**Mastercard Foundation Scholars**

Empowering the next generation. Now in its Sixth year, with a target to support 1,000 Scholars, the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program’s main goal is to educate and empower the next generation of African leaders, writes Paul Murungi.

**KEEPING GIRLS IN SCHOOL**

Profound impact:
The Scholars Program has had profound impact on girl child education by offering 80% of the Scholarships to female students. In the last six years of the Scholars Program implementation, 981 Scholars were recruited in five cohorts, of these 740 are girls representing 75% of the total enrollment. This was designed to support female students to acquire university education, because of historical injustices that had sidelined girls from higher education.

**Economically disadvantaged.** The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program seeks to offer scholarships to academically gifted but economically disadvantaged youth from Africa to study at the prestigious university from 2013 to 2023.

By the academic year 2018/2019, up to 981 Scholars have been offered Scholarships with Comprehensive support under the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at Makerere University. In the Academic year 2019/2020, 431 Scholars were enrolled, of which 75% are female students. Prof. Aaron Mushengyezi, the Chair of the Selection Committee, says that the Scholars Program targets 80% females and 20% males. This was determined by the initial agreement that Makerere University had with Mastercard Foundation because of the historical injustices on women.

During the recently held scholarship award ceremony for the Fifth Cohort Scholars, Prof Barnabas Nawangwe, the Vice Chancellor of Makerere University hailed Mastercard Foundation for offering more than $21M scholarships to support 1,000 young people from sub-Saharan Africa, to enable them access quality higher education.

“Every year over 1,000 students drop out of Makerere University due to financial constraints. Makerere University therefore is privileged to have partners like Mastercard Foundation who lend a hand to young people who are unable to support themselves to acquire quality education,” Prof. Nawangwe revealed.

He further pointed out that the gift of education is more valuable than any other present, one could ever get. “It is through education that communities and countries are transformed,” he asserted.

**Selection and recruitment criteria**
Prof Mushengyezi says that during the selection stage, applicants are categorized into international applicants (Students from other African countries), Candidates transitioning from Mastercard Foundation Secondary partner organisations (Brac Uganda and PAVE-Rwanda chapter), and other Nationals. The latter category is further categorized based on

Beyond academics, Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program nurtures students into adept problem-solvers and transformative leaders. The Scholars Program offers psychosocial support, to nurture healthy and focused minds as they undertake their studies,” she said.

The Scholars Program ensures that all Scholars have a mentor within the University and beyond.

In addition, there is a great emphasis on the giveback ethos, where the Scholars are encouraged, motivated and guided into giveback initiatives as individuals as well as in groups. “Scholars receive a laptop accompanied by an internationally recognized ICT certificate course. An annual summer leadership camp is organized to equip Scholars with skills in communication, design thinking, problem-solving, teamwork and creativity among others,” Dr Namaalwa said.

Dr. Namaalwa further pointed out that, Makerere University received US$ 200,000 additional funds to support Scholars and Alumni kick start promising social ventures and transformative leaders through various capacity building sessions under Psychosocial Support and Transition units.

**Selection Committee.**
Vice Chancellor, Prof. Barnabas Nawange together with Prof. Aaron Mushengyezi, Chair of Selection Committee handing over a Scholarship award letter to one of the Scholars during the Scholarship award ceremony for Cohort Five Scholars.

**NURTURING YOUTH**

Transformative leaders. The Program Coordinator of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at Makerere University, says the Scholars Program does not only provide academic support to Scholars, but also nurtures them into transformative leaders through various capacity building sessions under Psychosocial Support and Transition units.
Program boosts higher education

Now in its Sixth year, with a target to support 1,000 Scholars, the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program’s main goal is to educate and empower the next generation of African leaders.

FUNDING IMPACT:
According to Dr Namalwa, the scholars program is an ongoing demonstration of the Foundation’s Young Africa Works strategy, which aims to enable 30 million young people in Africa, particularly young women, to realize dignified and fulfilling work, by 2030.

“The Scholars Program contributes to this effort by equipping young people with a high quality education and leadership skills needed to create employment opportunities and to have a positive impact on their communities,” Dr Namalwa noted.

This article has been produced with support from The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Makerere University.

FROM THE SCHOLARS

Kevin Githuku Wanai
(Kenyan)

I applied for this scholarship to be an investigative journalist and a voice for the voiceless. I have high expectations from this scholarship to inculcate the spirit of transformative leadership in me.

Kirungi Phiona
(Bachelors of Arts in Economics - Year one)

After finishing my high school, I had no hope of joining the university because there was no one to sponsor my education.

The school administration advised me to apply for Mastercard Foundation scholarship at Makerere University, which I did and was selected. I hope to come out a better person who can transform society.

Nalwanga Maria Assumpita
(Bachelor of Science in Biotechnology – First Year)

I have been part of Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program from senior one at King’s College Buddo. It is through the Scholars Program that I have been exposed to leadership and entrepreneurial skills.

“The global platform for Mastercard Foundation Scholars has helped me to learn from other Scholars across the world. My course needs a lot of research and I use this platform to contact Scholars from other universities across the world.

This scholarship will help me create projects that will empower people with agricultural background.

Chemutai Angella
(Bachelor of Commerce – First Year)

Losing my parents at a young age was a big blow that left me with no hope to further my education. Then I learnt of Mastercard Foundation scholarship and applied. I was selected.

It was a great opportunity for me to join University. Ever since I joined the University courtesy of Mastercard Foundation scholarship, my life has changed. I no longer think of myself as a refugee and my life has been opened to a world of opportunities.

Ajok Mary Valentino
(An international student from South Sudan - Student of Journalism and Communication – Third Year)

I come from South Sudan and got to know about the Mastercard Foundation Scholarship Program through a friend. By then, I was staying at Kiyandongo Refugee Settlement camp in Kiyandongo district. I did several interviews before I made it to the University courtesy of this Scholars Program. Through the psychosocial support trainings, I have learnt to communicate effectively, gained confidence and have acquired number of soft skills. This has enabled me to engage at both local and international level.

Negesa Sharifah
(Bachelor’s Degree in Information Technology - completed)

I come from a family of four and was raised by a single parent who could not afford paying our fees. I applied for the Mastercard scholarship and have had immense benefits. I have acquired mentorship and leadership skills as well as succeeding academically.

Currently, I am doing internship with the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at Makerere University. I am expanding my understanding of the monitoring and evaluation department. I hope to design and develop a professional skills having an IT based programme in monitoring and evaluation field. A person joining Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program should expect the best and be willing to learn.

Kutesa Frank
(Bachelors Degree in Community Psychology - completed)

My hopes for higher education were ruined when I failed to make it in government scholarship. However, I was able to join the university courtesy of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program in 2016. I have attended summer camps and trained in other fields that we do not get from class. Recently, I was selected as the best Alumni and given a one year fully funded internship to have hands on experience and sharpen my skills for the job market.

I have volunteered in several schools holding career talks to extend the skills acquired in various trainings.

This article has been produced with support from The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Makerere University.

The Scholars Program is a living legacy of the Mastercard Foundation’s goal to educate and empower the next generation of African leaders.