



## Equity Group Foundation and Mastercard Foundation Ensure *Wings to Fly* and Elimu Scholars Continue their Education

**A commitment of USD \$1.93M supports learning during the COVID-19 lockdown**

**Equity Center, Nairobi, Kenya (June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020):** Through the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, Equity Group Foundation and the Mastercard Foundation have partnered to support over 14,600 students in the *Wings to Fly* and Elimu scholarship programs to access education at home during the current COVID-19 lockdown. Secondary school Scholars have been provided with a solar powered device to ensure continued access to their lessons currently being aired on Government-owned radio and TV stations. Additionally, each of the 13,800 secondary school students and 800 alumni of the *Wings to Fly* scholarship program currently in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) will receive a monthly stipend for June through August to enable access to essential food and personal items.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, all academic institutions in Kenya were closed indefinitely in March 2020 and delivery of the curriculum moved to broadcast channels and digital platforms. Many families faced the challenge of accessing lessons at home. For scholarship recipients in the *Wings to Fly*, TVET and Elimu program in partnership with the Government of Kenya, this meant a return to households that could not provide access to learning. EGF moved to support learners by designing a program that would equitably help students and their families to continue their studies at home.

Beryl Sheryl Owambo, a Form Four *Wings to Fly* Scholar from Migori said, "I am really grateful for the solar lamps that you bought for us. It really inspired me during this period when we really needed to be at school. Actually, I was using kerosene lamp for my studies and at times we had no kerosene so I could not study after dusk. In addition, I use spectacles, so it was very hard to study with the dim lights of the kerosene lamp."

"We wanted the Scholars to have an equal opportunity through continued access to their class lessons during this difficult stay-at-home period. With many of them coming from financially challenged backgrounds, access to a radio for purposes of following the classroom lessons was going to be a big challenge. Additionally, with the majority of the Scholars not having access to electricity, we opted for solar powered gadgets. We believe that the Scholars are now well-equipped to keep up to date with their lessons," said Dr. James Mwangi, Managing Director and CEO of Equity Group Holdings, and Executive Chairman of EGF.

The device contains a radio, and a mobile charging unit for cell phones as well as a lamp that can allow studying after dusk. Because each household contains 5-6 students, it is estimated the program will reach 70,000 learners with curriculum as well as COVID-19 public health messages and advisories. EGF distributed the equipment through the Equity infrastructure of branches and its agency network across the country.

Daniel Hailu, Regional Head, Eastern and Southern Africa at the Mastercard Foundation stated, "Advancing equitable and inclusive access to education remains a top priority for the Foundation. The impact of COVID-19 requires us to be intentional about how we ensure the pandemic doesn't exacerbate existing gaps in education. In fact, this is the opportunity to seek out and promote innovative technology-driven solutions to bridge emerging gaps and even leapfrog the capacity and quality of educational delivery across the continent."

In addition to gaining the capacity to continue studying at home, student households will receive a stipend of Kshs 3,000 per Scholar per month for three months, that will contribute to household needs for food and other essentials. The stipends will also allow the beneficiaries to have airtime and data for mobile phone usage where possible.



“Against a backdrop of a still uncertain trajectory of COVID-19 in Africa, students are facing prolonged school closures of unknown length. At a time when the continent is making traction on its education goals, when the most vulnerable children can least afford to stop or delay their education, this is the time when we must step up to help them,” stated Dr. Mwangi. He added, “These young people are our future and we must not fail them during their hour of need if we want to shape the future we want to see.” Dr. Mwangi further appealed to parents and guardians of the students to take up the role of mentoring the students during this prolonged period at home, to observe the health protocols and to use their time constructively by pursuing their studies through the delegated broadcast channels. “During this period, we appeal to parents, guardians and the Scholars to continue working together to ensure the safety and protection of the Scholars, from all distractions including staying away from vulnerabilities such as drug abuse, early pregnancies and early marriages which have become a real threat to the lives of the youth,” Dr. Mwangi concluded.

**About Wings to Fly**

The *Wings to Fly* Scholarship program, a signature program in EGF’s Education and Leadership Development pillar, provides comprehensive secondary school scholarships to academically promising, yet financially disadvantaged youth. Since 2010, 17,304 scholarships have been offered to scholars selected from across the country through community scholarship selection boards. The scholarship covers school fees, transport, books, pocket money, mentoring, psychosocial support, and leadership development. Mastercard Foundation has been EGF’s anchor partner in supporting worthy scholars lacking resources to carry their academic dreams forward since 2010. Other former and current partners include USAID, UKAID, and the German Government through KfW. Graduates of *Wings to Fly* have an additional opportunity to access financing from EGF to pursue technical courses at reputable TVET institutions across Kenya.

**About Elimu Scholarship Program**

The Elimu scholarship program is run by EGF on behalf of the Ministry of Education and the Government of Kenya. With financial support from the World Bank, the program will provide comprehensive secondary school scholarships 18,700 primary school graduates from 110 sub-counties and 15 urban centers with informal settlements. This year, the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort of 9,000 beneficiaries reported to Form One and the remaining scholars will be identified to join secondary school next year.

**About Equity Group Foundation**

Equity Group Foundation (EGF), the corporate implementing foundation of Equity Group Holdings Plc, has as its mission to champion the transformation of lives and livelihoods for 100m people in Africa by 2024 through the design and implementation of innovative programs that leverage Equity Group’s infrastructure and partnerships to create shared value. Established in 2008 as the Group’s social engine, the Foundation delivers economic opportunities, capacity, tools, and technologies that enable individuals and businesses to increase productivity, resilience and share in socio-economic growth. EGF responds to the continuum of issues that challenge the socio-economic advancement of the people of Africa, especially low-income individuals, and families. EGF’s Creating Shared Value [CSV] strategy provides social development initiatives in Education and Leadership Development, Food and Agriculture, Health, Financial Inclusion and Entrepreneurship Development, Energy and Environment and Social Protections for the most vulnerable citizens. EGF’s programs are underpinned by technology, innovation, and synergy as a central means to launch, nurture, and scale up Africa’s next generation of successful leaders and entrepreneurs delivered to all communities in which Equity has operations.

**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. The Foundation was created by Mastercard in 2006 as an independent organization with its own Board of Directors and management. For more information on the Foundation, please visit: [www.mastercardfdn.org](http://www.mastercardfdn.org)

<p><b>For more information, please contact:</b></p> <p>Alex Muhia Equity Group Holdings Plc. T : Office - 0763 026007 : Mobile - 0763 618871 E : <a href="mailto:CorporateCommunications@equitybank.co.ke">CorporateCommunications@equitybank.co.ke</a> E : <a href="mailto:Alex.Muhia@equitybank.co.ke">Alex.Muhia@equitybank.co.ke</a></p>	<p>Carol Wairugu Ogilvy PR T : 0764 515797 E : <a href="mailto:Carol.Wairugu@ogilvy.co.ke">Carol.Wairugu@ogilvy.co.ke</a></p> <p>Helen White Mastercard Foundation Strategy Lead, Program Communications E : <a href="mailto:hwhite@mastercardfdn.org">hwhite@mastercardfdn.org</a> Mobile: +27 76 166 5372</p>
--	---