



DREAMROOT

LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE



Annual Report

2024

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EXECUTIVE LETTER



DreamRoot exists because we believe in the transformative power of experiences to shape learning and growth. These experiences act as a catalyst, propelling individuals into leadership roles where they ignite change in their organizations and communities. Every program, every interaction, and every opportunity we create is rooted in the conviction that when people step into environments designed for growth, healing, and discovery, something remarkable happens. Walls come down. Vision expands. New possibilities emerge.

By bridging cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, and industries, DreamRoot fosters an intentional community where collaboration drives collective impact and human flourishing—both locally and globally. In 2024, DreamRoot expanded its impact, forging new paths through the Leadership Accelerator Program, Brazil Exchange Trip, Jiu Jitsu Leader Network, Training Centers, and on-going leadership development training. These programs go beyond initiatives—they are bridges that connect people, spark learning, and foster collaboration, igniting transformation.

Leaders are rising in the communities we serve. They are standing in the gap, creating solutions and progressing forward despite challenges. No one can do this alone, and we weren't meant to. At the heart of DreamRoot is the power of belief: belief in the potential that emerges when given the right environment. It's those transformative experiences where someone says, "I see greatness in you." Often, others see our potential before we do. When someone believes in us first, something shifts. Doubt gives way to courage. Obstacles become opportunities. What once seemed impossible suddenly becomes achievable. Dreams become reality.

Leadership catalyzes lasting change. By equipping local leaders with the skills and connecting them to networks, they can build community and drive systemic change. Everyone has a critical role to play in problem solving, developing game-changing solutions, and implementing life-changing work. So, let's ensure everyone has a seat at the table, and we show up ourselves.

In 2024, DreamRoot equipped over 138 local leaders across four countries, impacting more than 1,680 students and community members and their families in 21 communities. We delivered over 675 hours of direct training events and coaching through our programs.

Our focus is not on chasing numbers; it's about deepening impact. True impact is about doing what matters most—intentionally and consistently. To multiply leadership impact, we must equip leaders at a deeper level, invest in long-term development, provide mentorship, and create opportunities for hands-on learning.

Together, we are preparing the next generation to step into greater leadership roles that transform their communities. Thank you for believing in this vision and for walking this journey with us. The best is yet to come.





BY THE NUMBERS

DreamRoot partnered with over 138 local leaders across four countries serving 21+ communities, to reaching over 1,680 students and their families.

Our work included:

675+

hours of DreamRoot training and coaching to local leaders.

20,000+

hours of local leader-led programming provided to community members.

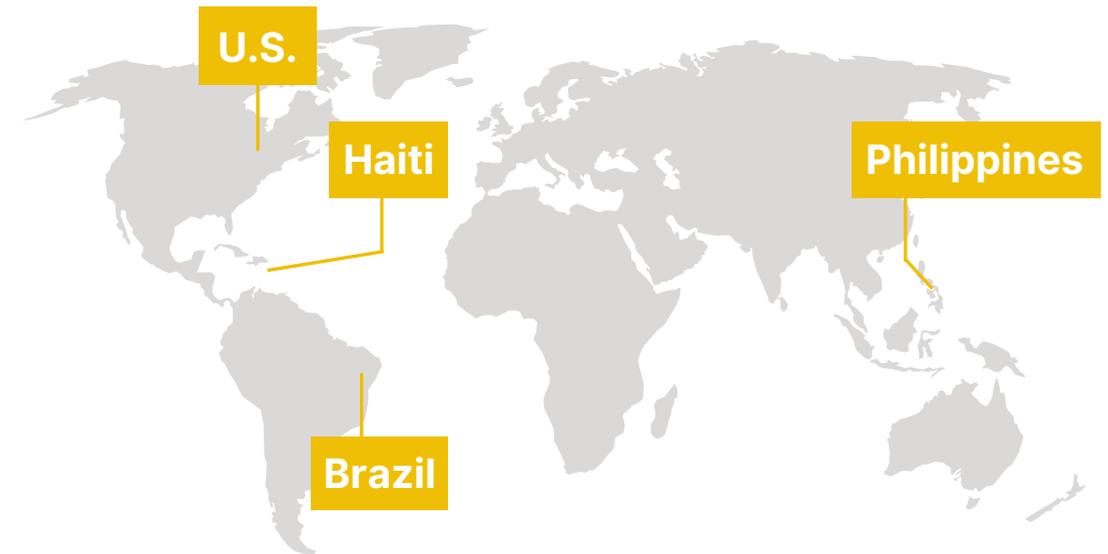
13

community capacity-building events hosted.

37

community members employed in educational program delivery and infrastructure projects.

COMMUNITIES IMPACTED



WHO WE ARE

Mission

DreamRoot Leadership Institute (DreamRoot) is on a mission to release the potential of leaders in underserved communities to reverse the cycles of poverty and promote the well-being of every member of society.

Vision

To see every person, regardless of their life circumstances, given the opportunity to realize and achieve their dreams, living out their fullest potential and contributing to the advancement of society as a result.



151

Initiative volunteers mentored by DreamRoot leaders

1,000+

Children and youth participated in local leader-led educational and sports programs

63

Jiu Jitsu uniforms donated, making programming accessible.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MODEL

DreamRoot is an international training and development organization focused on empowering local leaders to tackle their community's challenges and raise up others to do the same. By providing a combination of training, coaching, seed investment, and networking, we work alongside these leaders to launch transformative initiatives that foster sustainable social and economic growth. This creates a ripple effect that expands far beyond the initial impact.

Our leadership development model identifies proven leaders and high-potential change-makers within underserved communities, equipping them with the tools, resources, and networks necessary to launch initiatives that will bring social and economic change. These initiatives, in turn, multiply leaders who can sustain and grow the work.

IDENTIFY

EQUIP

LAUNCH

MULTIPLY

Focus Areas

DreamRoot's core focus areas—youth and education, entrepreneurship and economic development, community capacity-building, and equity and inclusion—are essential to building a thriving, empowered society.



PERMISSION TO DREAM

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT & LOCAL LEADER TRAINING



Hours of training and coaching provided to local leaders.

DreamRoot has empowered leaders to address critical social challenges. Through training, coaching, and consulting, we've supported participants in advancing their missions.

We have partnered with local leaders, offering guidance in leadership and organizational development. These leaders have focused on transformative issues, such as combating drug and sex trafficking, promoting educational advancement, and reshaping legal systems.

Throughout the year, we facilitated workshops designed to strengthen leadership skills and enhance community development.

We've hosted workshops, provided operational consulting, and facilitated community-building initiatives. Our vocational training programs and entrepreneurial incubators have strengthened local capacity, while our annual exchange trips to Brazil have helped foster lasting relationships and growth.

"DreamRoot has given me the tools and confidence to lead with purpose. I'm now equipped to create opportunities for my family and others."

- Juliana, workshop participant



Conflict Resolution Workshop

Recife, Brazil

Provided **43 local leaders across 10 communities** with practical skills to navigate challenges, ultimately benefiting over **600 students and community members**. Sessions included values mining, team-building, and conflict resolution. Plus, many local leaders even joined in on some jiu Jitsu training at the Arte Suave DreamRoot Training Center, further fostering camaraderie and resilience. Amidst shared laughter, collaborative learning, and heartfelt connections over games and meals, the workshop served as a catalyst for collective dreaming and empowerment

Flagship Leadership Accelerator Program

In 2024, we successfully launched our flagship Leadership Accelerator Program in Portuguese, extending our reach to a broader audience. Over the course of five months, participants engaged in intensive leadership development sessions, culminating in a Summit Celebration that brought together **23 Brazilian leaders**. Through the program, participants created their own **Life Canvas** projects, fostering **self-awareness and strategic planning** for their leadership journeys.

The experience featured **interactive workshops, strategy sessions, and cultural exchanges** that deepened participants' understanding of leadership in action. As a highlight, participants developed and pitched innovative business plans designed to address critical community challenges.

The Accelerator has helped me to have more self-reflection and feel more confident in the things I believe in and can achieve.
- Jhessika,
2024 Accelerator participant



23

23 local leaders completed the program

347

Students and community members collectively impacted by through local leader initiatives

4

Communities represented by the participants



Supporting Autistic Children

Recife, Brazil

We were honored to welcome two special guests from the U.S. who led a community-capacity building event at the Arte Suave DreamRoot Training Center, equipping parents, coaches, and community members with practical tools to support children's growth—especially autistic children and those with diverse learning needs. They shared valuable tools and insights to support children's growth, particularly for autistic children and those with diverse learning needs. **45 attendees** from two Brazilian states left with **renewed hope, feeling understood and supported**, and with a clearer path forward.

The workshop introduced valuable strategies, including the use of pencil grippers to help children develop **motor skills for writing**—challenging the misconception that cognitive limitations prevent them from learning to write

Team Leadership Workshop

Arcoverde, Brazil

Worked with the leadership team of an organization in the Sertão region of Brazil focused on **clarifying vision** while introducing a strategic planning and operational rhythm to **achieve personal and team goals**, providing the leadership team with the **clarity and structure** needed to drive initiatives forward.



COACHING & CONSULTING


43
BJJ leaders
equipped and
connected

Recognizing the need for guidance and support, DreamRoot provided **organizational development consulting and leadership coaching** for leaders of small and medium-sized businesses and community initiatives. This has strengthened leadership resilience and helped organizations build more effective cultures and strategies for impact. In addition to one-on-one coaching sessions, many leaders participated in peer-learning events, creating a space for collaboration, growth, and the exchange of best practices.

Jiu Jitsu Leadership Network

The Jiu-Jitsu Leadership Network continues to expand its global reach, offering leadership and organizational development to martial arts and fitness academy owners and instructors worldwide. Through the network, DreamRoot **equipped 43 leaders with tools to build world-class programs and businesses** that prioritize learning and development in a safe, inclusive, and a fun environment. When people feel secure, they build deeper connections and engage more fully – leading to true growth and transformation.





Changing Mindsets: Beyond the Mat and Into the Future



Jiu Jitsu is more than a sport—it's a tool for transformation. It has been central to DreamRoot's programming because it's woven into **our origin story**. Our founder, who runs a jiu jitsu academy and international affiliation, built connections through BJJ seminars in underserved communities, which ultimately led to the creation of DreamRoot.

Throughout the year, Tony Passos, our Global Programs Director, led BJJ seminars and regular classes at the Sertão and Arte Suave DreamRoot Training Centers, as well as several academies in the U.S. These sessions went beyond technique, integrating life lessons on **perseverance, resilience, and community building** while creating opportunities for **networking and mentorship**.

At the Sertão and Arte Suave centers, **weekly jiu jitsu classes** provide a consistent space for students to develop skills, discipline, and confidence. Additionally, **BJJ seminars** throughout the year brought together academies from across Northeast Brazil and the U.S., strengthening a network of relationships that extend beyond the mats and into the broader community.



It was inspiring to connect with leaders from different initiatives and share experiences.

- Levi,
Leadership workshop
participant

A Moment to Remember: One Girl's Journey of Resilience and Community

Colin, an exchange trip participant, recalled a powerful moment from a jiu jitsu training day. A 13-year-old girl from a local orphanage received one of 63 donated gis, allowing her to join in the activities.

Several other women and girls were there, serving as role models and encouraging her. Despite the challenge of training in a new academy, she embraced it with courage and a smile.

Afterward, we shared lunch together, where she tried cartola, a popular Brazilian dessert, for the first time. It was a day of courage, community, and connection—one that stay with us all.



Brazil Exchange Trip

Another transformational experiences in 2024 was the Brazil Exchange Trip, which welcomed **12 U.S. participants**, bringing the total number of international exchange participants to **50!** These trips offer so much more than travel; they create opportunities for **cultural immersion, community capacity-building, and meaningful connections.**

Participants visited The Arte Suave DreamRoot Training Center, met with local leaders and community members, threw a Children's Day block party, and shared meals, forming friendships that transcended borders. They also soaked in Brazil's vibrant culture—exploring beaches, markets, and new foods, and some of us even trained in jiu jitsu.

As part of DreamRoot's mission to empower local leaders and drive social and economic change, these exchange trips serve as a **bridge between cultures, fostering connections that transform lives** and communities worldwide—all while having fun!

COMMUNITY-BASED TRAINING CENTERS

DreamRoot Training and Resource Centers provide **safe spaces** where life-changing programs and connections take root, driving long-term community development. More than just buildings or leadership programs, the real impact is in **shifting mindsets**—from survival to aspiration, from hopelessness to vision.

Locally led initiatives at the centers are helping **students graduate and attend college, launch businesses, and give back** as tutors and coaches. Children now have access to sports and tutoring, while survivors of abuse find psychological support and a strong community. Reduced violence has created opportunities for small businesses and even attracted government investment.

This year, DreamRoot Training Centers hosted workshops on **career guidance, resume assistance, work authorization, and first aid certification**, equipping individuals for economic independence. At the Sertão center, a **workshop for 18 women** addressed unemployment and well-being, leading to one participant securing full-time work as a caregiver at a local school. Meanwhile, the Arte Suave DreamRoot Training Center provides office space for resume building, research, study, and employment advising.



Haiti Schoolyard Buildout

We completed the schoolyard buildout in Haiti, right next to the DreamRoot Resource Center. **17 local workers were employed** to complete the project. This new space now provides over **300 children** with a safe and welcoming place to play, learn, and grow.

It has quickly become a community hub, where locals gather for after-hours activities and events. An exciting development is that the **local soccer team** has made this their base, using the field for practice and games, strengthening community ties and creating a space where dreams take flight.



Arte Suave Renovation

The bathrooms and locker rooms at the Arte Suave DreamRoot Training Center in Brazil have been renovated! These upgrades are making a big difference, providing an even more comfortable space that enhances overall experience.

But this renovation is more than just a facility upgrade—it's about fostering dignity and inspiring dreams in more than **150 students and their families**. It's a daily reminder to every student that growth is possible and that they can aim higher every day.

YOUTH & EDUCATION

Education is a key driver of development and a powerful equalizer, both individually and for society. That's why DreamRoot is committed to removing barriers to education and increasing access to quality programming. We work closely with local leaders to launch, strengthen, and expand educational opportunities for underprivileged students.

In 2024, **664 children and youth** actively participate in educational and sports programs led by DreamRoot local leaders. These programs are enhancing their learning and improving their grades.



Improved Passing Rates Through Tutoring & Sports

Haiti & Brazil

The tutoring programs in Haiti and Brazil have led to significant improvements for **308 students**. These programs keep students engaged and motivated to continue their studies. In Haiti, ten young adult graduates were employed as tutors, helping their students achieve a **93% pass rate**. At the Sertão DreamRoot Training Center, children who were once illiterate are now learning to read.

DreamRoot also makes jiu-jitsu programs available to over **343 underprivileged youth** across Brazil, providing mentorship, accountability, and life skills training. To participate, students must be enrolled in school and passing their grades. This approach not only improves their athletic abilities but also enhances their academic outcomes. Students at the Arte Suave DreamRoot Training Center have achieved a **100% pass rate**, underscoring the coaches' commitment beyond the mats.





Children's Day Block Party

A highlight of the Brazil Exchange Trip was training jiu jitsu with the kids at the Arte Suave DreamRoot Training Center the opportunity to join in the festivities of hosting the Children's Day Block party. Over **75 children** attended, with an **additional 25** receiving presents. Between the bouncy house, piñata, snacks, games, and party favors, the kids enjoyed a carefree afternoon filled with laughter and fun.

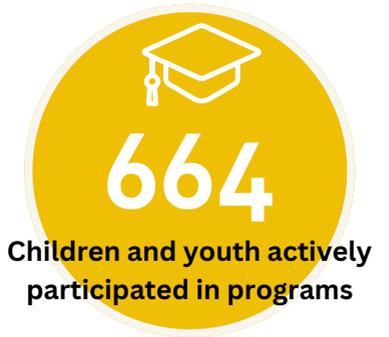
One participant shared that what touched him most was seeing how the center's programs and events like this were **"giving the kids a childhood."**



Building Futures: Parents Share the Impact of Arte Suave DreamRoot Training Center

Parents at the Arte Suave DreamRoot Training Center share how the center's programs have played a key role in the development of their children, helping them build skills, confidence, and a sense of community.

Listen to their testimonials [HERE](#).



Summer Camp

A Lifeline for Students

Haiti

The five-week summer camp in Les Cayes, Haiti provided educational games and daily meals for **147 students, employing 10 camp staff**. For students facing challenges at home, the camp was a lifeline, offering not just educational support but nourishment and positive guidance. In addition to lesson plans to help students keep up with their studies, the camp also included a memorable trip to the river, learning to crochet, and music and dance.





EQUITY & INCLUSION

DreamRoot is committed to equity and inclusion, ensuring everyone has access to opportunities, regardless of background. We create **accessible and welcoming** spaces—through community-based training centers, programs, and events—that empower individuals to connect, learn, and grow. This impact ripples outward, strengthening families and communities.

In 2024, this commitment was evident in the **63 gis distributed** to Jiu Jitsu programs in Northeast Brazil, enabling student participation; the Brazil Exchange Program, fostering cross-cultural **collaboration**; and the **empowerment** of women like Karol and Keyla, who are breaking barriers and becoming role models. By expanding access, we strengthen communities and create lasting change.





Breaking Barriers

Empowering Women

Research shows that when girls are given equal opportunities for education, entrepreneurship, and personal development, outcomes improve not only for them but also for their families and communities. Through DreamRoot Training Centers and programming, there is a growing engagement of women and girls in these areas.

Five women are leading jiu jitsu classes. One inspiring example is Keyla, as of 2024 she became the newest female black belt at the Arte Suave DreamRoot Training Center. As an instructor who teaches weekly classes, she serves as a role model and is paving the way for others.

At the school where the DreamRoot Resource Center operates in Haiti, led by local leaders Rose and David, **51% of the 308 students are girls.**

Additionally, after participating in the DreamRoot Leadership Accelerator in Brazil, four women identified their vision to either start or grow their own businesses as entrepreneurs, contributing to local economic growth and community development.

OUR FINANCIALS

DreamRoot is committed to transparency, accountability, and wise stewardship of resources. We adhere to rigorous financial oversight and governance standards, ensuring funds are used effectively to maximize impact. Our dedication to ethical financial practices has earned us recognition, including the GuideStar Seal of Transparency, reflecting our commitment to sustainable growth and lasting change in the communities we serve.



REVENUE



- Individuals 66%
- Corporations 33%
- Other 1%

EXPENDITURES



- Program Costs 67%
- M&G 33%

OUR TEAM

We are committed to investing in leaders and changemakers in underserved communities, equipping and empowering them to solve local challenges and equipping others to do the same.



Amy Passos
Founder & Chairperson



Chris Little
Board VP



Kellie Koch
Board Secretary



Nathan Park
Board Treasurer



André Galvão
Board Member



Rebecca Bahlo
Board Member



Jhon Alves
Brazil Leadership Director



Tony Passos
Programs Director



Rebeca Esteves
Program Officer



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- Phalanx Facilities Management
- Jiu-Jitsu Mentor
- Lion Heart Jiu-Jitsu

To Our Supporters

To our valued investors, your partnership has been pivotal in realizing this impact and driving sustainable development beyond expectations.

To all those who believed in and invested in this work, thank you. Your generosity made this possible. Because of you, these leaders are equipped to transform their local communities, spreading hope and creating change. Your partnership in our mission fuels every milestone we achieve.



PERMISSION TO DREAM

[DREAMROOTINSTITUTE.ORG/DONATE](https://dreamrootinstitute.org/donate)



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