

Alumni Ventures Fund: Celebrating 2023 Projects and Welcoming 2024 Recipients

December 16, 2024, New York, NY- This December, the Alumni Ventures Fund celebrates two important achievements: the conclusion of the 2023 projects, through which Diana Mandewo from Zimbabwe and Dr. Winfred Mgaya from Tanzania made lasting contributions with their year-long initiatives, 'HPV Access' and 'Plastic-Free Smiles,' respectively; and the launch of the 2024 recipients, Dr. Hildah Bwembya Nkonde with the 'Save My Smile Project' in Zambia, and Michael Leo with the 'Knowledge in Books: Digital Learning Hub' project in Sengerema, Tanzania.

Supported by the Alumni Ventures Fund, Dr. Hildah will be working to improve access to quality oral healthcare for people living with disabilities in Ndola, Zambia, while Michael will be working towards a society where every individual possesses the ability to read and write, with equitable access to educational resources in Sengerema, Tanzania.

To better understand the impact of these two projects, this piece further elaborates on them and includes direct insights from the recipients.

Save My Smile Project in Zambia

The 'Save My Smile Project' addresses significant disparities in access to quality care.

Many individuals with disabilities lack access to oral healthcare due to limited resources and providers' lack of training in managing patients with disabilities. This leads to avoidance of treatment and reliance on potentially harmful restraint techniques. This project tackles these two challenges.

"There is a lack of training on incorporating applied behavior management techniques in clinical practice among dentists in Zambia. This has led to poor access to quality oral health care services among patients with Intellectual and Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (IDD) and negatively affects their overall oral health outcomes." Dr. Hildah says.

Further, she highlights that this project addresses these disparities in healthcare training and consequently improves the oral health outcomes among the IDD community in Ndola and Zambia at large.

Knowledge in Books: Digital Learning Hub in Tanzania

Michael's project enhances an existing community library by adding a digital learning hub equipped with computers and tablets, providing free access to online learning resources and

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digital skills training. It addresses the significant educational inequity in underserved Tanzanian communities where many students lack access to books, technology, and digital skills.

The 'Knowledge in Books: Digital Learning Hub' project is unique as it integrates technology within the existing library framework, offering not just book lending, but also digital skills training for both students and volunteers. This ensures that participants acquire the skills needed to effectively use technology, enhancing both their education and future employment opportunities.

"This project is already transforming education in Sengerema, Tanzania, by equipping the community library with laptops, tablets, and internet access. This initiative empowers students with the tools they need for digital learning, helps bridge the education gap, fosters innovation, and equips young minds with essential skills to thrive in today's connected world," says Michael, who recently joined the first cohort of MCW Global Ambassadors.

Leon Gojani, Program Associate for the Young Leaders Program, highlights the importance of these initiatives and how they are making a lasting impact, leaving their communities better than they found them. He works closely with the recipients throughout the implementation period to ensure the success of their projects.

"The Alumni Ventures Fund has granted over \$108,000 since its inception and I am incredibly proud to work with such bright leaders who take on the responsibility to solve such critical issues affecting their communities. Hildah and Michael have shown unmatched commitment with their professionalism and passion for their communities and we are excited to see these projects come to life."

The Alumni Ventures Fund is fully supported by The Claire Friedlander Family Foundation and Hyman R. and Ruth Shapiro Foundation, Inc.

Please click [here](#) to read testimonies from the 2023 recipients of the Alumni Ventures Fund.

About Us

MCW Global is a non-profit organization with a vision for communities around the world to achieve greater levels of education, improved health, and increased economic security. Our mission is to address communities' pressing needs by empowering current leaders and readying leaders of tomorrow. Founded in 1999, MCW Global is based in New York with affiliates in Africa (Rwanda, Tanzania, and Zambia). MCW Global offers Young Leaders and Africa Programs. Across all our programs, we seek to act with integrity, compassion, accountability, responsibility, and excellence.

For more information and our recent activities, please visit www.mcwglobal.org.

For more about Alumni Ventures Fund information, please click [here](#).