount granted  
 42,906,982 number of beneficiaries reached  
 53% Education; 32% Job Creation; 15% Other  
 85% Global: 15% U.S. (by dollar amount)  
 60.2% grants to ultra poor



## IN MEMORIAM

Jonah Skees Hinman  
 1995-2017



*With our deepest sorrow and lasting love.*

# CATALYST PARTNER HIGHLIGHTS



Est. 2007 | BANGLADESH

JAAGO is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, expanding to 13 schools serving 2500 students. We recommend watching this [video](#) that explains their mission, their model, and what they've accomplished over the past decade.



Est. 2007 | HAITI

22 ambassadors from APA's 2015 pioneer cohort graduated this year. Many have committed to another year of teaching. This past spring, APA selected 45 candidates from 700 applications to enter the 2017 two-year program.



Est. 2011 | INDIA

Medha has enrolled over 1,500 students across 15 partner educational institutions and have worked with over 6,000 youth. Since their founding, they have placed over 375 students and alumni into internships and full-time jobs.

## MY JOB BOOK UPDATE

Our social-mission book, *MY JOB: Real Stories of People at Work Around the World*, has received rave reviews from *The New York Times* and *Global Press Journal*, Craigslist and Harvard University.

One Amazon reader's wish will soon come true: "I've heard that in fiction empathy for other people is learned, but this is more than any one fictional story could provide. I hope there is another book waiting now that I finished reading this one :)." Stay tuned for *MY JOB: Book 2*, next spring! Sneak-peek video [here](#); fresh stories and updates [here](#).



## FAMILY GRANTS

Each year, our individual families have the opportunity to give to an organization that reflects their values. Family grants have become a unique way for Skees generations across the country to engage directly with nonprofits in their communities or support causes they're passionate about internationally. We're proud to announce our family grant partners here:

THE MAERTZS



[The Dragonfly Foundation](#) brings comfort and joy to kids, young adults, and their families enduring cancer and bone marrow transplants.

[The National Alliance on Mental Illness](#), is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

SKEES-TALPAS



[The Diversity Center of Santa Cruz](#) is building an equitable community where LGBTQ+ people thrive.

SHELLY-RONS



[The Destiny Foundation](#) combats sex trafficking and slavery through the economic empowerment of women.

[Voix et Actions](#) is geared toward the development of the Haitian community and the physical and moral relief of the disadvantaged people who live there.

SKEES-HINMANS



[The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention \(AFSP\)](#) is a voluntary health organization that gives those affected by suicide a nationwide community empowered by research, education, and advocacy to take action against this leading cause of death.

SKEES-HELLYS



[NorthStar Church](#) is a non-denominational church committed to serving the community in tangible ways, both locally and internationally.

KRIS-TONYS



[Mecklenburg Area Catholic Schools Education Foundation](#) provides essential funds to equip principals and encourage teachers so they can educate students for a life based on Catholic values and academic success.

# CURRENT GRANTEE PARTNERS

## SEED



African Entrepreneurs Collective is a collection of business accelerators that supports local entrepreneurs to drive job growth.

Africa



Educate Lanka is a nonprofit whose mission is to empower economically disadvantaged children and youth by enhancing their access to quality education, mentoring, and employment.

Sri Lanka



Resonate catalyzes the next generation of female leaders, using storytelling to engender confidence and agency.

East Africa



Tomorrow's Youth Organization (TYO) works in disadvantaged areas of the Middle East, enabling children, youth, and parents to realize their potential as healthy, active, and responsible family and community members.

Palestine



Women LEAD is the first and only professional and leadership development organization for young women in Nepal.

Nepal

## CATALYST



Anseye Pou Ayiti (Teach for Haiti) recruits, trains, and equips Haitian teachers to unleash transformative outcomes for Haitian students.

Haiti



The JAAGO Foundation is a nonprofit whose mission is to educate children from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh



Medha improves employment outcomes for youth in India. It delivers a training and internship program to college and vocational students on campus that connects them with the job market.

India

## PARTNER



Advancing Girls Education (AGE) in Africa's mission is to provide life-changing opportunities to young women through initiatives in education, mentoring, and leadership development.

Malawi



Agora Partnerships is a nonprofit that fights poverty and inequality by unleashing the potential of entrepreneurs to in the developing world to improve their communities.

Latin America



Global Press Institute is a nonprofit that educates, employs, and empowers women in developing media markets to produce high-quality local news coverage that elevates global awareness and ignites social change.

Global



The School Fund is a nonprofit that connects students with individual funders via an online platform to raise funds for secondary school. TSF is increasing access to secondary school in the developing world.

Global

## GENERATIONAL



The Destiny Foundation combats sex trafficking and slavery through the economic empowerment of women.

India



The Pacific Aviation Museum Pearl Harbor educates young and old alike, honors aviators and their support personnel who defended freedom in the Pacific Region, and preserves Pacific aviation history.

United States



PBMR provides education, job-training, and restorative justice to Chicago's at-risk youth.

United States



Strong Minds empowers impoverished African women by treating depression at scale and enables these women and their families to lead more healthy, productive, and satisfying lives.

Africa



Voix et Actions gives the people of Trouin, Haiti the ability to support themselves and their families through the development of a self-sustaining enterprise breeding pigs, goats, hens, and fish.

Haiti

## IMPACT INVESTMENTS



Alliance Bernstein Sustainable Global Thematic Investment seeks to generate superior financial returns through investments that benefit society and the environment.

Global



Beneficial Returns is a new impact investment fund designed to support the growth of leading social enterprises that operate in emerging markets.

Global



Jibu's mission is to ensure every person on the planet has access to a safe, affordable and sustainable water source. Jibu provides all the hardware, business resources, and guidance needed to start a successful business selling safe, clean water.

East Africa



WCCN (Working Capital for Community Needs) creates opportunities for access to microfinance, services, and markets to improve the lives and communities of the working poor in Latin America.

Latin America