

# THE POWER OF SISTERHOOD

“**G**rowing up, I found my mother secretly crying as she struggled financially to keep me in school in rural Zimbabwe. Her love and determination showed me what resilience is, but the odds were stacked against us.

I remember waiting for classmates to finish writing, so I could borrow their pen. My teacher became my ally, suggesting I hide in the bathroom when officials came looking for school fees we couldn't pay. My community showed up for me - selecting me for support from CAMFED, (Campaign for Female Education) at secondary school, just as we had lost hope that I could progress. I struggled with guilt, because I had a chance when so many friends had to drop out. I was fortunate, but this shouldn't be celebrated as exceptional - every girl has the right to be educated.

Across rural Africa, 95% of girls from the most marginalised communities never complete secondary school. These are real girls with dreams - just like I had, and my mother for me. This systemic exclusion affects every part of girls' lives and their ability to shape their own futures, and future generations.

That's why I co-founded the CAMFED Association, a sisterhood of women educated with CAMFED support, leading change in and with their communities. More than 300,000-strong across Africa, we understand the challenges facing girls because we've navigated them: the cost of fees, uniforms and transport; and the fact that when under-resourced rural schools can't respond to girls' specific needs, they're pushed out of education often resulting in early marriage in a desperate but hopeless attempt to ease the financial burden on struggling families.

This is compounded by a lack of relatable female role models to show us what is possible when young women step into their power.

Now, we are those role models, and I am the CEO of the organisation that once supported me. As the sisterhood at the helm of CAMFED, we deploy our experience to address the needs of the most disadvantaged, creating solutions that work for everyone. In our partner schools, girls are three times less likely to drop out. Our peer mentors help improve learning outcomes for all students, who grow up to identify and tackle barriers for others. My sisters across Africa are teachers and medical professionals; they launch businesses that employ others and advocate for policies that protect vulnerable children. I'm so proud that our youth-led approach is starting to be deployed by education ministries at scale, to benefit all children.

Community-led solutions are the most effective - our sisterhood model is proof. CAMFED graduates support an average of three more girls (and five more children) through school, creating a ripple effect of change. By co-creating solutions with young people and their communities, working in partnership with traditional leaders, government officials, teachers and families - we ignite lasting change benefiting everyone.

When you know what it's like to be denied opportunity, but have experienced the transformative power of education, then you become determined to open that world of possibilities to everyone. We don't do pity parties in our sisterhood! We work hard, we sing, we dance, we laugh. Because every single moment we are making the world better than we found it. ”



**Angeline (Angie) Murimirwa**

CEO of CAMFED

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