



GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT: HER INITIATIVE Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Women First's grantee partner Her Initiative connects young women with entrepreneurship skills training and opportunities. In Tanzania, unemployment remains a major challenge and more and more young people – especially young women – are finding it nearly impossible to find a secure footing in the labor market.

Made up of ambitious, energetic young women, Her Initiative uses social media as a strategy for connecting with their community, collaborating with stakeholders, and seeking sponsors and volunteers. Knowing that practical business skills and ongoing mentorship for young women are crucial, they engaged with Instagram accounts of successful business women in Dar es Salaam and sent them direct messages through the app.

That strategy resulted in a group of fantastic volunteer trainers who spend 3-4 hours every Saturday for 8 weeks offering advice on how to get started in seeking employment and becoming entrepreneurs by sharing their past mistakes, coaching young women on how to negotiate for better market prices and, most importantly, how to get through unexpected financial crisis' when all paths appear to be impossible to succeed.

Her Initiative is a perfect example of how women reach out to help other women and their communities. Lydia, the Founder and Executive Director of Her Initiative, is just 27. With the support of Women First, the young women of Her Initiative are pulling their peers up with them, while the generation of women above them make time in their busy schedules to mentor them. Women First is especially proud to be on the journey with Her Initiative as their first major funder and partner.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As I reflect back since our last newsletter, I am amazed by how much we have accomplished. Yet, beyond the daily tasks (and many Zoom meetings), we have been able to reflect as a team on how far our grantee partnerships have evolved... and, more importantly, how far they will take us into the future. When I talk to the women leaders in our programs, I am filled with hope. They are diverse, brilliant, kind, and brave. They have the skills to create solutions that will change their communities and an organization (Women First) to support them as they do so.

Women First's transformation in recent years has been fundamental to the mission of the organization. As I reflect on the last year and look to the next, I am reminded that the need for supporting effective funding models working on gender equality is more critical than ever. Advancing gender equity requires a determined effort across fields and organizations, from nonprofits to funders, government agencies, companies, and financial institutions. We look forward to continuing to advocate for, with, and alongside all girls and women everywhere as we work to create a more gender-equal future.

None of this would be possible without the support of our loyal donors, so thank you for being part of the Women First Family. We appreciate your sacrifice to help impact our global community and wish you and your loved ones all the best during the holiday season and coming New Year!

RECENT HAPPENINGS

Women First is proud to announce our new Director of Programs - Consultant, Madonna Kendona. Based in Accra, Ghana, Madonna is an international development expert with a background in economics, women's rights, philanthropy, ethical fashion and social entrepreneurship. We invite you to read her impressive bio available on our website.

"I'm really excited to join Women First because I get to be a part of implementing our unique approach to funding women's economic empowerment where it is most needed: at the grassroots level." Welcome, Madonna!



A special shout out to Board Member Noelle Silberbauer who hosted the "Fashion, Food, & Fundraising" event on September 17 in Paramus, NJ. The afternoon was a great success bringing in a crowd of over 90 women for a fall fashion show and delicious lunch at the Capital Grille. The proceeds will benefit Women First's grantee partners as they journey into our 2nd stage of support, creating strategic business plans that will impact their programs and communities.

BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: JULIE HOBBS

Julie Hobbs joined the Women First board in 2020 and serves as the Chair of the Audit Committee. Julie brings over 20 years of financial and legal expertise to Women First and is currently a Managing Director at Morgan Stanley in the Legal and Compliance Division. She lives in Connecticut with her husband of 26 years, has a daughter in college, and enjoys spending time with her three dogs. A lawyer by trade, Julie's outstanding compliance experience is a guiding force for Women First.

Julie's incredible personal journey as an ovarian cancer survivor ignited her passion for philanthropy. Julie knew how lucky she was to be afforded top medical care during her cancer battle and understood the stark contrast between the care available to her and what might be available to other women living in the global south. She is drawn to Women First because she understands that creating financial independence for a woman is life-changing. If a woman is struggling financially, she is far less likely to be proactive about her health. Being financially empowered gives women the confidence needed to change their situations - they become problem-solvers and are proactive about taking care of themselves, their communities, and their children.



"Economic Empowerment is the key," said Julie, "it allows women to support and advocate for themselves."

Being a part of the transformation of Women First over the past few years has been exciting for Julie. Women First's adaptability and willingness to look fearlessly into the future to create deeper and more meaningful impact is what she looks forward to most in continuing to serve on the Board. Women First is grateful for the knowledge, leadership, and support that Julie brings to the organization.

Women First grantee partners live and work in some of the most difficult environments on earth — communities where COVID-19 is only one of many life-threatening issues. And yet, less than 2% of donor funding reaches the grassroots groups we partner with, despite evidence showing that the mobilization of these groups has a more direct influence on positive change to society than almost any other factor.

Learn more about how you can help Women First continue to support our grantee partners and the women, girls, and trans people they serve:

www.womenfirstfund.org/donate

All donations are fully tax-deductible by United States Federal Law. EIN: 23-7068080.

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