



## **PRESS RELEASE:**

### **18,442 Scholars Mentored on Leadership and Innovation at Equity Group Foundation's 16th Education Congress**

**15<sup>th</sup> April 2025, Nairobi** – Equity Group Foundation (EGF), in collaboration with its strategic partners, is hosting its 16th Annual Education and Leadership Congress, bringing together 18,442 Wings to Fly and Elimu scholars from across 11 regions in Kenya, including 2,512 refugee scholars from Dadaab and Kakuma camps.

Held under the theme “*The Innovation Generation: Igniting Ideas, Creating Impact*,” the two-day regional congress is designed to mentor and empower scholars through leadership development, values-driven education, and a deep focus on innovation as a driver of transformation.

Equity Group Foundation's leadership, Equity Bank staff, and senior stakeholders from the Ministry of Education, UNHCR, the Department of Refugee Services, captains of industry, academia, and teacher champions are going to mentor the scholars through plenary sessions during the two full days Congress.

Speaking to the scholars convening at Kabarak University, Equity Group Foundation Executive Chairman, Dr. James Mwangi, reflected on the importance of the congress, explaining, “It is the time that we come together. Those who are united with the purpose of pursuing education as a means of changing the lives of our young people to take account of what has happened in the last one year. To converse, discuss how we can make ourselves better and how we can up our game. I have been part of this for the last 16 years. The 16th Congress comes at a time that we again challenge each other on how we can better ourselves. Education is the most powerful tool of transforming lives. It is a tool that empowers individuals and a tool that can never be stolen. We become better when we hold intellectual conversations and challenge each other. It's deepening our thinking and our reasoning so that we can solve problems better than before. That's what education is for.”

Other than Nakuru, scholars have converged in Mombasa, Machakos, Meru, Eldoret, Lodwar, Kakuma – Tumaini Girls Secondary School, Kakuma – Big Hearts Foundation Girls Secondary School, Daadab, Garissa, and Nairobi.

“We believe that true transformation begins with empowered minds. Through mentorship, innovation, and access to quality education, we are nurturing a generation of ethical, solution-driven leaders who will shape the future of Africa. These scholars are not just students, they are catalysts of change, and their potential is limitless. Our unique model intertwines world-class education, transformative mentorship, and strong ethical values to create true agents of change. This congress represents the power of our holistic approach: where scholarships meet leadership development, where potential meets opportunity, and where today's students become tomorrow's innovators,” Dr Mwangi added.

The Wings to Fly and Elimu scholarship programs, spearheaded by Equity Group Foundation in partnership with Mastercard Foundation, the World Bank, Ministry of Education, KfW (German Development Bank), and Equity Bank, provide comprehensive support for bright but financially disadvantaged students across Kenya. To date, 60,009 scholars, (22,009 Wings to Fly Scholarships and 38,000 Elimu) have benefited from these programs, receiving full scholarships and mentorship support throughout their secondary education journey.

Kabarak University Vice Chancellor Prof Henry K. Kiplangat lauded the significant impact of the Equity Group Foundation's educational initiatives, specifically the Wings to Fly and Elimu Scholarship Programs, in providing opportunities for Kenyan youth.



Expressing his appreciation for the vision behind these programs, Prof. Kiplangat stated, "I would like at this point to congratulate and thank Dr. James Mwangi for the noble idea to establish Wings to Fly a scholarship program to support and mentor the youth of Kenya. The graduates of this program become resourceful in the society and responsible leaders in various sectors of the Kenyan society. It is fundamental truth that education provides wings to fly. We call upon other corporate entities to emulate Equity Bank in supporting the Kenyan children in realizing their dreams. I trust that the knowledge you will gain during this Congress, young people, will guide you as you continue your academic journey."

This year's congress builds on five core pillars central to Equity's scholarship and mentorship model: Academic Excellence, Value-Centered Living, Transformative Leadership, Giving Back to Society, Gender Sensitization.

Nakuru County Director of Education Victoria Mulili appreciated Equity Group Foundation for the transformative impact of the Wings to Fly program on the lives of children, parents, and communities within the education sector.

"Today we are celebrating 16 years of Wings to Fly and the immense impact on the lives of our children, parents, and communities. As the Ministry of Education, we would not manage the sector alone, and we thank Equity Group for the impact and the ripple effect created by educating even just one child in the community, making dreams come true for children who might otherwise perhaps not have seen the light of day or had their dreams come to life.

"We can now speak of doctors, engineers, teachers, and others whose lives have been transformed through Wings to Fly and the investment that has been made through Equity's partnership with Mastercard."

Through immersive plenary sessions, scholars will interact with corporate executives, spiritual leaders, professors, alumni, and peers, gaining insight and inspiration on how to lead with integrity, build resilience, and spark meaningful change in their communities.

Under its Innovation Pillar, EGF is nurturing the next generation of changemakers equipped with future-ready skills. The Tech Apprenticeship Program has to date placed 415 Wings to Fly alumni and Equity Leaders Program (ELP) scholars into immersive training tracks within sectors such as HealthTech, AgTech, InsurTech, and LegalTech, in partnership with global giants like Microsoft, Cisco, and AWS.

Kuresha Hassan, a Form Four student at Kipkelion Girls High School and a beneficiary of the Wings to Fly scholarship, said the April holiday mentorship program has been very resourceful to her.

"I have learned a lot during the two-day mentorship, especially how to handle peer pressure. This scholarship means a lot to me, and I will work hard to excel in my exams. It has opened academic doors I never imagined possible, and I am more confident in my dreams. I now believe that with determination and support, I can achieve anything I set my mind to."

The Equity Leaders Program (ELP) continues to demonstrate remarkable impact: 113 scholars in 2025 have secured full university scholarships at world-class institutions. To date 29,515 scholars have joined ELP, with 970 global scholars attending 233 universities in 37 countries, including 204 in Ivy League universities. 750 scholars joined the pre-university internship program this year. The program has facilitated 9,700 paid internships and supported 3,979 TVET scholars, significantly contributing to youth employability and leadership across the region.



Phabian Wilson Waithaka, an alumnus of Karima Boys High School in Nyeri, and a beneficiary of the Equity Leaders Program (ELP), celebrated his outstanding academic achievements. He recalled his impressive A grade with 82 points in the 2023 KCSE exams, a significant milestone for his school, as the school had last recorded an A in 2013.

“I was also a top student in Othaya Sub County that year. I was picked as a pre university intern and interned at Nakuru West Side Mall branch for 6 months and was nurtured through a mentorship that guided me on applying to prestigious institutions worldwide, resulting in multiple admissions. This mentorship paved the way for global opportunities. I received offers from esteemed universities worldwide, including the University of British Columbia, the University of Perch, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I am joining Princeton University, the number one university in the US for the last 15 years,” he said, adding that he will benefit from a full sponsorship for his annual school fees of USD 95,713.

The Congress experience is designed not just to motivate, but to activate and challenge scholars. Scholars are equipped with the tools and mindset to make intentional, value-driven decisions in their academics, personal lives, and future careers. The initiative also aligns with Kenya Vision 2030 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ensuring quality education contributes to long-term socioeconomic progress.

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### **About Equity Group Foundation**

Equity Group Foundation (EGF), the corporate impact implementing foundation of Equity Group Holdings Plc, has as its mission to champion the transformation of lives and livelihoods for 100 million people in Africa by 2030 through the design and implementation of innovative programs that leverage Equity Group's infrastructure and partnerships to create shared value and prosperity.

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, become more resilient 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 Enterprise Development, Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Social Protections for the most vulnerable citizens and Innovation and Technology in order to solve some of Africa's most challenging issues and support talented young people with ideas to thrive.

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 Wings to Fly**

The Wings to Fly scholarship program, an initiative of the Equity Group and Mastercard Foundation (MCF), was established to support secondary education for top performing children from financially challenged backgrounds. With support from other partners, the program offers access to leadership training to previously marginalized children in all counties.

The Wings to Fly program supports children within the top five percentile in the KCPE exams in each sub-county who are financially challenged. Each beneficiary receives a comprehensive secondary school scholarship that caters for tuition, shopping, school uniforms, revision books, pocket money, medical insurance, transport, annual congress attendance, one-on-one mentoring and academic support.



The program offers comprehensive support for the scholars through the provision of tuition fees, accommodation, books, uniform, shopping, pocket money and transport to and from school during their 4 years of secondary education. It has so far supported 60,009 bright but economically challenged scholars.

For more information log on to: <https://equitygroupfoundation.com/>