



CorpsAfrica and Mastercard Foundation expand partnership to drive impact across 11 African countries

March 28, 2023, NEW YORK – CorpsAfrica announced today that its partnership with the Mastercard Foundation to develop the leadership skills of young Africans, particularly young women, has been expanded. The five-year partnership will empower participants to fight poverty and facilitate sustainable, community-led projects that impact public health, food security, education, gender issues, the digital economy, the environment, and economic development while creating work opportunities for young people across the continent.

CorpsAfrica recruits, trains, and places ambitious, college-educated, hard-working young African women and men to serve in high-poverty communities in their own countries for one year, inspired by the Peace Corps model. The volunteers live within the communities to gain a deep understanding of the problems facing their fellow citizens and work with community members to implement sustainable solutions to improve lives, build resilience, and create better economic outcomes for all.

As part of their learning process, the volunteers work with communities to help identify their needs and support them in developing community projects such as building schools, wells, and irrigation systems, helping launch small businesses and agriculture projects, tutoring in schools, training centres, and where community members identify a need for assistance.

The expanded \$59.4 million partnership will enable over 1,600 young African volunteers to serve across 11 countries on the continent and impact over 800,000 community members.

CorpsAfrica volunteers driving impact in their communities

In Rwanda, at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Christian, a CorpsAfrica volunteer, opted to stay at his site, helping a displaced community to identify and establish the first sewing and handcrafts skills training center. The center has and continues to train numerous women and girls in the Kinigi IDP model village and contributes toward reducing the number of unemployed youth and women in the community. Working with community members and adjoining towns, graduates from the Center can sell their products to a ready market and earn a reliable income to support their families.

In Morocco, a young female CorpsAfrica volunteer named Oumaima helped a group of local women form the Amalou Ikkiss Cooperative, the only women's cooperative in the Inman Valley that specializes in making carpets and pillows using knowledge and skills inherited from their elders. The cooperative enables them to market their products collectively, earning decent incomes to support their families. The Amalou Ikkiss Cooperative challenges stereotypes about women in rural areas by showing they can change their own lives. One of the community members said, "For me, CorpsAfrica is a blessing. It has helped me to know my value, my capacity, my responsibility, and the role I have to make life better."

"During their ten months of service, CorpsAfrica volunteers create formal and informal jobs using a

Human-Centered Design approach. They help to create a healthy environment that allows for economic prosperity and independence,” said Liz Fanning, Founder and Executive Director of CorpsAfrica. “This includes training leaders and building community projects that are identified, owned, and managed by the local people. They listen and learn while living alongside community members, which gives them critical thinking and problem-solving skills, humility, and empathy. When their service is complete, they leave a legacy of innovation and change with families and communities.”

Agents of positive change

Volunteers and the rural people with whom they live and work for a year become agents of positive, inclusive, and sustainable change in their communities and countries. Rural, high-poverty communities also become more resilient and can build sustainable livelihoods due to access to resources and new income streams stemming from the projects. CorpsAfrica volunteers learn life-long lessons and skills of servant leadership, the importance of inclusive and sustainable growth in their countries, and gain a deeper understanding of poverty that can only come from living it, which they then utilize and share with others in their post-service lives and careers.

Angelique, a CorpsAfrica volunteer in Rwanda, said, “Active listening, persistence, and humility are the tools I used to empower my community to solve different problems caused by poverty or that can cause poverty. I lived with them. I worked with them. I saw that their assets exceed what they need from the outside. My role was to help them realize that and fully access their potential.”

With long-standing support from founding funder the OCP Group of Morocco, the Mastercard Foundation, and from other generous supporters, CorpsAfrica has hosted almost 500 African volunteers in six countries – Morocco, Senegal, Malawi, Rwanda, Ghana, and Kenya. With this new partnership, the organization plans to extend its program to Nigeria, Uganda, and Ethiopia this year, and to two more African countries in 2024.

“CorpsAfrica has proven its impact in rural communities and demonstrated the value of deploying a network of service-minded young Africans to solve pressing issues across the continent. Their vision aligns with our Young Africa Works strategy to enable 30 million young people, particularly young women, to access dignified and fulfilling work. We are pleased to support their growth and expansion throughout the continent,” said Peter Materu, Chief Programs Officer at the Mastercard Foundation.

“This funding could not have come at a more important time,” added Fanning. “Real-world experience and service opportunities are urgently needed to engage young Africans and create sustainable economic opportunities for rural people. This extraordinary partnership will provide the resources to advance and expand CorpsAfrica’s mission by ensuring sustainability across the continent. Together, we can create a model for national and Pan-African service and participatory development that is efficient, effective, collaborative, and accountable.”

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About CorpsAfrica

CorpsAfrica recruits, trains, and sends college-educated Africans to live in remote villages in their own countries to facilitate small-scale, high-impact projects that are identified by local people, inspired by the Peace Corps model. For more information, visit www.corpsafrica.org
Twitter: @CorpsAfrica and Facebook: facebook.com/corpsafrica

About the Mastercard Foundation

The Mastercard Foundation works with visionary organizations to enable young people in Africa and in Indigenous communities in Canada to access dignified and fulfilling work. It is one of the largest private foundations in the world with a mission to advance learning and promote financial inclusion to create an inclusive and equitable world. It was established in 2006 through the generosity of Mastercard when it became a public company. The Foundation is an independent organization, and its policies, operations, and program decisions are determined by its own Board of Directors and senior leadership team. It is a registered Canadian charity with offices in Toronto, Kigali, Accra, Nairobi, Kampala, Lagos, Dakar, and Addis Ababa.

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