

News Release

For Immediate Release

Empowerment Squared and McMaster University receive \$4.9M investment from Global Affairs Canada to launch African Youth International Internship Project

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Empowerment Squared, in partnership with McMaster University and Schools of Dreams, is excited to announce an investment of \$4.9M to launch the African Youth International Internship Project. This project will place participants into structured internship placements in Liberia and Ghana and provide international experience to Canadian youth of African descent. The learning and development experiences will focus on gender-empowering educational research and inclusive growth, as well as climate change mitigation, adaptation, and environmental research. The African Youth International Internship Project will begin activities in 2024 and will run until 2028. Further information about plans and opportunities will be shared in the near future.

The funding for this project is an investment by Global Affairs Canada in six International Youth Internship Program (IYIP) projects aimed at giving young people in Canada the opportunity to gain international experience, skills and knowledge, to help to prepare them for the future. This funding was announced on February 6, 2024 by the Honourable Ahmed Hussen, Minister of International Development,

Through the professional skills development and experience gained while participating in the internships, the project will enhance employment opportunities and leadership capacity for emerging leaders. This investment builds on the hands-on work Empowerment Squared has undertaken over several years in Africa including projects in Liberia, Ghana, and South Africa, and aligns with the organization's mission to empower individuals and communities in Canada and internationally with the tools and opportunities to thrive and contribute to society.

International mobility and partnerships are part of McMaster University's identity as a global institution. The new African Youth International Internship Project will provide more McMaster University students looking for mobility with the financial support they need to experience parts of the world they may not be familiar with.

As a partner in the project, McMaster will support the recruitment of interns, provide pre-departure training, and facilitate partnerships and networking opportunities. The program is an excellent fit with McMaster's values-based internationalization strategy, which is anchored on principles of global social responsibility. McMaster's approach centres on building mutually beneficial relationships founded on trust, equity, sustainability and reciprocity with Empowerment Squared and Schools of Dreams.

A primary hub for the deployment of the African Youth International Internship Project will be the Liberian Learning Center; a collaborative project led by Empowerment Squared in partnership with Rotary International, Rotary Club of Hamilton, Rotary Club of Monrovia, Paynesville City Corporation, McCallumSather, and Hamilton Public Library, and Tri Buchanan Development Corp. The Center will be built in multiple phases on the site of Paynesville City Hall and will include Liberia's first postwar comprehensive learning center and library, co-working and business incubation spaces, sports and recreation facilities, and event facilities. [A dedication ceremony for Phase 1 of the Liberian Learning Center is being held on February 23, 2024 in Paynesville, Liberia.](#)

“At Empowerment Squared, we believe that education and learning must transcend the walls of the classroom to be purposeful and connected to life and society. Through this transformational investment, we will take on the important task of supporting 100 Canadian youth and young adults of African descent to prepare for the future by developing culturally relevant skills and fluency in international development responsive to the emerging needs of our world. ”

- **Leo Nupolu Johnson, Executive Director, Empowerment Squared**

“Canadian student internship opportunities and international learning paths have not traditionally offered experiences in Africa, and that was a missed opportunity until now. To me, anyone left behind is knowledge left behind. I welcome this unique opportunity for McMaster students from underrepresented groups to gain a global perspective and to strengthen McMaster’s research and teaching agenda as well as that of the host educational institutions and community partners. I look forward to supporting the McMaster students who take part in this new program.”

- **Dr. Bonny Ibhawoh, Vice-Provost (International Affairs) and professor of Global Human Rights at McMaster University**

“Schools of Dreams is excited to be an implementing partner of the African Youth International Internship Project. Our organization has fostered a connection between Canada and Ghana with an emphasis on creating access to safe educational spaces, and we look forward to working with our project partners to establish impactful learning opportunities that connect young leaders in Canada to international issues and opportunities.”

- **Barbara Anie, President, Schools of Dreams**

About Empowerment Squared

Empowerment Squared is a registered Canadian charitable organization that is building a world where everyone is empowered with the tools and opportunities to thrive and contribute to society. The organization empowers newcomer, racialized and marginalized communities in Canada and Africa through educational programming, professional skills development and entrepreneurship, sports and recreation programming, and advocacy and leadership initiatives. It has supported more than 3,000 newcomer youth and families in Canada since its inception. The organization operates out of Hamilton and Windsor, Ontario, and is also registered as Empowerment Squared Liberia in Liberia.

About McMaster University

McMaster is a research-intensive university ranked among the best in the world with a bold ambition to advance human and societal health and well-being. Among Canada’s top universities for student services, our research excellence is matched by our long history of teaching innovations and commitment to preparing students for an increasingly complex future. Our alumni continue to be among the most employable graduates globally, as they bring the McMaster vision of a brighter world to communities near and far.

About Schools of Dreams

Schools of Dreams transforms the lives of young children and their communities by building safe, sustainable learning environments in rural Ghana. Founded by community leader Dora Anie (also the City of Hamilton’s 2024 Black History Month Honouree), this Canadian based charitable organization has been building schools and shaping futures since 2004.

About Global Affairs Canada

Global Affairs Canada defines, shapes and advances Canada’s interests and values in a complex global environment. We manage diplomatic relations, promote international trade and provide consular assistance. We lead international development, humanitarian, and peace and security assistance efforts. We also contribute to national security and the development of international law.

Contact

Priya Goorbarry, Director, Operations and Administration, Empowerment Squared
p.goorbarry@empowermentsquared.org

