

BRIN<

IMPACT REPORT

2021



Certified



Corporation

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Celebrating International Women's Day in our London office.
Credit: Brink

[B IS FOR BENEFIT

A note from our founders

When we set out to build Brink, we felt that the traditional model of business (in which return to shareholders has highest priority above all else) just didn't resonate with our values. That's why we are proud to be a certified B Corp. It means we are bound by law to build a profitable business that prioritises bringing benefit to society, economy and the environment.

We believe vital statistics are not just EBIT, margin, headcount... We have built Brink with the intention of remaining a small but mighty team focused on making an outsized impact. To us, one of the most important metrics is the size and number of positive dents we make on the world. And by maintaining a healthy business, we're ensuring that the team we're building and the client and collaborator relationships we form along the way, can keep doing that at scale.

OUR B IMPACT

109.9

GOVERNANCE

16.1

WORKERS

29.6

COMMUNITY

24.0

ENVIRONMENT

10.3

CUSTOMERS

29.8

Our score when we first certified was 94.4 points – we're working hard every year to keep getting better!

How can we bend the curve of progress, together?

It gives us hope to see even more businesses being certified. In the time we've been certified the number of fellow certified B Corps has risen from around 2,500 to now 4,000 in 70 countries.

Even so, top companies are exaggerating their progress or failing to meet their own targets on climate. That's why transparency, accountability, measuring what matters, and aligning business with benefit has become an imperative for us.

At Brink we ask things like: *How can we bend the curve of progress? And: Can a product be truly innovative if its model is asset or resource extractive or if it exacerbates to the climate emergency or social inequalities?*

In this report we explore our B Corp score, what it means, and how we might do better. We believe working in innovation means being held to account against how we can make an outsized dent on the world. We'd love to hear what you think.

Abi and Lea



Our team retreat in Norfolk in summer 2021: for some of our team members who had joined during the pandemic, it was the first time they'd met their colleagues.

Credit: Brink

[BRINK IN NUMBERS

14

**PROGRAMMES
SOLVING
NON-TRIVIAL
PROBLEMS**

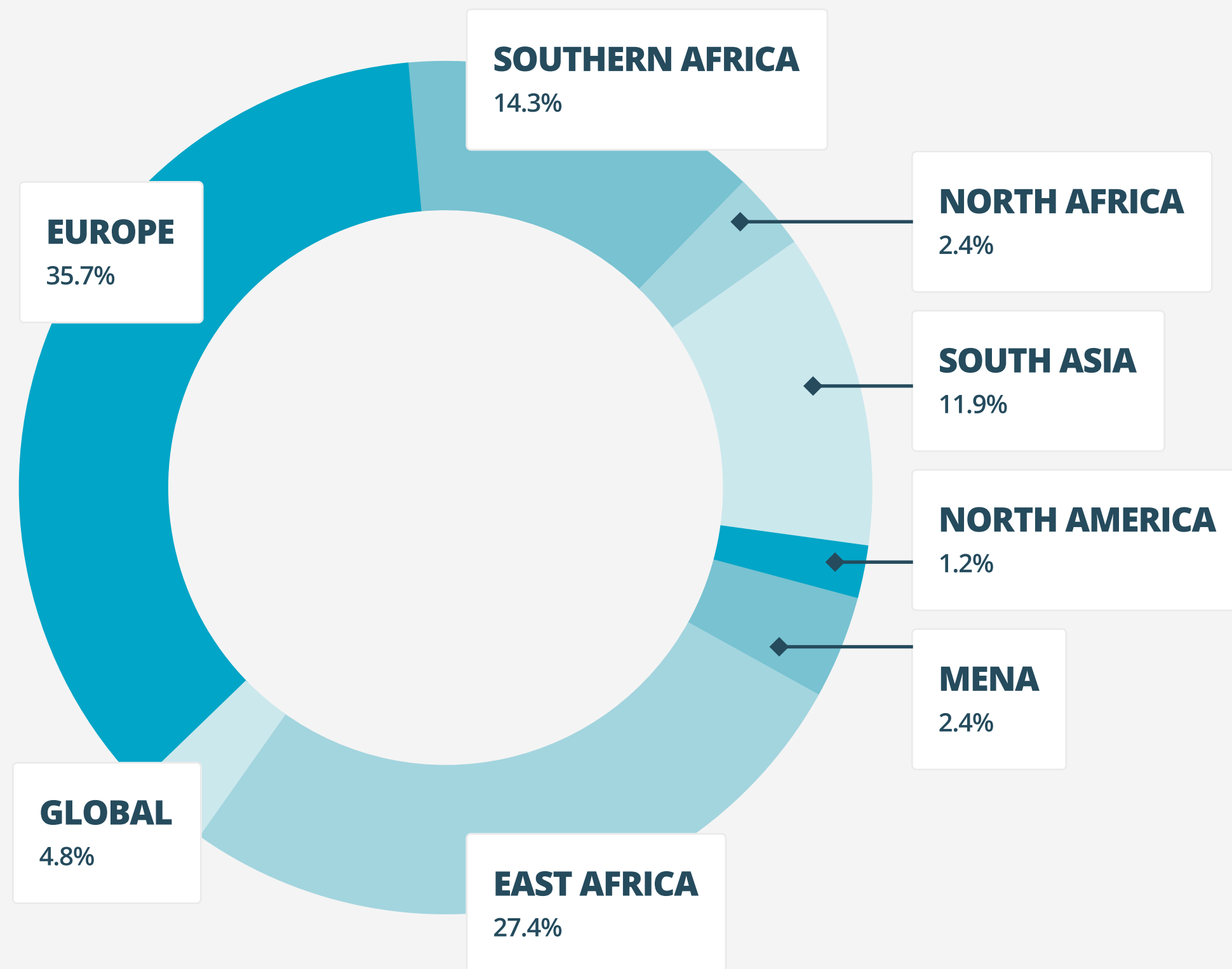
22

**BRINKSTERS
WORKING IN
8 COUNTRIES**

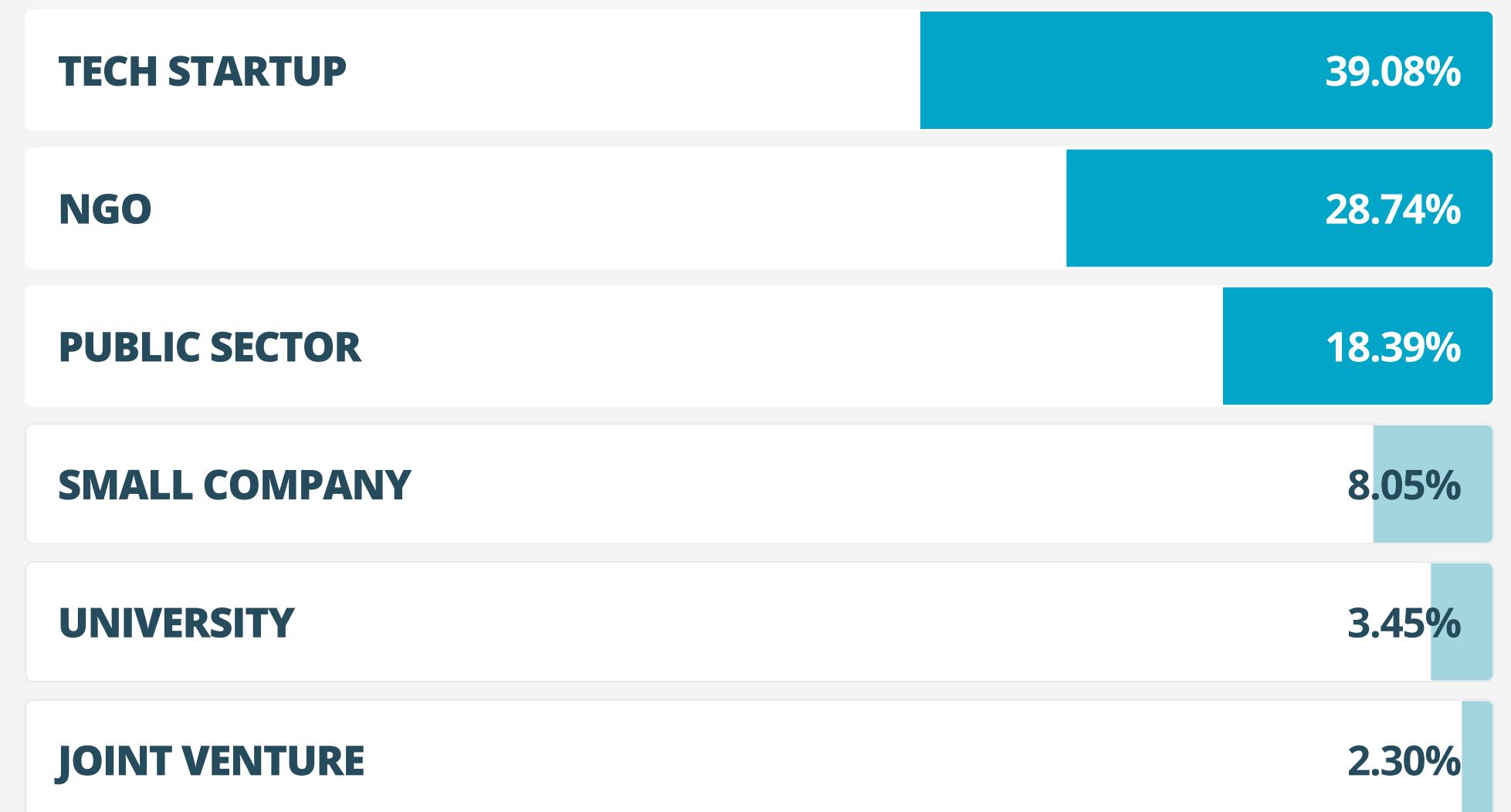
169

**VENTURES
SUPPORTED
IN 29
COUNTRIES**

ENGAGEMENTS BY REGION



WHO WE WORK WITH



OUR WORKERS

The UK Government website defines workers as those who 'have a contract or other arrangement to do work or services personally for a reward'. To us, our people are much more than that though.

Our team is our everything: they make up the foundations we work on and are at the core of the impact we're able to have on the world. We're told part of our magic is we're made up of diverse schools of thought and backgrounds: psychologists, strategists, designers, creative thinkers, tech optimists and ops whizz kids.

One of the many strong beliefs we are united by is that psychological safety is critical to creating sustainable change in the world. Our brains have a limbic reaction to situations where we do not feel psychologically safe, and it prevents us from imagining solutions, let alone building them in reality. With our team about to grow by nearly 50%, growing sustainably and responsibly will be one of our big picture challenges over the next couple of years. It will inevitably become harder to nurture the safe space we exist in at Brink.

For example, as our team grows and becomes more disparate, we are unsurprisingly beginning to outgrow some of our policies. We've been refreshing our policies around annual leave, safe travel and review processes, and are looking at ensuring there is more focus on career development. Whilst our team structure is flat, we certainly don't want Brinksters' career progression to be that way. On top of this, we would love to formalise our parental leave policy to feel more in line with our values and share this commitment to the team.



Practising improv as a team, a practice we use to bring joy and imagination to our work.
Credit: Brink

CHECKING IN ON WHAT WE NEED

We've developed a quarterly survey to track ways of working and being together. This has been vital in gathering the team's needs and being able to act on key themes.

INVESTING IN OUR TEAMS

Brink is investing in 'Dojo Days' for the team - a quarterly online get together with a variety of sessions and speakers planned.

Most recently we have been learning about Non Violent Communication, which up-skills us all regardless of our role and ultimately helps us to support one another as colleagues better.

RAPID GROWTH TAUGHT US A LOT

- The rapid growth of the business and only having one team member managing our HR procedures and operations, meant that we couldn't reach everything we wanted to.
- Our policies can't be reactionary and for them to truly reflect our values, they require time and effort.
- We put our review process in place when there were just five members of the team, and we are, unsurprisingly, outgrowing it.

BEYOND B CORP

Our lowest scores came in around financial security for our workers. Ultimately we know that what's on offer to our people is more than the numbers on their paycheques. Team members receive access to mental health coaching, team retreats to connect in real life and unlimited holiday. We strive to provide unique roles which don't exist anywhere else, shaped around each individual's strengths and passions.

OUR ENVIRONMENT

To us, there are two aspects of environmental impact to consider:

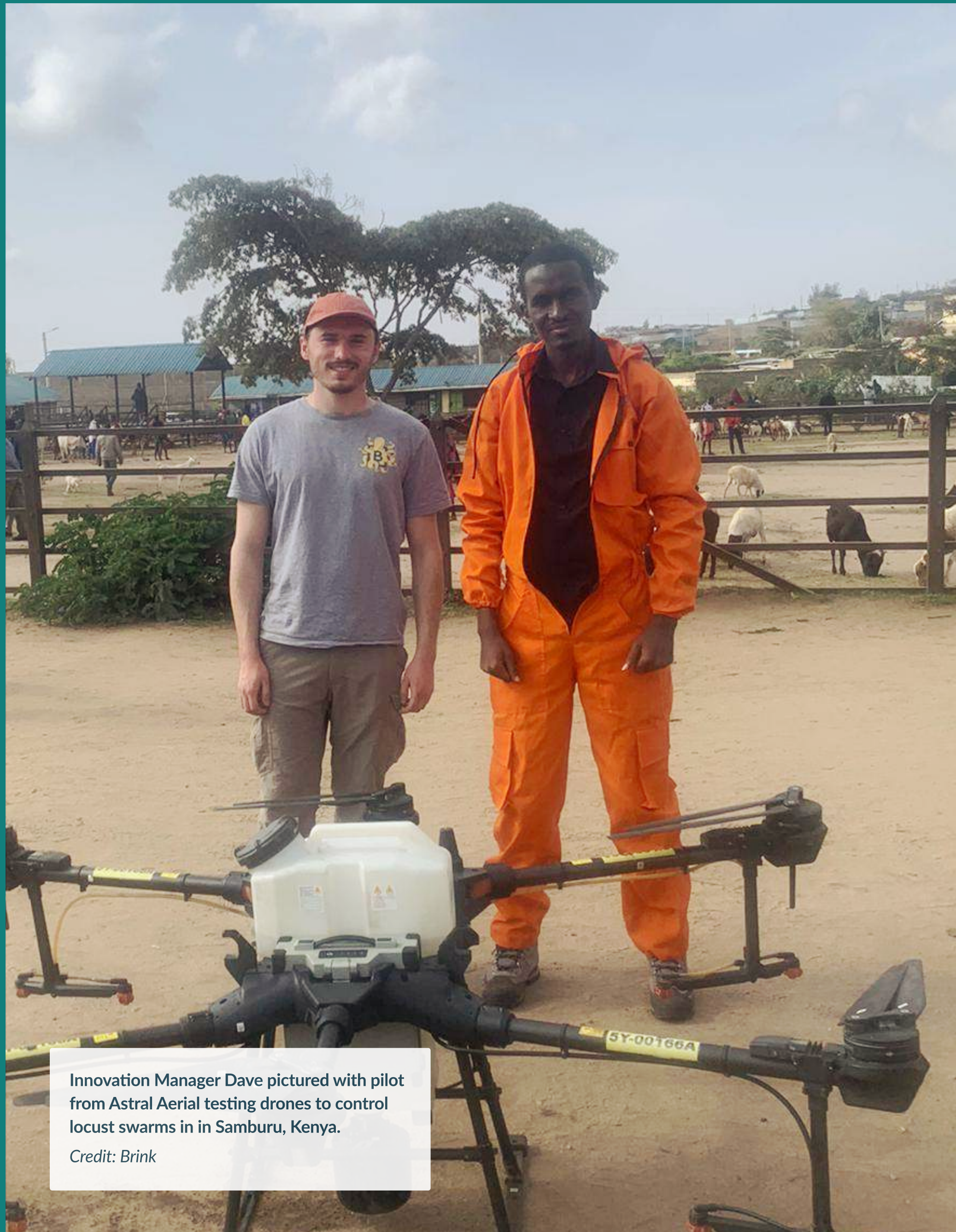
1. Mitigating our own 'footprint' as a global business with projects in 30+ countries
2. The role our work plays in making a positive contribution to the Climate Crisis

On the first point, we've optimised our office to be more environmentally friendly by setting timers on electronics, switching to an eco-friendly cleaning provider and significantly reduced our general waste by introducing snacks that have recyclable or biodegradable packaging. We even gained a First Mile Silver Recycling Award.

But we're more interested in the second point. As a boutique services business with a limited supply chain, we have fewer opportunities to reduce the impact of our operations. We have key watch areas like travel, server usage and supplier selection, but we see far more potential in focussing our work on making a positive dent on environmental challenges.

We don't want to offset our problems away, or to excuse ourselves from the conversation as a "small business, with a small footprint". We believe that we can have an outsized, positive impact as an environmental steward, both on our projects and beyond.

We've said in the governance section of this report that to us, the most important metric is the size and number of positive dents we make on the world, and we want to maintain a healthy business in order to keep doing that. This is particularly true for our environmental impact, where we want to be sure that we're playing the biggest and most relevant role we can.



Innovation Manager Dave pictured with pilot from Astral Aerial testing drones to control locust swarms in Samburu, Kenya.

Credit: Brink

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO TEST SOLUTIONS

We help run an innovation fund that this year invested 50% of its grant capital into solutions both technological and nature-based, which could address climate challenges in the Global South. As we prepared for 2022's cohort of grantee innovators, we felt a huge amount of enthusiasm amongst FCDO staff to do more to address the climate crisis. In response to this, we helped FCDO create a new category dedicated to climate and nature-based solutions. Pilots include a collaboration with WWF Pakistan to test Early-Warning Forest Fire Detection, developing electric motorboats in Senegal and testing Aquaculture technology to counter Mangrove destruction.

LAUNCHING A NON-PROFIT

We set up a CIC, the Better Futures CoLab, through which we've launched our first project on Circular Economy Plastics in Kenya, where we're mapping out the value of the Repair and Reuse economy.

NEXT: ADDRESSING THE CRISIS MORE EXPLICITLY

As a services business, often playing a strategic role on innovation funds and research projects, we have an opportunity to not only "influence the conversation", but very directly the redirection of capital towards climate challenges.

BEYOND B CORP

Being a B Corp is about providing value beyond our shareholders, and that includes providing value to our planet. We'll keep recycling and mitigating damage - that's important. We'll also keep working on those positive dents which will have a long term value to the environment: supporting clean tech ventures, testing electric vehicles, coaching cities to test waste management solutions. We are ultimately interested in what levers we can pull as a small team to have outsized impact.



OUR CUSTOMERS

At Brink we are often serving two customers: there's the client paying for our time and our Behavioural Innovation expertise, and the communities who ultimately benefit from the work we do together. With the former, we believe that language is an important tool to help us collaborate to create impact together: our clients are our partners, and we work together closely.

For example, we work with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to run an innovation fund called the Frontier Tech Hub. Through this work we coach civil servants around the world, our clients, to design and test products and services for communities from all corners of the globe. In this way we are serving 'customers' who may not have expressly asked for products in the first place. Like injured people who need medical assistance in humanitarian situations, who can be operated on in the field thanks to a portable, sterile operating system developed by one of the innovators we support in the Humanitarian Grand Challenges community.

Our services involve convening communities, co-designing strategies and building learning journeys. These directly contribute to the development of products consumed by diverse customer-bases: emergency contraceptives for women and girls in Kenya; WhatsApp classrooms in refugee camps; electric motorbikes for riders in Rwanda. We feel privileged to work with 169 innovators across the world developing products and services which seek to address some of society's most pressing issues, and grateful that B Corp recognises this in their impact assessment process.



Innovation Lead Alice Carter with two people working for Nouakchott city council in Mauritania. They are taking part in the ASToN City Network to test ways to develop an address system which is commonly understood by citizens.

Credit: ASToN Network

CREATING IMPACT FOR BOTH CUSTOMERS

This year our venture Well_Lab will work with clients to design evidence-based wellbeing solutions which prevent burnout in the workplace and lean into the new, uncertain world of work with progressive strategies in place.

In 2021 their work to design interventions around gratitude, value and appreciation may have been paid for by Barts NHS trust (their client), but it served the 'other customer' too: the hundreds of ambulance drivers and back-end administrators who are now feeling their workplace transform around them.

DOING WELL BY DOING GOOD

30% of our revenues in the last fiscal year were generated from services that benefited the underserved populations.

These services include supporting DeafReach to test distance learning solutions for deaf children in Pakistan through our work with the EdTechHub, and developing much-needed assistive tech solutions in Africa with entrepreneurs through the Assistive Technology Impact Fund.

OVER THE NEXT YEAR WE'LL BE FOCUSING ON

- Getting feedback from our partners
- Making our feedback more public, particularly what we intend to change
- Continuing building our participatory lens. The way we make sure if it's about you, we're not designing it without you

BEYOND B CORP

We want to continue empowering our partners to make change themselves, with us or without us. We know that by building capacities of civil servants, designing processes for flexible grant reporting for foundations and creating communities which share knowledge across borders and sectors we are part of a halo effect which holds infinite possibilities for impact.



Connecting and exploring our mindsets through the power of ukeleles.

Credit: Sarah Weiler

OUR COMMUNITY

Community is at the heart of Brink, what we do and how we do it.

We exist to serve communities - not only the groups of entrepreneurs and networks of staff which form Brink's contracted work - but of course, the communities around those we serve. When we work with [Zambia's female farmers to get around by bike](#), that has a ripple effect beyond one farmer and her family: it impacts her whole community.

Secondly, we facilitate a communities of innovators and entrepreneurs. From [FCDO staff learning about innovation together](#), to the [Humanitarian Grand Challenge community](#) of innovators working on projects to support those in conflict zones; collectives, networks and communities form a vital part of Brink's work.

Thirdly, we are a community of Brinksters who support one another. One of the ways we do this is by getting together on a Monday, and [spending an hour understanding one another better](#).

And finally, each of us at Brink exists in our own community: the places we live and work. We organise ourselves around a decentralised model, employing people in different locations around the world, and we know that we get the best out of this diverse bunch by making sure we can each bring our full selves to work.

WE DIDN'T ALWAYS GET IT RIGHT

One of our goals for the last year was to embed anti-racism and equity firmly into our programmes, practices and initiatives. That was incredibly ambitious, and not exactly a SMART goal. This lack of clarity has hindered us feeling that we have made any progress on this, as there was no way to define what that looked like, and what success would look like.

DE&I AT BRINK

That said, we have launched a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion group within Brink. With a global portfolio of work, and teams in 7 countries, we are a company for everyone and it is essential that our people represent the diversity of the people we work with. We're dedicated to fostering a culture where everyone feels that they belong, where our voices are heard and where we feel supported to be our authentic selves.

IMPROVING OUR HIRING PROCESSES

Setting up the DE&I group has been integral to helping us attract more diverse talent, as we've been able to collectively develop our application and interview process to be more inclusive ('I really appreciate your prompt response and detailed feedback - I am pretty sure no one has shared such extensive and frank feedback on any of my applications, ever!' - feedback from an applicant)

BEYOND B CORP

We want to look beyond the communities listed above, and see how Brink could convene its own community of people interested in communities (so meta!) So we've dreamed up and launched Collective Conversations: a new virtual event series run by Brink about building collectives, networks and movements for positive social change. We'll bring together speakers with a range of experiences — think grassroots activism to global tech communities, guardians of ancient wisdom to social media movement builders — to learn what works and distil those insights into our own practices.

OUR GOVERNANCE

The B Corp certification process has helped us along our path to do well by doing good by formalising how we evaluate our mission and measure our social and environmental impact, ethics, and transparency. The certification also means our mission to scale Behavioural Innovation and leave positive dents on the world is enshrined in our corporate governing documents.

In a year of changes (remote-first and expanding into a global team, for a start) our focus has been on keeping our good ship steady.

When it comes to our finances in particular, it's no longer just a case of the founders crunching the numbers with the accountant each month! Our part-time Chief Financial Officer has helped us get to a stable financial position and will soon be handing over to our first full-time Finance Manager.

We're excited about having the capability in our team to make more data-driven decisions, and be able to offer more financial education and support to our teams who are responsible for increasing amounts of budget.

As we enter a new financial year, we know that we've got the main controls as we grow. We don't yet have a board or external corporate governance - this year turned out to be focussed on internal operations: building them to support scale and distribution. But we're ready to explore the idea of a soft board - a diverse group of experts who can contribute their wisdom, help us amplify our work and hold us to account against our mission and goals.



Co-Founder Lea Simpson with Brink's first two hires: Asad and James, when Brink was a team of only four people.

Credit: Brink

UPPING OUR FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY

We shared our salary banding for all roles in the business, which helps foster a culture of fairness and provides guidance to Brinksters on their potential trajectory. Each month we talk through our revenue figure with the team and compare it to previous months to ensure it's transparent across the organisation.

LEANING INTO DEEP TRUST FOR ONE ANOTHER

On the surface, our 'unlimited annual leave' policy might sound hard to improve, but it's had its challenges. We've found that the word unlimited has to be teamed with guidelines around how and when you use it (which risks taking the shine off what we really meant). We decided to scrap limits and put the ownership on one another. Brinksters are trusted to balance their needs as an individual with the needs of the business. With that **we have developed a 'take what you need' policy**. The premise is simple: ensure your leave isn't going to affect your work, check it over with your immediate team and then go ahead! It's up to you to make the call.

LIFTING THE LID ON OUR EFFORTS

This is our first public impact report! We see this as a big milestone for Brink. We're lifting the lid across our organisation beyond just our B-Corp score alone.

BEYOND B CORP

Although we have reported publicly for the first time, we are still lacking a clear and 360 view on what the impact of our work is. We have B Corp's 'Business Model' score, but we want to go further than this. We'd also like to find ways to capture and measure the very different shapes and sizes of Brink's positive dents in the world, and we'll be exploring the question of what an 'impact margin' could look like to do so.



BRINK

Chat to us at coffee@hellobrink.co

