UNITING TO CHANGE
THE UNACCEPTABLE

2017 WAS THE FIRST YEAR OF OUR
THREE YEAR STRATEGY, TAKING US
TO 2020

In our strategy we have detailed planned activities
and the impact we hope to contribute for each
focus area.

We are proud to collaborate with many organisations
working towards the same goals, which is why we
talk about “contributing to” impact rather than
delivering it singlehandedly.
OUR APPROACH TO CHANGE: WHY WE’RE DIFFERENT

IDENTIFYING ISSUES
We work with experts to identify and explore the unacceptable issues we feel we can uniquely impact. Issues where we can use our ability to bring people together to create change.

COLLABORATION AND CONVENING
We believe in the power of collaboration, bringing together non-profits, governments, academic institutions, multilateral organisations, businesses, and members of our community to share expertise, pool resources and progress faster.

INNOVATE AND INCUBATE
Next we apply the entrepreneurial Virgin spirit. We incubate innovative new solutions, new organisations, and support partners with ground-breaking approaches to creating change. Since launch, we have incubated a number of organisations including The Elders, Carbon War Room, The B Team and Ocean Unite.

REACHING IMPACT AT SCALE
In time, the organisations we have incubated become independent and those we’ve supported become fully established. Ongoing, we provide funding and organisational support to help these partners scale their work and communicate their successes to a much wider audience.

virgin.com/unite  |  contact@virginunite.co.uk  |  [Social Media Icons]
Select an issue for more detail about how we are measuring our impact so far.
WHAT ARE WE DOING?

In 2015 we launched Ocean Unite, an organisation designed to unify, amplify and engage impactful voices calling for Ocean protection so that they can drive positive conservation outcomes. This year we have provided financial and in-kind support to Ocean Unite so that they can deliver both on-the-water outcomes and amplify their ocean conservation message.

WHY PROTECT THE OCEAN?

The Ocean covers 71% of the Earth’s surface, and provides wide-ranging value from food to tourism and employment. However, its capacity to provide food and support livelihoods is diminishing rapidly, and the depletion of marine ecosystems jeopardises economic, social and political stability.

OCEAN PROTECTION

THE ROAD TO 2020

At the beginning of 2017, our target was to support the protection of the Ocean (currently less than 3.6% of the Ocean is safeguarded), working with others to achieve 10% protected by 2020. This is part of a wider goal to reach 30% of the Ocean protected by 2030.

SUCCESS SO FAR

Ocean Unite launched “The Ocean is Everybody’s Business” initiative to engage the business community to take concrete action on Ocean conservation. The initiative’s hashtag achieved 128 million impressions on Twitter.

Ocean Unite grew their network to 32 global political and business leaders and social media influencers from around the world. The network is working with Ocean Unite to build awareness about the state of the Ocean and leading action around solutions to restore and revitalise it.

Ocean Unite worked on successful proposals to create protected areas of the Ocean in Chile, Dominican Republic and in Mexico, creating the largest marine reserve in North America.

The world’s largest marine protected area at 1.55m km² came into force in the Ross Sea, Antarctica, thanks to Ocean Unite’s work.

STORIES FROM 2017

It’s time to talk about women and the ocean

The Ocean is Everybody’s Business

Five years of Ocean conservation

Stop and ask yourself – what would the Ocean say?
"The ocean is so important to me, to all of us - and I will keep telling anyone that will listen (and those that won’t) that we need to protect it."

Richard Branson, Founder
WHAT ARE WE DOING?

We are working on two main projects to catalyse access to clean and affordable energy. We have collaborated with Rocky Mountain Institute and the Rockefeller Foundation to develop the SEED (Sustainable Energy for Economic Development) programme, working with Governments, utilities, and private sector energy developers to build whole-systems energy programmes.

In 2017 we have also supported the launch of Energise Africa, an online lending platform for pioneering solar businesses in Africa.

WHY DOES AFRICA NEED BETTER ACCESS TO CLEAN ENERGY?

Clean energy use will not only have huge positive impact on the environment, but will also directly benefit the population of the countries in which we work.

Households with access to clean energy will make financial savings, suffer fewer illnesses, fires and deaths and their increased working or studying hours will support both education and economic growth.

SUCCESS SO FAR

The SEED programme has developed clean energy plans in Uganda, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, some elements of which have already been implemented. Two new countries are now in the pipeline.

£1m has been raised from the UK public, alongside £0.7m of matched funding from partners, for off-grid solar companies on the Energise Africa platform.

STORIES FROM 2017

Solar minigrids to unlock $740 million energy market in sub-Saharan Africa

Supplying clean, reliable solar energy in Africa

Helping developing economies leapfrog straight to the energy revolution

The road to clean energy in Rwanda

ACCESS TO CLEAN ENERGY

THE ROAD TO 2020

At the beginning of 2017, our target was to support 10 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to catalyse access to clean and affordable energy. Over the next 3 years we plan to do this by working both at a systems level supporting Governments to develop integrated energy plans, and through supporting solar home system businesses to grow.

£1m has been raised from the UK public, alongside £0.7m of matched funding from partners, for off-grid solar companies on the Energise Africa platform.
WHAT ARE WE DOING?
In 2009, Virgin Unite incubated Carbon War Room, an organisation designed to catalyse market-based solutions to climate change. A few years ago Carbon War Room merged with the Rocky Mountain Institute, and we continue to provide them with financial, communications and fundraising support. We are also working with another of our incubations, The B Team, on achieving Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

WHAT'S IMPORTANT ABOUT CARBON REDUCTION?
Although Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is naturally present in the Earth’s atmosphere, human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels have been increasing emissions since the industrial revolution. CO₂ emissions make up around 80% of all greenhouse gas emissions each year, which contribute to global warming by trapping heat in the atmosphere.

SUCCESS SO FAR
- Rocky Mountain Institute won the National Academies grant to build a revolving fund for sustainable projects at airports.
- The B Team worked with partners on the formation of the “We Are Still In” coalition of coalitions, formed as a response to the US’s intended exit of the Paris Agreement.
- Online portals were developed to help both the trucking and shipping industries to improve efficiency.

STORIES FROM 2017
- Global energy use to create a clean, prosperous, and secure low-carbon future.
- Introducing the trucking fleets that run on less.
- How Rocky Mountain Institute is catalysing efficient buildings.
EMPOWERING ENTREPRENEURS

THE ROAD TO 2020

At the beginning of 2017, we targeted ourselves to support entrepreneurs in the Caribbean, the UK and Sub Saharan Africa, proving them with access to business skills, networks and mentors to scale their businesses and empowering them to create 20,000 jobs by 2020.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

We partner with a number of projects supporting entrepreneurs. We incubated the Branson Centres of Entrepreneurship in South Africa and the Caribbean and the MaRS catalyst fund, and provide funds and in-kind support to organisations supplying training, mentorship and seed funding to early-stage entrepreneurs. In 2017, after over ten successful years we made the strategic decision to close our operation in South Africa, as there are now over 200 entrepreneur support organisations in the area.

WHY ENTREPRENEURS?

At Virgin Unite, we believe entrepreneurs are the lifeblood of a booming economy and creators of social change. Entrepreneurial businesses can bring much needed streams of income, fresh opportunities and valuable services to the communities around them.

That’s why we’re working on empowering entrepreneurs to launch and grow their businesses, which will in turn, impact the communities around them.

SUCCESS SO FAR

- The Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship Caribbean relaunch in Kingston was a huge success allowing them to be immersed in the entrepreneurial hub of Jamaica and develop new products and services to further build the centre’s impact in the region.
- The MaRS catalyst fund invested in five high-impact ventures, including two medical device companies.
- Through our partnership with Everwise and Virgin Start Up over 240 entrepreneurs were matched to mentors.

ENTREPRENEURS supported by the Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship in the Caribbean saw an average income increase of 43%.

STORIES FROM 2017

- Opening the Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship in Kingston
- Helping patients recover from heart disease
- How PROWEB mentoring took one Zimbabwean woman’s business ideas global
- How the Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship is helping turn business dreams into reality

OUR PARTNERS
SHAPING THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS

THE ROAD TO 2020

At the beginning of 2017 we targeted ourselves to support the growth of enlightened business leaders through The B Team, and to create a new vision for the future of work. A future where people are always put first, working through the 100% Human at Work programme to build a global network of over 100k companies by 2020, impacting over 5 million employees.

WHY BUSINESS?

We believe that the private sector must take concerted, positive action to ensure business becomes a driving force for social, environmental and economic benefit.

The time has also come for business to start thinking of people as human beings and not resources; the world of work is transforming and this is the subject of intense debate around the likely impacts on jobs, workers, wages, and society in the future.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

In 2013, Virgin Unite and partners launched The B Team, a group of business leaders driving better ways of doing business, for the wellbeing of people and our planet. We continue to support the B Team strategically and financially, whilst providing project management for their 100% Human at Work initiative; building a global network, hosting gatherings in key international regions and helping to drive and engage in thought leadership around the future of work.

SUCCESS SO FAR

- B Team leaders used their voice to influence countries to commit to public registers of beneficial ownership, in order to end anonymous companies.
- The B Team developed a toolkit for use by 50 target companies to implement climate competent boards.
- The B Team Africa was founded and the 100% Human at Work programme was launched in Africa and Australasia in 2017.

STORIES FROM 2017

- Introducing The B Team Africa
- How The B Team are approaching the end of coal
- A South African future of work
- Why better mental health is better for business

OUR PARTNERS

THE B TEAM

100% HUMAN AT WORK

Over 300 companies have joined the 100% Human at Work network.
At the beginning of 2017, we targeted ourselves to contribute to ending hunger and malnutrition for 3 million farm families in sub Saharan Africa by 2020.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

In 2017, we committed to supporting One Acre Fund, an organisation working with farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa to eradicate hunger and poverty, to scale their work. We are funding them to grow the number of farming families they support from 445,000 to 3 million by 2020.

HOW DOES FARMING END HUNGER?

Over 50 million smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa are locked in annual cycles of hunger because they’re unable to grow enough food to feed their families.

By providing these farmers with high quality fertilizer and seed on credit with flexible repayment, along with the training they need to use these tools effectively, farmers can increase their income and build their own path to prosperity.

SUCCESS SO FAR

- One Acre Fund is supporting farmers in six countries across Africa.
- One Acre Fund now has over 6,000 staff, 95% of whom are living in rural areas.
- On average, farmers’ incomes have increased by $150 per year.
- Harvests and farming productivity amongst One Acre Fund’s farmers have improved by 50%.

STORIES FROM 2017

One Acre Fund: The organisation planting 4,000,000 trees per year

10 Years With One Acre Fund

Mobile Phones Are Making a Huge Difference for Kenya’s Farmers

Climate Change Is Already A Reality For The World’s Farmers

By the end of 2017, One Acre Fund was directly supporting 583,000 farm families.
“I am a proud farmer. My maize looks healthy, so I’m confident of a great harvest this season and that my children won’t go hungry.”

Joy Kintu, One Acre Fund Farmer
In September 2017 some of the strongest Hurricanes in recorded history tore across the Caribbean, leaving devastation in their wake. Recovery from these events will take many years, and we have committed to support the BVI to rebuild and develop over this time. We are also working with others to support a group of leaders in the Caribbean to form the ‘Caribbean Climate Smart Accelerator’, which aims to transform regional energy systems, build resiliency, and drive economic growth through attracting significant investment capital, ultimately to create the world’s first climate smart zone.

WHY THE CARIBBEAN?
Both Virgin and Virgin Unite have strong connections to the Caribbean, especially the BVI, where Richard Branson lives. This connection allowed us to provide much needed relief, working with our partner Unite BVI, in the immediate aftermath of the hurricanes. We know there is much more to do to help the BVI and wider Caribbean rebuild greener, smarter and better, and feel we are well placed to work with partners to deliver.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?
In the immediate aftermath, Unite BVI, Virgin Unite and Virgin Limited Edition were heavily involved in providing aid to communities, fielding incoming calls for help, and matching them to offers of support. Unite BVI continues to play a critical role in coordinating government, community and donor collaboration. We are now also focused on the long term recovery to support the government in building a “stronger, smarter, greener, better BVI.”

SUCCESS SO FAR

- 9,000kg of aid and urgent medical supplies delivered to the BVIs.
- We supported Caribbean Leaders to develop the Caribbean Climate-Smart Accelerator, announced at the One Planet Summit in Paris.
- Donations made to Red Cross, Team Rubicon UK and Serve On to support the response efforts.
- Virgin Unite funded flights for Virgin Care nurses to relieve local nurses at Peebles hospital.
- Members of our donor community were some of the first to respond - personally flying aid to the area, running emergency evacuations, and donating essential funds. Their commitment is unwavering. Our community continues to host fundraisers, revitalize the area with volunteer tourism, and ensure the region stays in the spotlight.

STORIES FROM 2017

- Update on BVI Hurricane Irma Aid Efforts
- Acts of Kindness in the BVI
- Announcing the Caribbean Climate-Smart Accelerator
- It will take years to recover, but it will recover

$2.5 million raised by the BVI Community appeal fund for relief and the long-term reconstruction of the BVI. (£1.8m)
**WHAT ARE WE DOING?**

Virgin Unite incubated The Elders in 2007, an organisation bringing together a group of global leaders to work towards peace and human rights. This year the Elders continued to support conflict resolution, promote Universal Health Care and regularly spoke out about the refugee crisis. In 2017 they also celebrated their 10th anniversary with the launch of their #WalkTogether campaign, and we continued to provide them with funding, communications and project management support to achieve their goals.

**WHAT ARE THE KEY ISSUES FACING THE WORLD TODAY?**

In 2017, the issues of climate change and inequality were more pressing than ever. The United States withdrew from the Paris Climate Agreement, the refugee crisis worsened as conflict and instability continued in the Middle East, and at least half the world’s population live without access to essential healthcare.

**STORIES FROM 2017**

- **Join The Elders as they Walk Together to celebrate 10 years young**
- **Collaboration: the heart of The Elders and their work**
- **The Elders condemn US refugee ban**
- **How one couple led their country to success in the campaign for same sex marriage**

**SUCCESS SO FAR**

- The Elders regularly spoke out about the refugee crisis and held a number of events around the UN general assembly.
- The Elders continued to support the strengthening of the UN, working with the UN Secretary General and the UN Security Council to achieve their goal of building a stronger, fairer, more transparent UN system.
- The Elders continued to promote universal health coverage, advising the President of Indonesia on creating one of the world’s biggest public health systems.
- Virgin Unite connected community members and leaders behind Australians for Equality, Tom Snow and Brooke Horne, with Elder President Zedillo. President Zedillo immediately offered to help their cause. The support of The Elders aided progress in Australia’s march toward equality and the passage of the marriage equality law.
“We combine Virgin's famed entrepreneurial spirit with the dedication of the Branson family, bringing people together to change the world for good.”

Rosanne Gray, Managing Director
What Are We Doing?

We are building a network of like-minded supporters from the donor, non-profit, and activist communities, making grants, convening events in order to shine a spotlight on unacceptable issues and pioneer organisations that are tackling them. By doing this we believe we can help these organisations reduce recidivism and change public perception of what constitutes justice.

Why Is Criminal Justice Important?

We believe the narrative around criminal justice needs to change from one of solely punishment, bias and isolation to one of reform, opportunity and true justice. We need to stop locking up (or killing) people with addictions and mental health issues and start treating them like human beings and give them the healthcare and the opportunities they deserve. Currently 68% of people released from prison in the US reoffend within 3 years, by reducing this we can help break the cycle.

Criminal Justice
The Road to 2020

In 2017 we continued building the Criminal Justice Reform Collective and set the goal to catalyse $0.5m (£0.38m) in donations in order to bring much needed funding to organisations working to reduce mass incarceration, recidivism, and the incidence of the death penalty.

Success So Far

- In 2017 we held three successful events bringing together donors and NGOs working in the space.
- We are partnering with The Last Mile to support the first web development shop inside a US prison.
- We have committed $1m (£0.76m) over the next five years to support The Bail Project to free 126,700 people who can’t afford bail.

Stories from 2017

- This could be the biggest opportunity to end mass incarceration in the US
- A haunting volunteer job
- It’s easy to kill a monster

Our Partners

THE BAIL PROJECT
#CUT50
LASTMILE
STARTUP
WHAT ARE WE DOING?

We know it’s time for a rethink, and that’s why Richard Branson is part of the Global Commission on Drug Policy. Virgin Unite supports the Commission’s work. Our goal is to raise awareness of the huge social and economic cost of the war on drugs.

We want to see policies that treat drug use as a social and health challenge, not a crime.

SUCCESS SO FAR

✓ The Global Commission on Drug Policy (GCDP) published a report titled “The World Drug Perception Problem: Countering prejudices about people who use drugs”.
✓ The CCDP issued a Position Paper to address the issue of The Opioid Crisis in North America.
✓ Advocacy efforts supported the implementation of drug policy reform in France, Ireland, UK, Norway, Denmark and Myanmar.

WHY SHOULDN’T DRUG USE BE A CRIMINAL ISSUE?

The war on drugs isn’t working. Over the last 100 years, billions of dollars have been spent, but the illegal trade is stronger than ever. And so is the cycle of violence that comes with it. We believe there is a fundamental problem with drug policies that criminalize people who use drugs rather than treating it as a health issue.

Such policies contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS and hepatitis, and to the global crisis of pain with the lack of access to essential controlled medicines.
RETHINKING EDUCATION
THE ROAD TO 2020

At the beginning of 2017, we targeted ourselves to work with organisations who are reimagining education. The world has come a long way but education hasn’t kept up and we think we can do better. We hope to make change by working with Big Change to rethink the education system in the UK, supporting Galactic Unite in their mission to inspire the next generation of STEM leaders, and supporting the launch of MASS Design Group’s Africa Design Centre, providing much needed architectural training in Africa.

WHY DO WE NEED A CHANGE IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM?

Education is the greatest lever for social change, yet the current system is failing to meet the needs of young people in the 21st Century. Unacceptable gaps in academic attainment, poor social mobility, rising mental health issues and a failure to provide young people with the skills they need for life in the 21st century are just some of the consequences of a system rooted in the needs of a bygone era.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

We are supporting Big Change in their mission to set up young people to thrive in life, not just exams, and are working with them to explore an initiative on reimagining education. Working with Galactic Unite, we have given scholarships to STEM scholars to continue their education, and have worked with MASS Design Group on the launch of a ground breaking new architectural training centre in Africa.

SUCCESS SO FAR

- Big Change celebrated their fifth birthday, during which time they have backed 18 projects and grown their community to over 1,000 members.
- The Reimagining Education initiative driven by members of the Virgin Unite Community of Supporters engaged and united 50 top leaders and influencers across sectors to work together in calling for a change in education.
- Galactic Unite has engaged over 50,000 children across the world around space and the importance of STEM education.

STORIES FROM 2017

- Reimagining Education
- Helping school kids become space kids
- The state of speaking in our schools
- Celebrating five years of Big Change

OUR PARTNERS

MASS Design Group’s African Design Centre began construction on the Ruhhehe School, which will serve a community of over 22,000 people once completed.
IN JULY 2017 WE COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING TWO INCREDIBLE HEALTH INITIATIVES.

The first is Living Goods and Last Mile Health, who we will (along with other funders) support to enable just under 50,000 digitally empowered community health workers across sub-Saharan Africa by the end of 2021, reaching a total of 34.3 million people. This will deliver life-saving, door-to-door, care at a cost as low as $2 per person per year.

The second initiative will support Sightsavers to treat over 40 million people in Africa for trachoma - an infection of the eyes that results in blindness if untreated - eliminating the disease in nine countries. The team are also aiming to treat a further 20 million people for other neglected tropical diseases.