



About Us

Wells Mountain Initiative (WMI), a Vermont-based nonprofit, advances 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. Through our three program areas - Education, Global Collective Action and Community Development Grants, we are fostering a small, but mighty, global community of engaged leaders and social entrepreneurs who are tackling issues such as health, economic security, sustainable agriculture, gender inequity and climate change.

Covid-19 Health and Resiliency Fund

WMI is uniquely poised to build local response to Covid-19 in vulnerable and remote regions of the world. Across the 44 countries where we work, WMI Scholars are on the forefront of addressing the health, economic and food security impacts caused by Covid-19. Currently, we are seeking urgent resources so that WMI Scholars are able to lead efforts to address Covid-19 in their communities. We are seeking support in the following areas:

- **COVID-19 Community Response Fund:** In order to be responsive to both the roadblocks and the incredible potential of the local leaders that we support, we have initiated a new grant program- the COVID-19: Community Response Grants Program, exclusively designed to enable WMI Scholars to lead critically-needed responses. This grant is designed to provide WMI Scholars with funding to implement immediate projects to proactively slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus, improve access to accurate information, increase knowledge and adoption of personal and community hygiene practices, and aid in ensuring the continuity of services for vulnerable populations in local communities. We are also seeking to fund projects that will promote sustainable solutions to distance learning/online learning in environments with low mobile/internet connectivity.

In just a few weeks, we have already received over 100 high-quality proposals and yet only have funding for less than 25% of the projects. With the support of our donors, we can fund most, if not all, of these projects. The following are recent proposals:

- *Thyolo District, Malawi.* A WMI Scholar, studying medicine, is currently volunteering at a public hospital that serves a population of 721,456 people yet has only 2 qualified medical doctors and no running water. Through this project, the WMI Scholar organized a volunteer committee to supply handwashing stations and soap for health workers and patients
- *Johannesburg, South Africa.* A WMI Scholar has witnessed elderly people in a public nursing home wait in a crowded bread line every morning and their distinct susceptibility to COVID-19. Partnering together with a local tailor and grocer, she will be able to produce and distribute masks and soap to the elderly.
- *Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya.* A WMI Scholar, studying medicine and a resident of Kakuma, will create a youth committee to disseminate public health information on COVID-19 prevention, will distribute personal protective equipment and soap to people residing in the refugee camp and provide linkages to healthcare and other services.

- **Financing Health Professionals:** Currently, there is an even more urgent need to finance a surge in health system capacity, particularly in remote and underserved regions of the world. To date, we have funded over 150 health professionals, a majority of whom are working in underserved areas. Many have significantly increased healthcare access and quality of care in their villages and districts, especially as the first doctors or practitioners in a specialized field. This year, we will enable over 40 additional students to work in the medical and health fields.
- **Economic Relief for Undergraduate Students:** According to the World Bank, as of March 28, 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic is causing more than 1.6 billion children and youth to be out of school in 161 countries. This is close to 80% of the world's enrolled students.¹ We are ensuring that our current WMI Student Scholars (221 undergraduate students) have flexible tuition so they can resume their studies once their colleges and universities reopen. We are providing resources to enable students to engage in remote learning when possible. We are also offering relief packages to students who are experiencing acute financial need during this crisis time, many of whom have had to return home during lock-downs.

Impact Stories

Being an engaged citizen and leader requires one to use the power of one's voice, technical knowledge and skills to create the world one wishes to see. This truth is perhaps most evident during times of crisis. This truth is perhaps most evident during times of crisis.

- Johnson Okolie, who studied clinical medicine with WMI's support, is the Project Manager at the African Centre of Excellence for Genomics of Infectious Diseases (ACEGID), an organization that is at the forefront of the fight against Covid-19 in Nigeria and in Africa. Johnson helps ensure that Nigerians can get tested for free, and ensures that scientific innovations relating to testing and treatment reach the community.
- Clarrise Mutimukeye, a medical doctor in Rwanda is leading efforts to screen and test at various sites including the Kigali International airport.
- Sujan Gautam, from Nepal, leads an agriculturally- responsive seed business that helps bring food to his family and community. As per his government's guidelines, he is self-quarantined at home with his family. He is building a website for his company so that he can help continue to support food security in his region.

Data

Over the last 15 years, WMI has enabled 418 people from 44 developing countries to attend college. Three-fourths of these people are the first in their families to do so. WMI Scholars are leading sustainable change:

- Eighty-nine percent of graduates are employed (84% in their field of study) or continuing their education.
- WMI Scholars have led 51 WMI-funded social entrepreneurship projects in 13 countries.
- Over a third of WMI Scholars have launched a nonprofit or business that collectively employ over 150 people, and serve over 10,000.
- 80% hold leadership positions in community and/or school groups
- 65% support the education of somebody else

¹ <https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/educational-challenges-and-opportunities-covid-19-pandemic>