

CASE STUDY

**CENTRS DARDEDZE:
ACHIEVING A DEEPER IMPACT
IN A FINANCIALLY
SUSTAINABLE WAY**



dardedze

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SUMMARY

For the past 20 years, [Centrs Dardedze](#), one of the most influential non-governmental organisations in Latvia, has been working to ensure that every child has a safe childhood. Amongst their programmes, they have been delivering [Džimba](#) (en: 'Jimba') - a key prevention programme which teaches kindergarten and primary school children about personal safety and safe relationships in an engaging and exciting way.

With a significant impact on preventing violence against children, the programme has had an impressive growth to date, being delivered in 60% of kindergartens across Latvia. Its success, coupled with interest from organisations within and outside of the country in running the programme, made it clear that Džimba needed to be delivered at scale. But the sheer scale needed for the programme to be as impactful as possible required new strategies, unprecedented approaches to funding, sustainability, and testing, and a noteworthy shift in mindsets.

This case study presents the key lessons gathered from Centrs Dardedze's journey to impact at scale so far, guided by Spring Impact, a global nonprofit dedicated to helping great solutions have a greater impact on the problems they seek to address.

SITUATION

Over the last 20 years, **Centrs Dardedze**, a Latvian non-governmental organisation, has been advocating for every child to have a safe childhood. With a vision that every child is loved, protected, respected and cared for in a safe environment, free from all forms of violence, Centrs Dardedze is one of the most influential non-governmental organisations in Latvia, providing a suite of successful programmes, which have been making a positive impact across the country for decades.

Amongst these is Džimba - a key prevention programme which helps kindergarten and primary school children learn about personal safety issues in an engaging and exciting way. In Džimba's training classes, children learn that their bodies belong exclusively to them, learn the difference between good and bad touching, and learn to distinguish between good and bad secrets. The programme's highly effective approach provides children with the opportunity to understand personal safety in interaction with other people, ultimately preventing the risk of violence.

Centrs Dardedze had been delivering the Džimba programme for 15 years in kindergartens, by training individual kindergarten representatives to become 'Džimba's agents' - meaning preschool teachers, psychologists, or other specialists are equipped with the confidence, tools and knowledge to become personal safety teachers in their own kindergarten or school. The programme's highly successful approach has helped it achieve an impressive growth, being delivered to 60% of kindergartens across the country and reaching over 10,000 children.

But while Džimba was making a significant impact in the lives of the children taking part, the **prevalence of the issue of violence against children (VAC)** meant that more needed to be done to ensure that no child in any segment of society faces violence or sexual abuse. Its great success in supporting children to lead safe lives, and the potential for it to make a wider impact, coupled with the increased demand in the programme from other organisations, made it clear that Džimba needed to be scaled.

CHALLENGE

ACHIEVING A DEEPER IMPACT IN A FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE WAY

Centrs Dardedze recognised that, to truly solve the problem they are addressing, they needed to scale in a way that reached more kindergartens and their children, created a deeper impact on the issue of preventing violence against children, and ensured high-quality programme delivery while also achieving financial sustainability.

Before working with Spring Impact, they had already started to scale the Džimba programme across Latvia, but felt like their approach had plateaued early on. By primarily focusing on giving more to their partners, they ended up investing more resources into the programme and its delivery at scale, without a plan for generating new income.

A prevalent mindset which made them think that as a non-governmental institution, they ‘have to provide everything for free’ made it difficult to imagine how they could request financial contributions from their potential partners. They felt they didn’t have the necessary capacity and resources to continue working in this way, and felt limited by a lack of skills and knowledge of how to progress.

The team knew they wanted to reach every kindergarten in Latvia and that in order to achieve this, they needed to move away from providing one-off support to kindergartens and schools, as this approach was not guaranteeing sufficient impact or proving to be financially viable.

“PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE IS EVERYBODY’S BUSINESS.”

Centrs Dardedze recognised that, if the Džimba programme was going to create profound change and effectively challenge the prevalence of violence against children, it needed to combat a number of factors that prevent children from learning about, experiencing, and practising safe relationships. Something needed to change in the wider environment, and the team needed to identify how the Džimba programme could contribute to this.

They partnered with Spring Impact to create a structured approach to truly achieving the impact at scale they desired, focused on developing:

- 1. New strategies which consider the problem** they are looking to solve and the intended impact on the wider environment
- 2. A scale model that achieved deeper impact** in a financially sustainable way
- 3. A significant shift in mindset** and confidence in their approach

CHANGE & ACTION

1. BUILDING A STRATEGY THAT CONSIDERS THE IMPACT ON THE WIDER SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

A key first step on any organisation's journey to scale is to understand the exact social change you are looking to create - or your 'intended impact'. Once you are clear on this impact, it is important to identify what it is that makes your programme work so well, and define the essential components that drive the impact you want to achieve - what is called the 'core' of your programme.

These exercises are crucial to ensuring that the scale efforts are focused on the most impactful parts of your programme or solution. What does your impact look like in the long term? What parts of the system need to change, so you can create lasting, profound impact? Who is the audience for your solution, and how are they different after experiencing its impact?

WHAT IS INTENDED IMPACT?

Your intended impact is the change that your solution seeks to have as you address a social problem. An intervention may have impact on an individual, a structural, or a societal level. Intended impact considers who the audience is for your intervention, and how they are different after experiencing the intervention.

WHAT IS 'CORE'?

The core consists of all the things that make your intervention work. These might include principles and values that underpin your programme, systems and 'behind-the-scenes' process that support delivery, as well as all the elements of direct delivery that a user experiences.

IDENTIFYING 'INTENDED IMPACT' BY FOCUSING ON SOLVING THE PROBLEM, RATHER THAN SCALING THE SOLUTION

“One key lesson of the Džimba programme is: if you're in danger, call for help. A lightbulb moment came up when one little boy who was listening in on one of our sessions reacted saying - 'in our neighbourhood, it doesn't matter. Even if you call for help, you're on your own'.”

The ultimate impact that Centrs Dardedze wants to achieve is enabling children to learn about, experience, and practice safe relationships. Participating in these exercises with Spring Impact revealed that, while Džimba was incredibly successful in teaching children about their personal safety, it was not enough for children alone to learn this. Parents and teachers alike needed to be trained to respond, to act as role models for children, and to offer them support when needed.

By better understanding the problem they are trying to solve, Centrs Dardedze identified the key barriers that exist to truly tackling the issue. It became clear that pursuing their ultimate impact could not be achieved without addressing problems at other 'levels' of society. The most notable factor being societal 'taboos', which result in adults - including teachers, parents, and others - not feeling comfortable or willing to talk to children about difficult topics such as VAC, making them unequipped to adequately respond when a child asks for help.

For instance, in the current situation, due to societal taboos, some Džimba agents are not confident in covering all the topics of the programme, and parents do not continue teaching children about safe relationships at home - as a result, the ability of children to understand personal safety is limited, and the impact on preventing VAC reduced.

Through focusing on the problem, rather than their solution, Centrs Dardedze were able to identify that **only when they are working to also lift the societal ‘taboo’ around violence against children**, will the Džimba programme truly achieve its full potential to ensure children are protected and lead safe childhoods. If they had solely focused on delivering more of the same support to more children alone, the barriers imposed by social ‘taboos’ would continue to exist, and limit the impact of the programme.

To create profound change, the Džimba programme therefore needs to challenge social norms, shift the role of kindergartens, and bring them to a place where they are prepared to take on more responsibility for child safety. It now aims to:

- Create an environment of safety across a whole kindergarten, beyond just one classroom
- Better engage parents in the issue of VAC
- Give ‘Džimba agents’ the confidence not to skip crucial topics on the Džimba curriculum

EXPANDING THE ‘CORE’ OF THE PROGRAMME TO SUPPORT ADULTS AND CHALLENGE SOCIETAL NORMS

‘We didn’t want this programme to just be one, isolated lesson – we wanted it to be more. We really intentionally thought through how the programme could link in other group teachers – not just the ‘Džimba agent’, and provide them with things that they can build into their everyday routine.’

With Spring Impact’s support, Centrs Dardedze identified that in order to achieve the intended impact, the programme needs to expand its ‘core’ to support adults to feel comfortable and confident talking about these difficult topics with children. The programme will give education professionals and parents the confidence, skills and knowledge to teach children about, and role model, safe relationships.

The improved package of support will lead to deeper and more consistent impact by making it easier for kindergartens to engage other teachers and promote children’s rights across the kindergarten, providing agents with more resources to engage parents, and giving agents the confidence to cover all required topics.

Džimba will also enhance the role of kindergarten principals and ensure they are more engaged with the programme from the outset, to ensure the kindergarten could truly become a safe space - principals’ roles allow them to really embed the teaching of the programme across the whole kindergarten and ensure agents and other staff are delivering successfully.

In addition, Centrs Dardedze recognised that changing societal norms and creating lasting impact requires continued commitment by kindergartens, and ongoing monitoring by their team. Before starting to scale, Centrs Dardedze’s approach consisted of training Džimba agents once, and allowing them to deliver the programme without much oversight. Now, the team will retrain agents regularly through learning events and conferences, to ensure they are able to deliver the programme to the high standard it requires. This increases the amount of formal support offered to kindergartens taking on the programme, both up-front, and year-on-year, ensuring ongoing value is provided.

By maintaining an ongoing relationship with the kindergartens, the team will also be able to measure the impact of the programme continuously, and ensure it effectively progresses towards the intended goal.

This new approach to scale will require enhanced ongoing support to kindergartens from Centrs Dardedze. This will increase the core organisational and programme costs year-on-year. **Therefore, the Džimba programme must become more financially sustainable.**

CHANGE & ACTION

2. IDENTIFYING HOW TO BE FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE AT SCALE

For most nonprofit organisations, understanding how to deliver their solution at scale in a financially sustainable way is crucial, but often a difficult issue to work through. To scale successfully, an intervention and scaling model need to not only deliver the ‘intended impact’, but also deliver value for all stakeholders, so that they will continue to make use of your service and support it financially.

THE APPROACH TO FUNDING BEFORE

Originally, Centrs Dardedze’s funding model was based on a project-basis, which involved applying for funding to deliver specific prevention work. The organisation was paid a single, one-off fee by municipalities (the main authorities funding kindergartens across Latvia), to train a cohort of single teachers to be Džimba agents in their kindergartens.

Centrs Dardedze would then give the agents all the resources and intensive training to run the programme as best and as much as they could. They would occasionally continue to provide agents with learning events and additional support if and when requested - however, this support was all offered for free, as it was not considered part of the initial one-off fee paid by municipalities.

THE APPROACH TO FUNDING NOW

In their collaboration with Spring Impact, Centrs Dardedze started by exploring who might pay for the delivery of their solution - could it be delivery partners, end users, local authorities? They worked through various key questions: what is the value of the Džimba programme? How to create an annual fee that is really affordable, while the value and impact of the programme is still maintained? And how to be flexible to the different needs and requirements of potential payers?

Finding that ‘sweet spot’ between the value, impact, and sustainability of the programme helped clarify how to progress successfully.

As a result, the new approach to funding proposes that the income for Centrs Dardedze’s scale will come from both one-off and ongoing fees charged to municipalities for each kindergarten that enrolls in the Džimba programme, specifically:

- A one-off fee for the initial training for agents and kindergarten principals
- A smaller ongoing fee so that agents are allowed to continue delivering the programme year-on-year, and so that they can access additional support

The new scale model will mean that:

- Municipalities will pay an initial fee to Centrs Dardedze for each kindergarten they want to enrol in the Džimba programme. The improved package of support Centrs Dardedze will provide municipalities and kindergartens with ongoing value, justifying the licence fee.
- The municipalities will then select and motivate the kindergartens to engage with the programme (using materials and support from Centrs Dardedze). This stronger collaboration with municipalities will in turn help motivate and engage kindergartens better. Equally, the direct municipality involvement will help them gauge the impact and increase likelihood of ongoing financial investment in the programme in the future.
- Centrs Dardedze will train a teacher in each kindergarten to become a Džimba agent, and will support principals to create an environment that promotes children’s rights across the kindergarten. This ongoing relationship will also help monitor progress and collect insights ongoingly.

CHANGE & ACTION

3. SHIFTING MINDSETS AND TESTING ASSUMPTIONS

Often, nonprofit organisations find it uncomfortable to reach out to potential partners, feeling like they have ‘one shot’ at getting funding secured. They lack confidence sharing the success of their programme and its impact and feel unprepared to speak to potential partners.

Paired with this is a common mindset of ‘giving, not asking’. Centrs Dardedze had been historically seeing their role as offering services for free. They were fearful that asking for a fee would risk not delivering the programme, and ultimately not reaching the children it could benefit. Additionally, having never delivered the programme using this model before, the team was unsure of how it would work, and wanted to have a tested scale model before asking for funding, to ensure they don’t risk losing their chance of securing funding.

“We weren’t accustomed to looking at funding in this way, we were set on ‘giving’. We’d rather sweat and work ourselves out, than face the risk of ‘what if nobody’s going to pay for it’. We didn’t dare to stand up and test our scale model with this in mind. But someone had to come in and protect us.”

However, as they were piloting this new approach, they needed to overcome and shift these mindsets, and start testing and asking for feedback. Otherwise, starting to deliver the programme in this new way would not have been possible.

To validate their financial assumptions, Centrs Dardedze had to start testing as soon as possible. For this, the team worked with Spring Impact to adopt and develop the key mindsets and confidence needed for scale.

1. Overcome perfectionism and start validating assumptions

The notion of not being fully ‘ready’ to scale was one of the organisation’s biggest barriers to testing. Centrs Dardedze felt that they had to offer something of near-perfect quality from the start. However, they later realised that not having all the answers right away is ok - “sometimes, you just don’t know yet”.

2. Treat potential payers as genuine partners

Equally, testing the financial model, rather than asking potential partners to pay for the ‘finished product’, allowed room for potential payers - in this case municipalities - to participate in shaping the offer, providing highly relevant suggestions and directions. Treating municipalities as genuine partners paid off - they learned what would be most beneficial for them, and with those learnings, were able to validate their assumptions around who would pay and build a more concrete financial model as a result.

3. Build confidence in the offer’s contribution to solving the problem

For Centrs Dardedze, being able to effectively communicate the significant impact the Dzimba programme was creating was key. Keeping the problem they are trying to solve front and centre of their new approach to scale was essential, helping them build confidence in the fact that - given the big difference the programme was making - partners would be willing to pay.

“We can approach potential partners and say: here is the problem. We are really concerned about it. This problem affects your children in your municipalities. We want to be your partners - and we want you to be our partners - in solving this problem; in protecting and safeguarding your children. We have the expertise, the tools and instruments for how to do that - if you can find a way to fund it, we should partner up.”

CONCLUSION

Having achieved significant success across Latvia with the Džimba programme to date, this new approach represents an exciting opportunity for Centrs Dardedze to not just scale its impact to new locations, but to achieve deeper impact - better supporting agents to tackle difficult topics, creating an environment supporting children's rights throughout the kindergarten community, and better engaging parents in the issue of violence against children.

Their journey to scale so far has required significant shifts in their strategy, approach to funding, and overall mindsets - big undertakings, but all taken forward effectively due to Centrs Dardedze's ambition, capabilities, and commitment to ensure every child can have a safe childhood. The team is now already onboarding 58 kindergartens into this new approach. Progressing on their journey, the organisation will continue to test the new scale model to ensure it delivers the intended impact and provides value to partners. They will continue to collaborate with Spring Impact to develop the additional necessary materials and support to get the Džimba programme to scale successfully.

Transition to scale support from Spring Impact to Centrs Dardedze was made possible with funding by Oak Foundation.

“Before you go onto the scaling journey, make sure it’s something you want to do and something that you’re committed to doing. Ensure that the whole staff is on board, and keep the engagement with staff going. And when you start losing hope and courage, have Spring Impact next to you. We wouldn’t be here without the support of Spring Impact. It kept us moving, kept us disciplined.”

CONTACT

THE DŽIMBA PROGRAMME

- [Visit website](#)
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FURTHER INFO

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