



Wells Mountain Initiative



2019 ANNUAL REPORT

Building a Global Network
of Grassroots Leaders

Letter from the Founders

CELEBRATING
15
YEARS

Dear friends,

It is hard to believe how quickly time flies. Fourteen years ago, we founded Wells Mountain Initiative with the recognition that we had an important role to play in helping young people and leveling the global playing field for education, opportunity and justice.

We started with humble beginnings -- helping fund the undergraduate degree of one student in 2006. Our goal was to help one young person at a time, one community at a time. With the support of a community of friends who encouraged us to “Dream Big”, and key investors like the Bolger Foundation, we have been able to scale our impact. Since 2006, WMI has enabled 418 young people from 44 countries to attend college. Over three-fourths of them are the first in their families to do so.

Today, nearly 15 years later, WMI not only funds scholarships for undergraduate degrees, but we also seek to build the next generation of changemakers in some of the most impoverished and under-resourced areas in the world. We also have a particular focus on ensuring women and girls are afforded equal opportunities. Through our three main program areas - Education, Global Collective Action and Community Development Grants - we are fostering a small, but mighty and growing, global community. These engaged leaders and social entrepreneurs are tackling issues such as gender inequity, educational access, health care, sustainable agriculture, climate change and civil society. To date, WMI Scholars have led 44 WMI-funded social entrepreneurship projects in 11 countries.

As we enter our 15th year, we are ready to further increase our impact. We will fund more scholarships, lead more strategic networking and provide core funding for more social entrepreneurship projects. We will also continue to elevate the voices and leadership of WMI Scholars.

One such leader, Evode Mbabazi of Rwanda, studied Clinical Medicine through WMI tuition support. This year, after graduating, he leveraged a WMI Community Development Grant to launch a digital health project that works in partnership with local schools to provide culturally-grounded, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights information. In just a few months, the project has reached almost 2,000 young people. Evode believes that men must play an important role in changing gender norms and promoting community health and wellness. Like many WMI Scholars, Evode demonstrates how local leaders can positively transform communities and nations. His story is one of so many.

We thank you for your support and look forward to working closely with you and all of our supporters in the next phase of our growth!

Sincerely,

Tom Wells
Board Chair, Founder

Jordyn Wells
Executive Director, Co-Founder

Cover: Clarisse Iradukunda of Rwanda discusses gender-based violence with young girls she mentors.

Right: Maria Elena Cortes of Mexico participated in the Zapatista Army's “Second International Meeting of Women Who Fight” where 3,200 women gathered from all over the world to address global violence against women.



Vision Statement

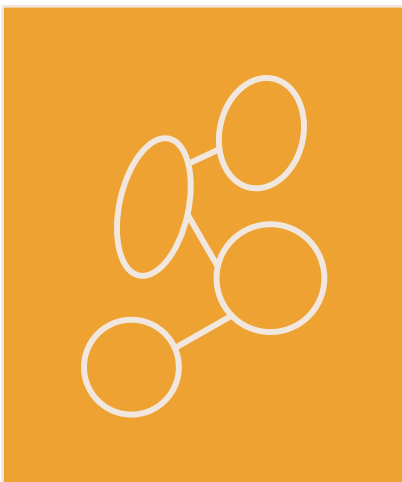
Young people are able to realize their full potential and become leaders in creating the changes they want to see in their communities and, ultimately, the world.

About WMI

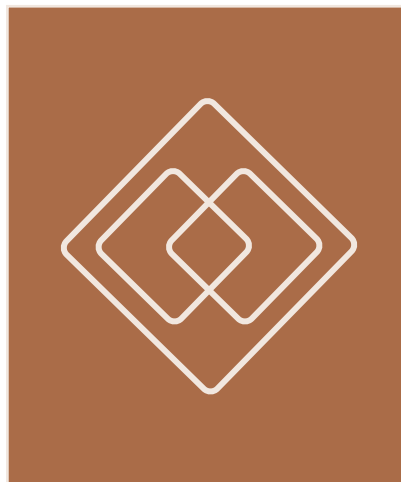
Wells Mountain Initiative (WMI), a Vermont-based nonprofit, fosters social change at the local level by building a global network of grassroots leaders (WMI Scholars) who are catalyzing community transformation across 44 developing countries.

We find talented people in the most remote corners of the world and partner with them throughout their lives to lead effective change. We identify young people who have proven to be unstoppable in the face of adversity and are deeply committed to leading change in their community. We fund their undergraduate studies, help them lead social service projects during their academic career and stand alongside them to address any challenges so that they successfully complete their studies.

Post-graduation, we provide life-long support, which includes training and technical assistance, regular national and global convenings and community development grants. Through our efforts, we foster a small, but mighty, global community of engaged leaders and social entrepreneurs who are tackling issues such as gender inequity, educational access, health disparities and climate change. We enable individuals across movements, sectors and countries to work to strengthen the social, physical, and economic fabric of the communities in which they live.



Education



Collective Action



Grants

Programs

Education

We fund WMI Scholars' undergraduate education, offer skill-building opportunities and provide on-going career counseling to ensure that young people successfully complete their studies. Through intensive community service projects, WMI Scholars garner hands-on leadership development alongside their academic career. We also provide flexible tuition support that enables first-generation college students more chances to complete their studies and succeed.

Collective Action

We bring WMI Scholars together through multi-day conferences and national fellowships so that they can share strategies, implement projects and scale their impact. Annually, we host a Global Training Academy, and every three years, we host the Dream Big Conference. We provide hands-on training and technical assistance as WMI Scholars implement their social entrepreneurship projects, engage in cross-learning and gain inspiration from their peers in other nations and regions.

Community Development Grants

We provide grants, technical assistance and strategic networking opportunities to help people design and launch their social entrepreneurship efforts, including locally-led businesses and nonprofits. We bring them together with national experts and other WMI Scholars to help build and grow ideas and increase their impact.

418

scholars

44

countries

13

fellowships

294

fellowship members

89

fellowship community service projects, with 9 new projects hosted in 2019

44

community development grants since 2015, 11 in 2019

11

countries where community development projects have been implemented



Providing free health care services to inhabitants of rural communities is usually a great relief to them financially, since many cannot comfortably afford the cost of accessing adequate health care services. According to the WHO, Nigeria has only 4 doctors per 10,000 people, compared to over 25 in the US.

“I appreciate WMI for having so much faith in me and for providing me the opportunity to have a smooth journey in my academic career all this while, not to mention the values that have been imbibed in my life by virtue of my active involvement in volunteering over the years. It is reassuring to know that the support continues even still, as a graduate scholar.”

Bolaji Oyeniya Abimbola
Scholar of Clinical Medicine from Nigeria

The WMI Model

Recognizing that poverty is the result of global structural inequity, our strategy is to empower a generation of leaders who have the tools, resources and peer support to lead change to address the root causes of problems.

WMI's model is unique in three ways:



Deekshanta led the Chepang Community Project to provide rural school children with free school supplies and ran a health camp and awareness program. Here he is seen teaching students about essential personal hygiene techniques.

**Deekshanta Sitaula,
Scholar of Clinical Medicine from Nepal**

Local Leadership

Our work is based on the conviction that local leaders are the best positioned to lead change in their own communities. WMI Scholars lead in the face of daunting challenges and are implementing fresh and creative solutions to the world's most pressing problems. As a US-based organization, we know that our role is to help people lead, rather than implementing top-down solutions. Many WMI Scholars run nonprofits or businesses that hire locally, generate wealth and foster solutions.

Global Peer-to-Peer Collaboration

Often the most talented leaders operate in isolation, with few resources, tools and networks to ensure that their change efforts are sustainable. While education is a life-line out of poverty, sustainable social change requires committed, resourced individuals working collectively together over time. Through seed funding to support initiatives and regular strategy convenings, we help sustain and amplify locally-led change.

Building Sectors

We focus on building local leadership in high-need sectors such as health, education and the environment, so that WMI Scholars can bring badly needed resources to under-served regions and communities. For instance, many WMI Scholars start the first health clinic or school in their village. Gender empowerment is an approach that cuts across all of the sectors; we support the leadership of women and girls and prioritize gender empowerment projects.

Our Impact



A Community Development Fund micro-loan recipient engaged in her craft.

“Providing micro-credit to motivate resource-poor villagers is a means of building a solid economic foundation in communities where the only source of credit may be exploitative lenders, whose practices impede rather than nurture local people’s opportunities.”

Mayom Mabuong Scholar of Community Health from Uganda

Mayom received a WMI seed grant in 2015 to launch the Community Development Fund in South Sudan. Since then, his organization has granted over 189 micro-loans, 70% of which supported female-initiated businesses. In four years, the CDF has experienced 500% capital growth and continues to be the most trusted micro-lending group in the region.

32,640

community service hours performed in 2019 year by student scholars

80%

of student scholars have leadership positions in community and/or school groups

60%

of graduate scholars serve in leadership positions in volunteer community and/or civic groups

35%

of graduate scholars run their own nonprofit or business, employing over 150 people and serving over 10,000

60%

of graduate scholars support the education of someone else, supporting over 160 individuals in 2019

85%

of graduate scholars are employed - 84% in their field of study

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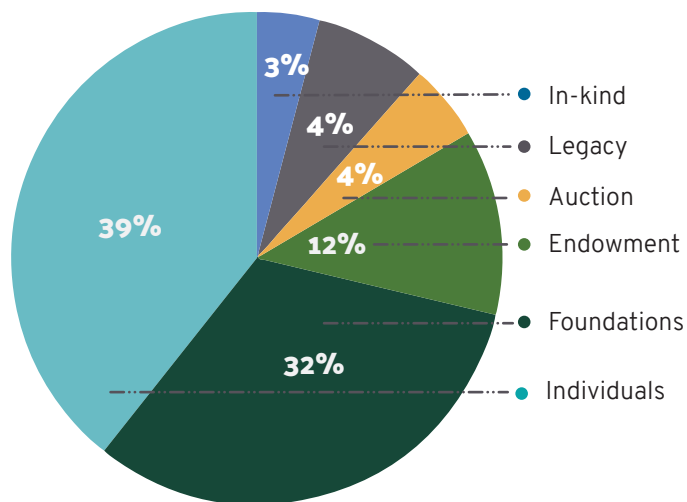
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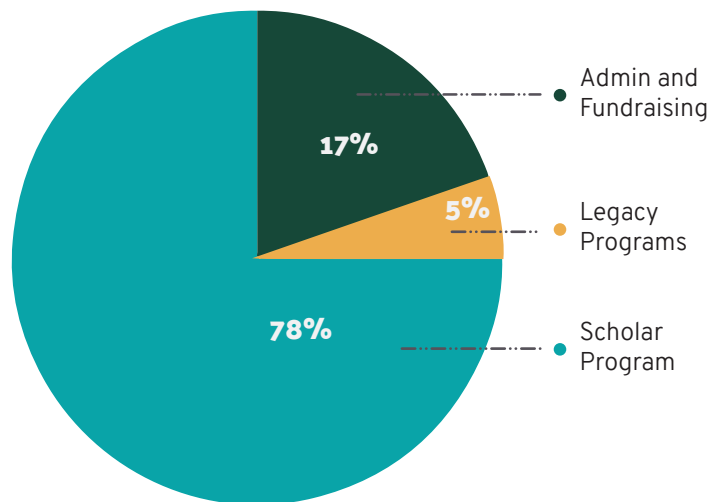
Esther Ajari of Nigeria, second from the right, teaches volunteers to make reusable and biodegradable sanitary pads as part of her Keep a Girl Dry and Clean Project. The project will improve hygiene and school attendance for girls in Ibadan, Nigeria.



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"We have been proud supporters of WMI since its beginning and we encourage others to join us in this support. There is no greater satisfaction than to see our investments pay dividends by offering opportunities where every individual is afforded education and a chance to make a difference not only in their own life, but also in the lives of others. WMI bridges current gaps by educating future leaders, who would otherwise not have the opportunity to be effective change-makers in their communities. As a result, we as a global community are safer, more connected, more just and equitable and more prosperous."

- **Bob and Marianne Dill,**
Donors since 2006

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